



Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE)

SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT

Compiled by ZIMCHE Secretariat and approved by Council

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Annexes

ZIMCHE Act; Organogram, Standards, SOPs; Strategic Plan

Glossary

AfriQAN	African Quality Assurance Network
AJU	Arrupe Jesuit University
AQVN	African Qualifications Verification Network
ASG-QA	African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
AU	Africa University
AUZ	Anglican University in Zimbabwe
BUSE	Bindura University of Science Education
CUT	Chinhoyi University of Technology
CUZ	Catholic University in Zimbabwe
DAIA	Directorate of Academic and Institutional Audit
DHRAF	Directorate of Human Resources, Administration and Finance
DRA	Directorate of Registration and Accreditation
EQAA	External Quality Assurance Agency
GZU	Great Zimbabwe University
GZU	Gwanda State University (GSU)
HE	Higher Education
HEFC	Higher Education Finance Committee
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HEQAC	Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee
HESSC	Higher Education Shape and Size Committee
HIT	Harare Institute of Technology
LSU	Lupane State University
MCU	Maranatha Christian University
MHTESTD	Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSU	Midlands State University
MSUAS	Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences
MUAST	Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education (Namibia)
NUST	National University of Science and Technology
PAMUST	Pan African Minerals University of Science and Technology
QA	Quality Assurance
RCU	Reformed Church University
SAMU	Southern Africa Methodist University (
SER	Self-Assessment Report
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SU	Solusi University
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
VC	Vice Chancellor
WUA	Women's University in Africa
ZEGU	Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University
ZIMCHE	Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education
ZNDU	Zimbabwe National Defence University
ZOU	Zimbabwe Open University

1.0 Chapter 1: Introduction - The agency's motivation to take part in the review.

The Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) was established through an Act of Parliament in 2006. Although skeletal staff were recruited in 2007, operations commenced in 2009 and hence has been in operation for ten years. ZIMCHE is the competent authority registering, accrediting, auditing and the holistic quality assurance (QA) of higher education institutions (HEIs) and their programmes. QA is targeted at safeguarding the quality of higher education (HE) in Zimbabwe. In pursuance to this goal, ZIMCHE develops and continuously improves policies, methods, standards, instruments and tools for use assuring and enhancing quality. This stems from the realisation that as systems evolve and the HE arena changes, QA bodies need to continuously adjust in order to achieve their goals. ZIMCHE finds it unnecessary to re-invent the wheel; it benchmarks its practices with other world-class QA agencies, adapts and innovates. A key enabler is the unique Act which empowers ZIMCHE not only with regulatory powers, but mandates it to also promote, advise and coordinate all issues that impact on the HE quality. Thus in executing its mandate, ZIMCHE focuses on both accountability and improvement. Benchmarking revealed that some QA agencies take the regulatory function only whilst some take a voluntary, self-improvement approach.

The vision of ZIMCHE is to be an internationally acclaimed quality-assured higher and tertiary education system by 2025. The mission is to regulate and engender a culture of self-assessment in higher and tertiary education in order to bring about industrialisation, modernisation, sustainable and equitable socio-economic development. In pursuance of its mandate and mission, ZIMCHE puts the responsibility for QA in HEIs to all levels: top management, senior management, middle management and at operational level. At the professional and academic level, ZIMCHE uses the collegial type of QA wherein staff and students are trained and encouraged to take charge of their work and to embrace constant improvement. Individuals, departments and institutions are given the responsibility to ensure quality. HEIs ensure quality in designing and implementing programmes using ZIMCHE standards and guidelines.

Cognisant of the need to continuously improve the QA system by way of further developing its strengths, eliminating weaknesses and mitigating risks, ZIMCHE recruited an Internal and Quality Assurance Audit Manager to assist in giving an independent opinion on the implementation of Council policies, procedures and systems. ZIMCHE is desirous of achieving the best QA system with limited resources by empowering HEIs be in charge of the quality of its teaching and learning, research and development and reducing the volume of assessments. To this end, ZIMCHE wishes to embrace the voice of local and international stakeholders hence the motivation for Council to be subjected to an independent review of its effectiveness in implementing its mandate. Such an exercise is costly hence ZIMCHE grabbed the opportunity offered by HAQAA to be involved in a pilot review Courtesy of HAQAA financiers. The use of the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education will be of great use to ZIMCHE. The knowledge that the pilot reviews are supported by the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN), a reputable international body, gave Council much comfort. Although ZIMCHE solicits for feedback from its stakeholders from time to time, the independent pilot review team is likely to get those views on the performance Council that stakeholders might not be free to share with ZIMCHE directly. Such honest and frank information will assist ZIMCHE to improve on the quality of its services.

Chapter 2. Development of the Self-assessment report (SAR)

Describe the means the agency has used to develop and produce the SAR (appointment of the SAR team, involvement of stakeholders, etc.).

The procedure involved ZIMCHE Secretariat convening a senior management meeting to agree on the processes to be followed in developing the self assessment report. The senior managers studied and discussed the ASG-QA with a view to determining the extent to which ZIMCHE adheres to them. They then went through the guidelines for developing the self assessment report in order to determine the best way forward.

The analysis of the report guidelines revealed that there were sections within the report which needed to be handled by people with academic and professional qualifications and work experiences related to these sections. This necessitated allocating each manager a section they were comfortable to handle and submissions were expected by a given deadline. The senior officers were then asked to prepare presentations which were then discussed by the whole senior management team for the purpose of value addition.

The value added presentations were then forwarded to the Manager Communications and Public Relations for consolidation into a Self Assessment Report. The draft SAR was then edited by the Acting CEO and submitted. The final report will be considered and approved by the ZIMCHE Council before being submitted.

Chapter 3. Higher Education and QA of Higher Education in the Context of the Agency

Describe briefly the higher education system and the evaluation of higher education in your country.

2. Higher Education Landscape

a) Brief history of HE in Zimbabwe (eg colonial times and impact on current)

Zimbabwe was colonised by the British between 1890 to 1980. During this period, the country changed names as follows: Southern Rhodesia from 1890 to 1965; Rhodesia from 1966 to 1978; Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in 1979 and Zimbabwe from April 18, 1980. The population of Zimbabwe was 12 million according to the 2012 census constituted by 41.9% under 14 year olds; 54.3% in the age range 15-64 years and 3.8% over 65 year olds.

The education system consists of a primary phase, grades 1-7 at 5-12 years; secondary phase (Ordinary level), Forms 1-4; upper secondary phase (Advanced level), Form 5-6 and vocational, tertiary and university levels. The year 1957 saw the introduction of university education in Zimbabwe through the establishment of the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland as an affiliate of the University of London. The Zimbabwean education system is still characterized by a wider primary and a narrower higher and tertiary education, a system that originated from the colonial era. Serious imbalances existed regarding opportunities in education between the whites and blacks during the colonial era. In an effort to address these inequalities and anomalies, several reforms were targeted at the education system after independence resulting in Zimbabwe becoming a regional leader in education, earning the country a good reputation internationally. The economic problems that occurred since the year 2000 lead to impediments in the higher education system particularly thereby accelerating brain drain, wherein experienced, suitably qualified and competent professionals left the country in search of more attractive positions overseas (Chetsanga, 2003 and the Nepachem Survey, 2009).

A study by SARUA (2012) notes that in spite of academic and economic setbacks faced by the Zimbabwean higher education sector, positive developments were recorded; notably the increased access to university education as well as the heightened emphasis on quality. The expansion took the form of the increased numbers of both private and public universities; the establishment of new faculties, departments and programmes as well as the introduction of the open and distance learning mode. Zimbabwe has a solid higher and tertiary education system, comprising of 23 registered universities (14 public and nine private), eight polytechnics, fifteen teachers' colleges and two industrial training centres. Five polytechnics and three teachers colleges offer some degree programmes in association with registered universities. Table 1 shows the registered universities in Zimbabwe.

Table 1: Registered universities in Zimbabwe as of 2018

Name of University	Responsible Authority	Established	Website Address
1. University of Zimbabwe (UZ)	Public	1957	www.uz.ac.zw
2. National University of Science and Technology (NUST)	Public	1991	www.nust.ac.zw
3. Africa University (AU)	Private	1992	www.africau.edu
4. Solusi University (SU)	Private	1994	www.solusi.ac.zw

5. Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE)	Public	1996	www.buse.ac.zw
6. Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)	Public	1998	www.zou.ac.zw
7. Midlands State University (MSU)	Public	1999	www.msu.ac.zw
8. Catholic University in Zimbabwe (CUZ)	Private	2001	www.cuz.ac.zw
9. Reformed Church University (RCU)	Private	2001	www.rcu.ac.zw
10. Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT)	Public	2001	www.cut.ac.zw
11. Great Zimbabwe University (GZU)	Public	2002	www.gzu.ac.zw
12. Women's University in Africa (WUA)	Private	2004	www.wua.ac.zw
13. Lupane State University (LSU)	Public	2004	www.lsu.ac.zw
14. Harare Institute of Technology (HIT)	Public	2005	www.hit.ac.zw
15. Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU)	Private	2010	www.zegu.ac.zw
16. Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (MUASt)	Public	2015	www.muast.ac.zw
17. Gwanda State University (GSU)	Public	2016	www.gsu.ac.zw
18. Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences (MSUAS)	Public	2016	www.msuas.ac.zw
19. Zimbabwe National Defence University (ZNDU)	Public	2016	www.defence.gov.zw
20. Pan African Minerals University of Science and Technology (PAMUST)	Public	2016	www.veritaszim.net/node/1586
21. Southern Africa Methodist University (SAMU)	Private*	2016	Methodistchurchinzimbabwe.net/samu/
22. Anglican University in Zimbabwe (AUZ)	Private*	2016	No website yet
23. Maranatha Christian University (ACU)	Private*	2017	www.mcu.ac.zw
24. Arrupe Jesuit University	Private	2017	www.aju.ac.zw

Source: Garwe and Thondlana (2018)

Key: *Under provisional registration hence no students enrolled yet and charter still not granted

b) Ministry, governance structures and funding

There are two ministries responsible for education in Zimbabwe namely: Primary and Secondary Education (responsible for formative and secondary education) and Higher and

Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development (caters for post-secondary education). Higher and tertiary education in Zimbabwe is governed by the following policies: the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education Act Chapter 25:27 of 2006, the Manpower Planning and Development Act, Chapter 25:02 of 1996 as well as the acts for each of the public universities and the charters for private universities. Efforts are underway to harmonise the legislation in the form of one higher and tertiary education act. Table 2 shows the list of statutory bodies governing the higher and tertiary education Sector.

Table 2: Statutory Bodies governing the Higher Education Sector

Statutory Bodies	Responsibility
Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE)	Quality assurance of higher education: Regulates. Promotes, coordinates and provides advisory services
National Manpower Advisory Council (NAMACO)	Offers liaison services between higher and tertiary education and industry as well as overseeing the determination and monitoring of training needs.
Zimbabwe Manpower Development Fund (ZIMDEF)	Collects levy from industry to support higher and tertiary education training programmes and projects
College Lecturers Association of Zimbabwe (COLAZ)	Represents lecturers in collective bargaining.
National Economic Consultative Forum	Recommends economic priority programmes including human capital development.
Zimbabwe Occupational Standards Services (ZOSS)	Job profiling and development of standards upon which Technical and Vocational Education and Training curricula are based and which form the basis upon which examinations test items and trade tests are developed.

ZIMCHE provides standards on the governance of universities and pays particular attention to the calibre of the leadership (qualifications, competencies and experience – see Table 3) and issues of autonomy to fulfil the institution mandate. The standards also specify the composition of the supreme administrative board, the senate and other appropriate boards and committees to deliberate on the various issues as well as the requirements for Faculty/School/Directorate.

Council is headed by a Chairperson and membership consists of ex-officio and appointed members with diverse expertise and representation. With the exception of a few private universities which have a Board of Trustees as the principal authority of the institution, Council is normally the highest governing body of universities responsible for providing policy direction to the institution and to ensure that the mandate of the university is achieved. The standing committees of Council may vary from university to university but they normally include: Executive Committee; Human Resources Committee, Finance Committee; Audit and risk Committee; Campus Development Committee; Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee; Academic Staff Promotions Committee and the Non-Academic Staff Promotions Committee.

The Chancellor is the ceremonial head of the university and the President of Zimbabwe assumes that role for all public universities whilst responsible authorities for private universities select their own Chancellors. The Vice Chancellor (VC) is the principal administrative, academic and disciplinary officer of the University, responsible for its daily

operations, assisted by one or more Pro-Vice Chancellors and supported by principal officers. Management of Faculties is vested in the Deans of Faculties under the overall coordination of the Pro Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs.

Table 3: Minimum requirements for university leadership

Post	Minimum Requirements
Vice Chancellor/ Rector	i) Earned PhD and Professorship from a reputable and accredited HEI. The Professorship should be earned in accordance with the ZIMCHE guidelines on academic promotions. ii) Has proven academic leadership and administrative capabilities. Has a minimum of five years as professor and a minimum of five 3 years as Pro-Vice-Chancellor
Pro-Vice Chancellor	i) Earned PhD from a reputable and accredited HEI. ii) Shall have a minimum of three years as Professor. iii) Shall have served as a Faculty dean in the HEI structures. iv) Shall be a respectable and proven academic in his/her field. v) Shall have proven academic leadership and administrative capabilities
Registrar	i) Shall have a Master's degree in administration or human resources management or related field. ii) Shall have demonstrated administrative experience at senior management level.
Librarian	i) Shall be a holder of a Master's degree in librarianship from a recognised HEI. ii) Shall have at least 2 years' experience in library management.
Bursar	i) Shall have a Master's degree in finance or accounting and a recognised professional qualification. ii) Shall have demonstrated post qualification experience.
Dean Faculty/Equivalent Structure	i) Shall normally have earned PhD from a reputable and accredited HEI. ii) Shall be capable of giving sound academic direction to the faculty. iii) Shall have evidence of sound research, and be published in his/her academic discipline substantively to at least the level of a senior lecturer as per ZIMCHE Quality Assurance Benchmarks

Source: ZIMCHE Standards document, 2017

The Senate commands the academic authority of the university. Its responsibility is to formulate and execute academic policy of the university including but not limited to: programmes of study, student admission, teaching, examinations, conferment of awards and honours. The Senate is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and its membership includes Pro-Vice Chancellors, Registrar, Deans and heads of units, full Professors, Chairpersons of Departments, one tenured academic from each faculty, the Bursar, ICT Director, Librarian, and representatives of the Students Union. Senate has its sub-committees the principal one being the Academic Board.

The university 'normal' entry requirement is two subject passes at Advanced level (upper secondary) including a pass in English at Ordinary level. Under graduate degree programmes

generally last for four years, with the exception of specialized areas e.g. Engineering and Medicine. Programmes at postgraduate level are also offered by the universities. The Zimbabwe Open University offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes through open and distance learning.

Financing of university education

Public universities are semi-autonomous institutions independently that account for their finances through use of internal and external auditors. Tertiary institutions (polytechnics, teachers colleges and industrial training colleges, account for their finances through the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development. Funding for universities includes from the fiscal allocations, student fees and levies, donations, and income generated from the institutions' resource mobilization initiatives.

Fiscal allocations

Traditionally, the government used to contribute the lion's share (82.4%) of public university funding, then the highest in Southern Africa which averages 65.3 percent (SARUA, 2009). Indeed, from 1980 to 2000 education received the largest share of the national budget in Zimbabwe. For example in 2002, the two ministries of education were allocated 26.6 percent of the annual national budget. The contribution of the fiscus to university funding has gone down drastically; however, the government still bears the burden of remuneration costs for staff in public universities. The process involved the submission of budget estimates for the forthcoming financial year by public universities to Treasury. In allocating the amounts for capital and recurrent expenditure to institutions, Treasury considered the bid, Treasury's projected revenue as well as national priorities. The fiscal allocations to universities are a preserve for state institutions; private universities do not enjoy this benefit.

Student fees and levies

Students pay fees and levies directly to the institution. Although some African countries introduced free higher education post-independence, Zimbabwe has embraced various forms of cost-sharing models since the introduction of the first university in 1957 (Chihombori, 2013) as shown in Table 3. Thus the government provided funding support to students at public universities through grants, loans and cadetship funds up until 2014 (Garwe, 2016). Table 2 reveals that currently students/parents/guardians/sponsors bear the cost of university education. Public university fees are subsidised by the government and hence they are lower than those prevailing at private institutions, which charge 'full cost' fees. All the public universities charge similar fees for similar programmes and these vary according to the type of programme of offer with science programmes attracting higher fees.

Table 3: Cost-sharing models in Zimbabwean universities (1957-2014)

Period	Year	Student Enrolment	Grants (%)	Loans (%)	No. of Universities
Colonial (1957- 1979)	1957	57	50	50	1
	1968	Not given	25	75	1
Post Colonial 1980-2005	1980	2240	50	50	1
	1991	9017	25	75	2
	1992	Introduction of private universities			3
	1998		20	80	6
	2002		0	100	11
2006-2014	2006		Introduction of the Cadetship Scheme		14
	2007	55548			14

	2009	49645		14
	2010	54888		15
	2011	62427		15
	2012	64449		15
	2013	77074	Cadetship scheme operating below optimum levels	15
	2014	85556		15
	2015-2017		No government support	18

Source: Adapted from Chihombori (2013) and Garwe (2014;2015)

Donations

Universities also receive funding in the form of donations from other sources including but not limited to: responsible authorities for example churches, partners, trusts, corporate bodies (as corporate social responsibility), charity organisations and individuals. Some organisations also provide scholarships and specific funding earmarked for provision of teaching and learning resources, sporting and health initiatives and other forms of institutional development.

Resource mobilisation

Universities generate funds from projects e.g. hiring out equipment, facilities, research, consultancies and other specialist services as well as interest on investments.

Zimbabwe Manpower Development Fund (ZIMDEF)

ZIMDEF collects a 1% levy of profits from industry as part of their contribution to national manpower development. Some of these funds are used to fund projects and programmes of higher and tertiary education institutions.

Churches and religious bodies

Churches and religious support the growth and development of education by providing infrastructure, facilities, teaching and learning materials, capacity building of staff and students.

c) Number of universities and their mandates (types of degrees, locations, overall population in universities, undergraduate vs postgraduate numbers)

The 23 universities in Zimbabwe have specific mandates or niche areas as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Mandates and locations of Zimbabwean universities.

Mandate	University	Location
Science and Technology; Sciences; Technology	National University of Science and Technology (NUST)	Bulawayo
	Harare Institute of Technology	Harare
	Chinhoyi University of Technology	Chinhoyi
	Lupane State University	Lupane
	Bindura University of Science Education	Bindura
	Gwanda State University	Filabusi
	Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences	Marondera
	Manicaland State University of Applied	Mutare

	Sciences	
	<i>Pan African Minerals University of Science and Technology</i>	<i>Harare</i>
Comprehensive	University of Zimbabwe	Harare
	Midlands State University	Gweru and Zvishavane
Pan African	Africa University	Mutare
	Women's university	Harare and Marondera
	<i>Pan African Minerals University of Science and Technology</i>	<i>Harare</i>
Church; Church related	Catholic University of Zimbabwe	Harare
	Solusi University	Solusi
	Reformed Church University	Masvingo
	Africa University	Mutare
	Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University	Bindura
	<i>Southern Africa Methodist University</i>	<i>Marondera</i>
	<i>Anglican University in Zimbabwe</i>	<i>Marondera</i>
	<i>Maranatha Christian University</i>	<i>Kadoma</i>
Culture and Heritage	Great Zimbabwe University	Masvingo, Mashava
Security studies	<i>National Defence University</i>	Harare
Open and Distance Learning	Zimbabwe Open University	Headquarters in Harare

Student enrolments in universities has been on the increase since 1980 when the country gained its independence (see Figure 1). Table 5 shows the enrolments for individual universities for the years 2009, 2013 and 2015.

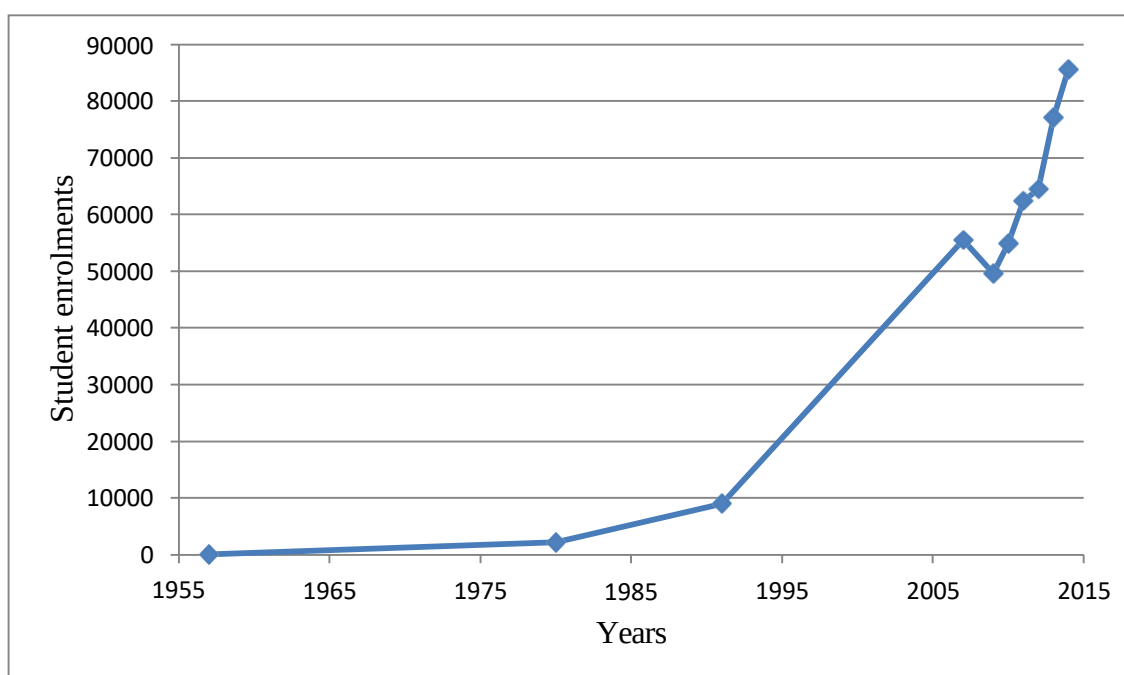


Figure 1: Student enrolment trends (1957-2015)

Table 5: University student enrolments for 2009, 2013 and 2015

University	Number of Students		
	2009	2013	2015
ZOU	16,295	7 133	7799
UZ	12,271	12 273	12581
NUST	5,132	8 512	8512
MSU	3,996	18 966	20569
GZU	2,738	5 819	9811
CUT	2,381	5 675	5812
BUSE	1,923	6 405	6405
SU	1,836	2 142	2142
WUA	1,203	2 751	2944
AU	1,007	2 504	2504
HIT	343	1 821	1821
CUZ	315	558	1243
LSU	205	2 438	3055
ZEGU	-	34	-
RCZ	-	197	391
MSUAS	-	-	210
ZEGU	-	-	65
MUAST	-	-	55
GSU	-	-	24
Total	49,645	77,228	85,943

The total student population in Zimbabwe's universities in 2009, 2013 and 2015 was 49,645, 77,228 and 85,943 respectively. The faculties at each university and the number of degree programmes on offer are shown in Table 6 (See Appendix 1).

d) Profile of academic staff at universities, do they have doctorates, general size

ZIMCHE's quality assurance standards require university lecturers to be qualified at a level pitched at least one notch above the exit level of the programmes they are teaching or supervising. Due to the brain drain during the period 2003 to 2009, the percentage of academics with doctorates stood at an average of 8.1% (MoHTE, 2010). The situation has improved greatly and currently the number of lecturers with PhDs are in the region of 25%.

Chapter 4. History, Profile and Activities of the Agency

Describe the history, profile and all activities of the agency as well as its position and status in the national context.

The phenomenal expansion of HE was properly planned to include a sharp focus on quality. Accordingly, in 1990, the government established the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), a non-autonomous agency to process applications from prospective HEIs and to advise the Minister on HE matters. The increase in HEIs from 1 (one) in 1990 to fourteen (14) (nine public and five private) between 1999 and 2005 happened at a time where resources were dwindling resulting in fear of a possible decline in standards. In order to redress the situation, in 2006, a more robust semi-autonomous body with an expanded quality assurance mandate, the Zimbabwe Council for higher education (ZIMCHE) replaced the NCHE. ZIMCHE is the sole and competent agency charged with the responsibility to monitor and evaluate the performance of HEIs through registration, accreditation and academic audits; harmonisation of quality assurance systems and procedures, quality promotion as well as advisory services. The functions of ZIMCHE as set out in the ZIMCHE Act as listed below:

Functions of ZIMCHE

1. To advise the Minister on all higher and tertiary education matters.
2. To develop and recommend policy on higher and tertiary education (HTEI) including the establishment of public institutions and advise the Minister accordingly;
3. To accredit institutions of higher and tertiary education;
4. To design and recommend an institutional quality assurance system for higher and tertiary education, that is a system whereby the courses, programmes and degrees offered by institutions are evaluated on a regular and objective basis, and to recommend to the Minister institutional quality assurance standards for:
 - i) The establishment, standardisation and accreditation of institutions of higher and tertiary education including standards of the physical plant and equipment;
 - ii) The preparation and amendment of university charters and statutes;
 - iii) The development of curricula;
 - iv) The standards of libraries;
 - v) The safety standards of laboratories and workshops;
 - vi) Student transfer between programmes and institutions of higher and tertiary education
5. To advise on the shape and size of the higher and tertiary education system;
6. To advise on the budgeting and funding arrangements for higher and tertiary education for public institutions;
7. To assist institutions of higher and tertiary education in training of high calibre staff;
8. To promote equity in access to higher and tertiary education through the provision of student assistance programmes;
9. To promote international cooperation and facilitate exchanges in higher and tertiary education;
10. To perform any other function that the Minister may deem necessary.
11. To regulate institutions of higher and tertiary and tertiary education;
12. To coordinate the development of higher and tertiary and tertiary education and promote higher and tertiary education science and technology development;
13. To co-ordinate academic programmes to ensure minimum body of knowledge that harmonises academic programmes to facilitate student credit transfer and staff mobility;

14. To ensure all institutions of higher and tertiary education foster the advancement of Zimbabwe's culture and heritage, develop and train high end skills to promote research, innovation technological solutions and business enterprise;
15. To ensure the achievement of international best practise for standards for academic programmes of study and the equating of degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded by different state and non-state institutions of higher and tertiary education;
16. To restructure and transform institutions of higher and tertiary education and programmes to be responsive to the human resource, economic and development needs of the society;
17. To design, implement and recommend an institutional quality assurance system for higher and tertiary education;
18. To promote equity in access to higher and tertiary education through the provision of student assistance programmes;
19. To promote international co-operation and facilitate exchanges in higher and education;
20. To assess, accredit and monitor the higher and tertiary qualifications fixed or awarded by every domestic and foreign qualifications awarding or educational quality assurance body whether state or non-state;
21. To develop and maintain the Higher and Tertiary Education Qualifications Database;
22. To develop, administer and oversee the implementation of the Higher and Tertiary Qualifications Framework in accordance with this Act, including the implementation of measures to ensure that the higher and tertiary educational qualifications or standards of competence constituting the Framework are regionally, continentally and internationally equivalent, comparable and transferable;
23. To receive and investigate complaints relating to institutions of higher and tertiary education and take appropriate action;
24. To collect, examine and publish information relating to different institutions of higher and tertiary education;
25. To advise the Minister, either at his or her request or at the Authority's own initiative, on the establishment of a state institution and accreditation of state and non-state institutions of higher and tertiary education;
26. To maintain a database of enrolled students and staff in institutions;
27. To continually promote technical vocational education and training degree and non-degree programmes as an integral function of the higher and tertiary education system;
28. To ensure the development and selection of appropriate curricula for technical vocational education and training
29. To provide for conditions or requirements for the establishment and conduct of teachers' colleges and technical and vocational institutions;
30. To provide for the standard of facilities to be provided by employers for apprenticeship and skilled worker training;
31. To set standards for the certification of skilled worker qualifications and the recognition of qualifications or levels of competence;
32. To provide for the standardization of training programmes and examinations for the purposes of any trade or industry

Quality assurance framework

ZIMCHE gives HEIs that meet the requirements certificates of institutional accreditation and re-accreditation every five years based on institutional assessments and audits. It also conducts evaluations for new programmes prior to approval. This is important in ensuring

relevance and compliance with the set standards of governance, infrastructure, teaching and learning facilities and resources, systems and staff. The standards for academic staff require that a lecturer should possess qualifications that are pitched at least one level higher than the exit level of the programmes (for example, a Masters holder can only teach programmes at Bachelors level) with the minimum lecturer qualification pegged at Masters level. Institutional/programme accreditation is a legal expectation and a quality endorsement symbol that every HEI aspires to get since it ensures public confidence. In addition to the ZIMCHE accreditation, HEIs are free to engage other external (non-Zimbabwean) accreditation agencies as part of their quality management endeavours. In the same vein, ZIMCHE also accredits foreign HEIs, which receive and train students from Zimbabwe.

ZIMCHE's quality assessments are based on self-evaluation reports submitted by HEIs followed by assessment by external peer review teams. Whilst shortcomings may lead to suspension of a programme or withdrawal of the HEI's right to award degrees (de-registration), the academic and institutional audits are in the first instance, improvement-oriented. HEIs are given ample time to rectify the anomalies identified before punitive measures are taken. All HEIs are obliged to establish internal/institutional quality assurance units. This gives ZIMCHE a pivotal role in the HES in that it operates at a macro-level and can add value to the system. Furthermore, it represents Zimbabwe in regional and international quality assurance networks and fora.

Various quality assurance standards and criteria are specified by ZIMCHE. In addition to the said standards, approval of new programmes is done in line with the HEI's mandate, adherence to the national critical skills requirements, needs analysis and benchmarking evidence. ZIMCHE carries out the evaluation using expertise from peer reviewers and relevant professional bodies. The standards are listed below and the document is attached.

1. Strategic Statements of the HEI
2. Governance & Leadership
3. Integrity
4. Planning
5. Internal & External Audit, Financial Reporting & Risk Management
6. Infrastructure, ICT & Library Resources
7. Research, Consultancy & Extension
8. HEI Self-Assessment & Evaluation
9. Student Support & Development
10. Professional Staff
11. Mode of Delivery
12. Assessment of Student Learning
13. Student Admissions & Retention
14. Academic Programmes
15. Programme Design & Admin

Harmonisation of higher Education

Until recently, the Zimbabwean higher education was characterised by very unique but disparate systems, processes and procedures, a situation that presented challenges in establishing comparability and compatibility of programmes among the local universities which also impacted its international attractiveness. ZIMCHE undertook a harmonisation of HE project in order to come up with a common QA system that addresses the disparities in the HE sector and enhances mobility nationally and internationally amongst other objectives. ZIMCHE's efforts towards harmonising the HE sector included working with the ministry,

HEIs and other stakeholders on several initiatives, including development and implementation of:

- A common credit accumulation and transfer system,
- Minimum bodies of knowledge for study programmes,
- Peer Review guidelines,
- Quality assurance standards e.g. For research, governance etc
- Framework for academic staff appointment, grading and promotion
- Framework for institution-industry collaboration
- Higher education management information system
- National Qualifications framework
- Legal frameworks
- Framework for internationalisation of higher and tertiary education (IHE)

As an example, the next section will focus on the development of a framework for IHE aimed at creating value in the HE sector. In doing this, the authors are fully cognisant of the complementarity of the various aspects of harmonisation.

Internationalisation of HE

The education system in Zimbabwe is arguably among the strongest in Africa with Zimbabwe's graduates being found to be highly competitive on the global labour market (UNICEF, 2011; Tevera and Crush, 2011). Since attaining its independence in 1980 and building on a colonial legacy of best practice, Zimbabwe has sought to strengthen and sustain its quality education delivery in diverse ways. These include, widening participation to make higher education accessible to all its populace and empowering ZIMCHE to lead quality delivery through harmonisation efforts and a strict regime of monitoring, supporting and overseeing quality delivery of all its HEIs. In its quest to ensure sustainable growth of HEIs therefore ZIMCHE recently led a systematic and rigorous process of the internationalisation of higher education which culminated in the development of a national IHE policy framework for Zimbabwe which guides all HEIs in formulating their own IHE policies, strategies and agendas. The process was a collaboration involving ZIMCHE and its external partner, the University of Nottingham; all HEIs; the Ministry of Higher Education; and related Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Tourism.

IHE was seen as imperative for the Zimbabwe education system to maintain its competitiveness on the global market and foster sustainable national economic development. In this regard the role of higher education in national development has been underscored. This can be achieved through the production of graduates that have a broader worldview, who are creative and innovative and are able to develop themselves and contribute to the development of their societies. To achieve this the policy framework was developed around the following seven outcomes of IHE revealed by the process:

- increase in the presence of international students and staff;
- active memoranda of understandings (research, teaching, and exchanges);
- increased impact of research and publications;
- increased innovations and patents;
- increased harmonized programmes;
- relevant curricula and favourable international rankings; and
- institutional capability, culture and awareness

The framework clearly articulates policy goals in relation to Zimbabwe's transformative agenda of an industrialised and modernised nation and the contribution of the higher education sector to that agenda. The national policy framework enables HEIs to adopt a unified approach to tackle common IHE challenges such as restrictive immigration requirements, language barriers and entry requirement disparities in relation to the rest of the region, while maintaining their uniqueness. It also ensures that HEIs' IHE initiatives and activities continue to receive the support of the Ministry and ZIMCHE through funding and capacity building activities.

Networking

In an effort to promote and strengthen QA systems in Southern Africa and in keeping with the encouragement from AfriQAN to establish sub-regional QA networks, ZIMCHE convened the first ever sub-regional (Southern Africa) conference on QA in Higher Education in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe in July 2014. ZIMCHE took its mandate from the fact that it represents the Southern Africa region in the Executive Board of AfriQAN. Participants were drawn from Southern Africa, AfriQAN and relevant facilitators were invited from international QA organisations. The conference delegates resolved to establish a QA network for Southern Africa which would work in close collaboration with AfriQAN in expediting linkages among members. This would enable sub-regional harmonisation and the enhancement of quality in higher education through the sharing and exchange of information on approaches, best practices, relevant experiences and strategies. It was further agreed that annual conferences on QA on higher education will be organised wherein countries would rotate the hosting. A task team led by the Chief Executive Officer of ZIMCHE, was appointed to draft a constitution for the network. The task team which comprised of Heads of national QA agencies from Zimbabwe; Botswana, South Africa, Lesotho and Namibia met in Windhoek, Namibia from 7 to 9 December 2014. The team deliberated on the constitution of the proposed Southern African Quality Assurance Network (SAQAN) which had been drafted by the NCHE of Namibia through assistance from an advocate that they had hired. The constitution of SAQAN was approved and officially launched by the Assistant Minister of Education in Botswana during the 2nd Sub-Regional Conference on QA in Higher Education in Southern Africa that took place in Gaborone, Botswana in October 2015.

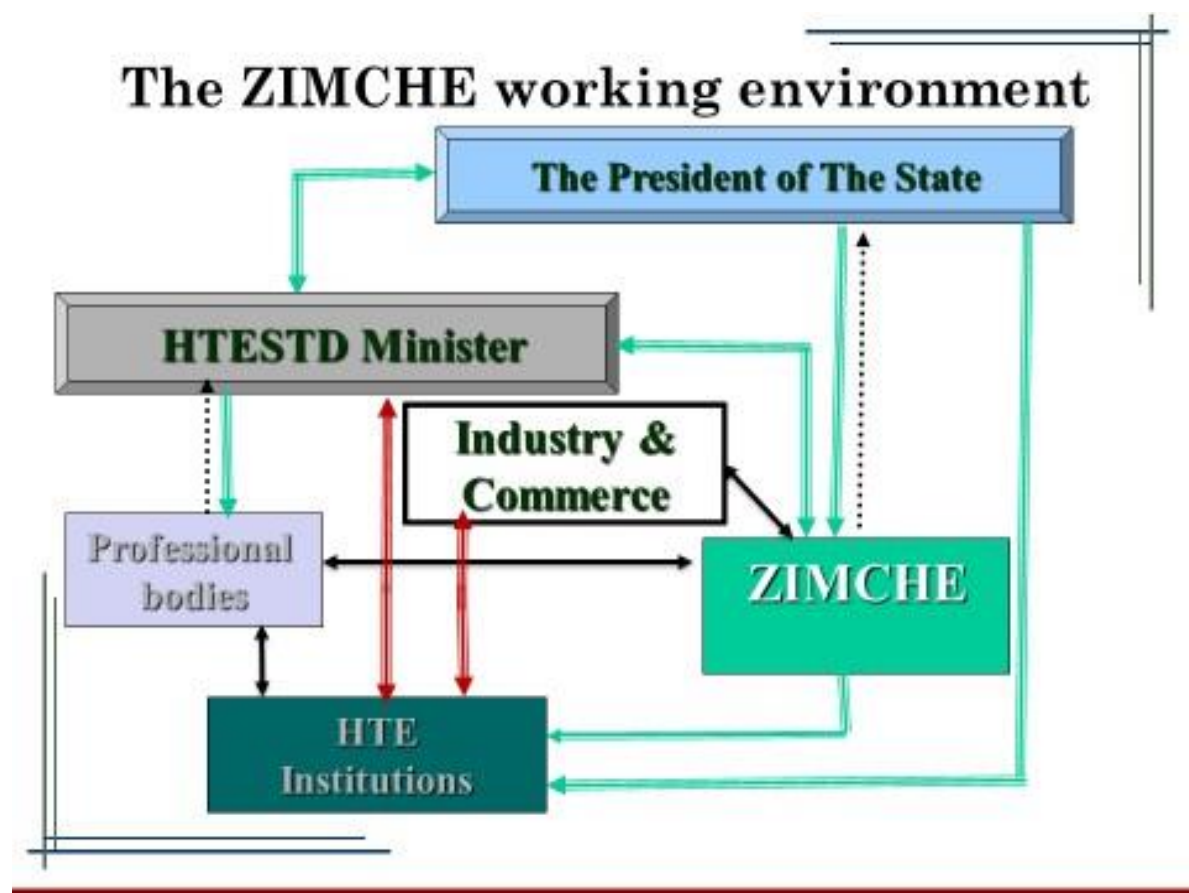
In keeping with its regional leadership ZIMCHE lead a SADC team in harmonising credit accumulation and transfer systems through the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAAQA) Initiative, funded by the European Union in partnership with the African Union.

Promoting research and scholarship

Until recently, ZIMCHE was responsible for organising the Research and Intellectual Expo (RIE) annually. RIE provides a platform for showcasing the best research and intellectual work by Zimbabweans both at home and in the Diaspora as an attempt to exhibit how investment in higher and tertiary education is benefiting the country. The event is aimed at harnessing leading innovations, research and intellectual output from Zimbabweans and utilising these to spur development of the country. Cognisant of the realisation that no nation can develop without exploiting the knowhow and wisdom inherent in its citizens, ZIMCHE aimed to pool and direct outstanding intellectual work, creativity and research outputs to develop Zimbabwe and to enhance the country's competitiveness. Each year, RIE provides researchers with an opportunity to present select, peer reviewed research as well as artefacts and other creative works. From the presented papers, a selection of the best papers is made and these are then published in the Journal of Zimbabwe Studies: Arts, Humanities and

Education or the Journal of Zimbabwe Studies: Science, Technology and Health depending on the discipline. The Expo also provides a platform for the exhibition of prototype products developed by Zimbabwe's science, technology and innovation specialists, as Research in Higher Education Journal Quality assurance in higher, page 6 well as an opportunity for individuals and institutions to showcase their activities and achievements.

Figure 1 illustrates the Organisational chart for ZIMCHE's working environment. In order to fulfil its mandate, ZIMCHE works closely with the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education and Higher, HEIs and other key stakeholders. ZIMCHE advises the Minister who in turn advises the President about all issues pertaining to higher education. ZIMCHE interacts with all the stakeholders of higher and tertiary education in a cordial manner.



Chapter 5. Higher Education Quality Assurance Activities of the Agency

Describe the external quality assurance activities undertaken by the agency. Provide details on the processes and methodologies applied and an account of the selection process, role and training of the external experts.

ZIMCHE is the sole and competent agency charged with the responsibility to monitor and evaluate the performance of HEIs through a QA framework that harmonises QA systems and procedures, quality promotion as well as advisory services. ZIMCHE's quality assessments are based on self-evaluation reports submitted by HEIs followed by assessment by external peer review teams. Whilst shortcomings may lead to rejection of the application to introduce a new programme, suspension of a programme or withdrawal of the HEI's right to award degrees (de-registration), the academic and institutional audits are in the first instance, improvement-oriented. HEIs are given ample time to rectify the anomalies identified before punitive measures are taken.

In order to guarantee and sustain quality in university education the ZIMCHE carries out registration, compliance monitoring, audits and accreditation of all HEIs and their programmes/courses. In addition, ZIMCHE assesses foreign qualification for authenticity and comparison with local qualifications. Various QA standards and criteria are specified by ZIMCHE including minimum bodies of knowledge (MBK) for each study programme within the Zimbabwe National Qualifications Framework. In addition to the said standards, approval of new programmes is done in line with the HEI's mandate, adherence to the national critical skills requirements, needs analysis and benchmarking evidence. HEIs are free to engage other external (non-Zimbabwean) accreditation agencies as part of their quality management endeavours. In the same vein, ZIMCHE also accredits foreign HEIs, which receive and train students from Zimbabwe.

Registration of Degree Awarding Institutions

ZIMCHE has since its inception received numerous applications to register institutions and has so far approved the registration of four new state universities and six new private universities. An institution is initially awarded a provisional registration certificate after being found to meet a given criteria. In order to ensure that no local institution operates outside the law and offer unaccredited degrees to unsuspecting Zimbabweans, ZIMCHE carries out compliance monitoring without prior notification. The procedure is well articulated in the attached SOPs.

Accreditation of Institutions and their Programmes/Courses

All HEIs, state and private, have to be accredited by ZIMCHE. There are two types of accreditation, institutional and programme accreditation. ZIMCHE issues an accreditation certificate to an institution has achieved the minimum standards as shown in the agreed benchmarks. These include issues concerning the availability of suitable infrastructure, equipment and other resources, quality assurance systems and procedures as well as the execution of academic pillars of teaching, research and community engagement.

ZIMCHE has clear guidelines and standards for accreditation of programmes which guide institutions on how to prepare for accreditation starting with the need to compile a self-evaluation report. Institutions are provided with necessary guidance on how to prepare for a review in general and a site visit in particular. They are given a comprehensive set of site visit guidelines. They are guided on how to prepare and present relevant documentation as

evidence of points made in the self-evaluation report. The self-evaluation report together with key programme documents from the institution being reviewed are used as a basis for the site visit.

The accreditation visit involved a team of at least three peer reviewers going through the self-evaluation report together with key documentation, followed by a site visit where meetings are held with different stakeholders such as management, teaching staff, students, alumni, and support staff among others. Once the site visit has been completed the reviewers compile a report which is shared with the institution for them to correct factual errors. The report is then finalised and presented to HEQAC after which it is tabled before Council. The minimum programme accreditation standards also include a decision framework permitting rejection, conditional accreditation and full accreditation.

Following the harmonisation of credit systems and the introduction of the Zimbabwe Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (ZIMCATS) in 2016, all HEIs migrated to the notional hour credit system in the design and management of curricula. The use of ZIMCATS and MBKs allows for horizontal and vertical articulation as well as intra- and inter- learner mobility within the national qualifications framework. Generally, 120 credits represent the minimum volume of learning required to achieve the specified learning outcomes in each academic year.

Academic and Institutional Audits

ZIMCHE carries out audits in HEIs as a way of verifying situations prevailing in these institutions. In carrying out these audits ZIMCHE gives special attention to:

- Staff levels in institutions;
- Qualifications of staff teaching at various levels;
- Enrolment statistics per programme;
- Facilities available for use by students including lecture rooms, library facilities, hostels and recreational facilities; and
- Special facilities and equipment that promote academic excellence.

The verification is done by using audits instruments and making audits visits. Well trained peer reviewers make up audits teams and where it is deemed necessary, foreign external reviewers are engaged. ZIMCHE has also encouraged universities to create Institutional Quality Assurance Units which carry out internal audits for the purpose of guaranteeing quality in their operations.

Qualification assessment

The SOP document attached details the process that pertains to the assessment of qualifications. The process starts with the applicant and goes through a rigorous and credible vetting process until finalized.

Chapter 6. SWOT Analysis

Strengths - Established through an Act of Parliament, Chapter 25:27, which prescribes its mandate. - Board (Council) is in place, giving the required advice and policy direction. - Council membership is well-balanced with requisite skills, diverse competences and occupational backgrounds. - Four fifths (4/5) of Secretariat staff posts are filled (31 out of 40 posts) - There is Ministry support that enables ZIMCHE to function. - Government provides financial support to ZIMCHE. - Regional & international membership - ZIMCHE enjoys the mandate of being the only regulator of higher and tertiary education quality assurance. - Strong QA framework, including registration, accreditation & audit standards; - Database of professionals who may be invited to constitute review panels depending on the relevance of their qualifications and experience.	Weaknesses - Dependent on government finances - No permanent home renting current premises - Inadequate office space - Post holders below establishment 30/40}) Some units (ICT, IPR, IQAA) are made up of one individual each - Currently no substantive head of HR, Finance & Administration. - The organogram does not fully address the HR needs, e.g. Legal Officer, Qualifications Assessment and Compliance Officer, Resource Mobilisation Officer, Training Officer, Admin Assistant, Statistician, Central Records Management, etc. - Inadequate vehicles - Insufficient budget allocation - Infrastructure: ICT - equipment not really up to expected level
Opportunities - Ability to improve the quality of higher education given the cooperation of stakeholders e.g. universities & industry - Economic growth can be achieved through promotion of innovation and industrialisation in universities - Leveraging on existing SADC protocols to establish linkages with sister quality assurance agencies e.g. CHE, SA and NCHE of Namibia and NCHE Lesotho - Collaboration with other local regulators and professional bodies in fulfilling its mandate e.g. Public Accountants and Auditors Board, Council of Engineers, Law Society of Zimbabwe, Standards Association of Zimbabwe, Medical and Dental Practitioner's Council, etc. - Fundraising may be achieved through collaboration with other institutions. - ZIMCHE enjoys support (financially and politically) from the government.	Threats - Inadequate funding due to current economic environment and other factors. - Government financial support may not be sustainable. - ZIMCHE may be susceptible to changing priorities due to policy changes. - The autonomy of ZIMCHE is limited by its founding act. - Lack of coordination between ZIMCHE and similar organisations such as HEXCO and ZIMSEC. - There are misconceptions about the role of ZIMCHE within the Higher and Tertiary Education sector. viii. Emerging diseases have a negative impact on human resources and students

Chapter 7. Internal quality assurance procedures

ZIMCHE is made up of 21 Council members appointed by the Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education on a three-year term. Three of the members are drawn from reputable international HE and QA concerns. Members are selected in such a way as to ensure that the functions of Council are executed in accordance to high standards of professionalism and in line with best practices. Accordingly, only highly experienced experts in the field of HE, who are willing and able to guide and offer advice pertaining to HE and QA issues, can sit in Council. Council is the governing authority, it meets at least four times a year and its key responsibility is to provide direction on policy matters (ZIMCHE Act, 2006). Concerns have been raised to the effect that the inclusion of sitting VCs in Council present issues of conflict of interest. On the other hand, it has been argued that to exclude VCs will be folly since these are the people who understand fully what takes place in universities. A compromise has been to include retired VCs who happen to be very few and far between.

Council executes its functions through six specialist Committees namely: Executive Committee; Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee; Higher Education Funding and Financing Committee; Human Resource Committee; Audit and Risk Committee and Shape and Size Committee. These Committees, occasionally with the help of experts, research, deliberate and make recommendations to Council on specific issues.

The day-to-day tasks of the Council are performed by the Secretariat, which has a current establishment of 41 staff members and is headed by the Chief Executive Officer. The Secretariat operates through three directorates consisting of two directorates dedicated to discharging the core business of Council and one support directorate. The core directorates are Registration and Accreditation and Academic and Institutional Audits whilst the support directorate is that of Human Resources, Administration and Finance. Top management posts are offered on a three to five year contractual basis depending on level of post. Only candidates that are appropriately qualified and experienced in university management are recruited for these posts. Middle management and support staff are also recruited competitively and are given permanent.

ZIMCHE has established an Internal and Quality Assurance Audit function. In addition, the Auditor General has an annual obligation to audit ZIMCHE whilst MHTSTD and ZIMDEF also audit ZIMCHE from time to time. The highest authority, the Government of Zimbabwe governs ZIMCHE through the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology, which can invite ZIMCHE to stand before it as and when there are issues of concern. ZIMCHE's governance structure and the attendant controls by assurance providers work together to present an effective combined assurance outcome as articulated in the King III Report. Combined assurance capitalises on the use of the different skills of the individual assurance providers to mitigate the organisation's risk exposure. It breaks down the silo mentality and reinforces teamwork, efficiency and joint accountability.

ZIMCHE has developed a robust system when formulating and/or adopting internal policies or guidelines for the purposes of decision-making guidance to inform rational outcomes. The procedure starts with the directorate or unit when formulating a policy, the document is then subjected to directorate/unit quality assurance system first, then senior management value add at the second level and executive management is the third and last level at secretariat level. The policies will then be interrogated by the relevant Council committee before approval by full Council.

Chapter 8.0 Alignment of [agency] with the African Standards and Guidelines Part B

81 Standard 1. Objectives of External Quality Assurance and Consideration for Internal Quality Assurance Standard

External quality assurance shall ensure that the higher education institution has clearly articulated vision and mission statements, and it shall help the institution ensure the effectiveness of its internal QA mechanisms, providing an additional instrument for assessing institutional quality

Guidelines

EQA is based on the institution's responsibility for the quality of their academic programmes and other provisions and, therefore, it is important that external quality assurance recognises and supports the institutional responsibility for its QA. EQA complements an effective IQA system and, therefore, assists the higher education institution to:

- a) *Appreciate the link between IQA and EQA*
ZIMCHE emphasises the notion that external and internal quality assurance complement each other in that HEIs *ensure* quality whilst ZIMCHE *assures* quality. To this end, quality at HEI level is the primary responsibility of HEI using ZIMCHE standards and guidelines. Good governance, quality systems, programme design, strategic plans, student support etc. form part of the said standards. ZIMCHE encourages HEIs to have institutional QA units (IQAUs) that are responsible for promoting quality. The IQA staff are thoroughly trained and constantly kept abreast with ZIMCHE guidelines hence the nickname 'local ZIMCHE.' ZIMCHE regularly conducts familiarisation and capacity building sessions with HEIs to ensure that they are always on the same page.
- b) *Adhere to established QA principles, standards and guidelines in the HE sector*
Activities inclusive of capacity building, accreditation, registration, compliance visits, academic and institutional audits enable ZIMCHE to monitor adherence to standards. Programmes that have fail to meet agreed minimum standards during accreditation are suspended and due advice is given to the affected institutions on how to address the shortcomings. The government takes heed of advice given to it by ZIMCHE without exhibiting any favouritism to public institutions. As a result, the higher education system in Zimbabwe is poised for positive growth and development.
- c) *Develop and entrench an institutional quality culture by establishing mechanisms for continuous quality improvement/enhancement*
The workshops and platforms created by ZIMCHE for dialogue and engagement creates a sense of urgency for continuous quality improvement. The process of accreditation includes availing self-assessment documents to peer reviewers who assess the programmes or institutions. The comments they make are referred to the institutions which deliberates on the comments and produces a university response to the comments which assists in improvement in areas noted as requiring improvement.
- d) *Provide a basis to benchmark inputs, processes and outputs with other HEIs nationally, regionally and internationally*

In all its activities, ZIMCHE benchmarks with the best institutions in the world. When developing academic programmes institutions are expected to benchmark their programmes internationally as well as ensuring national relevance. At the same time Peer Reviewers bring with them diverse experiences.

e) *Determine the institution's capacity to offer academic programmes*

The process of institutional and programme accreditation is designed in such a way that the curriculum, physical infrastructure, laboratory and workshop equipment as well as adequacy and appropriateness of personnel to run the programme are thoroughly scrutinised at various levels by the HEI itself; the ZIMCHE Secretariat, Peer Reviewers, the Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee and finally by the full Council.

f) *Assess institutional compliance with legal and other requirements*

During registration, institutional accreditation and audit exercises ZIMCHE through its instruments check for compliance with the legal mandates and the ZIMCHE standards.

g) *Provide independent evidentiary information to its stakeholders, the general public and international community that it is offering quality higher education*

ZIMCHE has a website and uploads information on it periodically for consumption by members of the public. The website presents information on the governance structures of ZIMCHE, reports and other important documents, information on HEIs and events. Council publishes information on suspended programmes or closed HEIs in the media. Its officials also provide information to the public through different media such as television, radio and news paper articles whenever necessary. Reporting to the public is always balanced with protecting the institutions by refraining from providing finer details contained in review reports. However, the importance of ensuring that members of the public are given sufficient information about programmes so that they can make informed decisions is not taken lightly. Annual reports of ZIMCHE are also made available to key stakeholders such as the Ministry in electronic and hard copies. ZIMCHE also communicates via social media use such as Face book, Twitter and others due limited human resources.

h) *Be recognised and accepted nationally, regionally, continentally and internationally*

ZIMCHE is recognized at all the stated levels. It is a member of the regional and continental quality assurance bodies. In fact it is ZIMCHE that was instrumental in the establishment of the regional quality assurance body, the SAQAN.

Standard 2. Designing External Quality Assurance Mechanisms Fit-for-Purpose

Standard

Standards, guidelines and processes for external quality assurance shall be designed to be fit for purpose, defined to achieve the intended aims and objectives of EQA, and to strengthen IQA systems at institutions.

Guidelines

It is necessary that standards, guidelines, and processes developed and implemented by QAAs and the institutions are created in consultation with stakeholders in order to address all academic activities of the HE system and for acceptability. The standards include:

- a) Standards and guidelines for periodic / cyclical programme accreditation /evaluation / assessment / audit; and/or
- b) Standards and guidelines for periodic / cyclical institutional accreditation /evaluation / assessment / audit.

The ZIMCHE standards and the standard operating procedures for institutional and programme accreditation that speak to this standard are attached. It is important to note that the standards and instruments were not imposed on institutions but were developed in partnership with all HEIs, experts and HE stakeholders. The same standards and instruments were benchmarked with those of other countries and through review of drafts with experts in other countries. For example, Council and Secretariat teams went on study visits to sister QA Agencies in Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania. In addition, Secretariat staff were seconded to South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Singapore.

The relationship between ZIMCHE and HEIs is generally good, with one or two challenges that have been experienced but the situation has greatly improved. At the beginning, a few institutions did not fully understand the role of ZIMCHE and its approach and felt that ZIMCHE was a monster whose existence is solely to close institutions down or impose itself on the institutions and take away their academic freedom. ZIMCHE has since engaged with the concerned institutions to clear the misunderstandings. ZIMCHE strives to foster development of mutual respect in its relationship with the institutions.

When ZIMCHE started its operations, the Secretariat visited all the institutions and met with their management teams. The main purpose of the familiarisation visits was to explain the ZIMCHE mandate and begin the process of interactions with the institutions and to explain to them the approach that ZIMCHE would use. One of the messages conveyed during these meetings was that the responsibility of provision of HE lies with the institutions. They were also informed that ZIMCHE would adopt a promotional and developmental approach where it would assist them through capacity building since this was the first time quality would be assured by an external quality assurance agency. ZIMCHE continues to extend these visits to newly established HEIs. ZIMCHE also holds workshops and meetings with Vice Chancellors and HEI staff to discuss strategic issues affecting their work. At the operational level regular meetings are held with quality assurance coordinators and with officials responsible for institutional data. Special meetings are also held with individual heads when issues emerge that need to be clarified, communicated or discussed.

ZIMCHE has contributed a great deal towards capacity building of HEIs through many training workshops mostly on quality assurance and HE issues. HEIs have been capacitated through a series of training workshops on how to develop quality assurance policies, programme development and accreditation, governance, internationalisation, credit accumulation and transfer, academic ceremonies management and many others focused on how to improve standards of delivery.

Standard 3. Implementation Processes of External Quality Assurance

Standard

The standards, processes, and procedures for EQA shall be pre-defined, reliable, published, and consistently implemented for purposes of accountability.

Guidelines

External quality assurance is carried out professionally, consistently and transparently to ensure that it is acceptable to the higher education institution. EQA is carried out on the basis of the self-assessment prepared by the institution. The processes for EQA include the following activities:

- a) Self-assessment by the institution and production of the SAR/SER;
- b) External assessment of the institution through the SAR/SER, site visit to the institution and interviews with stakeholders of the institution, and documentary evidence to support institutional claims;
- c) Oral report to the management of the institution before the review panel leaves the institution;
- d) Preliminary report provided to the institution before the final report is produced;
- e) Final report of the external review; and
- f) Follow-up activity to ensure that recommendations raised in the final report are addressed

ZIMCHE quality assurance processes are very robust and thorough. Accreditation standards are published and are disseminated to HEIs and their IQAUs (See attached standards and standard operating procedures).. HEIs compile self-evaluation reports and submit relevant documentation to ZIMCHE before site visits. Site visit teams also interact with students, alumni, staff and other stakeholders to gather more information. Peer Reviewers who are knowledgeable and experienced in the specific areas being considered also inform accreditation decisions. Relevant professional bodies and other relevant authorities are also consulted.

Standard 4. Independence of Evaluation

Standard

EQA shall be carried out by panels of external experts drawn from a wide range of expertise and experience.

Guidelines

The principle of best practices of external quality assurance is based on the consistent use of a wide range of expertise and experiences:

- a) *Experts are drawn from academics, employers or professional practitioners, and students*

ZIMCHE is consistent in the use of a wide range of expertise and experience drawn from senior academics and professional practitioners from HEIs, Industry and Commerce, Government as well as from relevant Professional bodies/Councils e.g. the Medical and Dental Practitioners Council, the allied Health and Practitioners Council, the Council of Pharmacists, the Social Workers Council, the Nurses Council, the Optometrist Association, the Association of Nutritionists. Engineering Council

etc. Peer reviewers Currently, alumni and students are not used as Peer Reviewers but rather as important informants on what is occurring in HEIs.

- b) To ensure professionalism, consistency and transparency of output of experts, it is necessary that they:
- i. Are carefully selected,
 - ii. Have appropriate skills and are competent to perform tasks assigned to them,
 - iii. Are adequately inducted into EQA principles and procedures before undertaking the external review,
 - iv. Are independent in their judgements about the quality of the programme or institutions,
 - v. Have no conflict of interest with the institution or programme they are evaluating, and
 - vi. Sign a Declaration of Independence and No Conflict of Interest Form

Care is taken to select Peer Reviewers who meet the criteria set by Council which relates to the appropriateness of their qualifications, experience and publications for the task at hand. Peer Review workshops are held to induct prospective Peer Reviewers. Together with experts in QA and a consultant from AfriQAN, ZIMCHE developed a comprehensive Peer Review Manual for use by experts. In addition, ZIMCHE ensures that the QA activities commence with a session where the Peer Reviewers receive orientation on the work at hand. A database of Peer Reviewers is kept by ZIMCHE and any expert showing errant behaviour, incompetence or lack of adherence to deadlines is blacklisted.

ZIMCHE does not influence the judgements made by assessors hence their judgements are truly independent. However, to avoid situations where incompetent assessor fail to articulation issues or to write the report, ZIMCHE makes use of at least three assessors.

Some HEIs have expressed the concern that using members of sister institutions as peer reviewers represents a possible conflict of interest in cases where the institution intends to offer a similar programmes. Whilst these allegations are indeed possible and have been proven in few cases, this is often neutralised by the presence of other assessors from different institutions. In many cases, experts do declare their interest and request to be excluded on review missions. Conflict of Interest Forms are currently restricted to Council members but not to experts.

- c) *In the case of possible conflicts of interest, the institution is given the opportunity to object to any member of the proposed review panel*

Although there is no clear policy to cover such an eventuality, HEIs are not prohibited from doing so. Council takes the issue of experts seriously and demands to know the names of all experts in accompanying reports.

- d) *Involvement of international experts is considered a good practice in EQA*

Due to financial constraints and the preponderance of local experts, ZIMCHE restricts itself to use of local experts for site visits. However, for programme reviews that are done electronically and whenever local experts are unavailable, ZIMCHE engages international academics and foreign experts.

Standard 5. Decision and Reporting of External Quality Assurance Outcomes

Standard Reports and decisions made as a result of external quality assurance shall be clear, based on published standards, processes and procedures, and made accessible, for purposes of accountability.

Guidelines

The decisions of external quality assurance have a significant impact on institutions and programmes that are evaluated, assessed or judged. It is critical that: External quality assessment decisions are published without undermining the integrity of the review process; -

- a) The EQA reports are the basis for follow-up actions, hence they are clear, precise and include:
 - i. Purpose of the review,
 - ii. Context description (of higher education institution),
 - iii. Description of procedures, including experts involved,
 - iv. Evidence, analysis and findings,
 - v. Commendations/examples of good practice of the institution,
 - vi. Conclusions,
 - vii. Recommendations for follow-up actions;
- b) The institution is given an opportunity to point out factual errors to ensure the accuracy of the report;
- c) The institution is the first to receive the EQA report in the interest of transparency and fairness, prior to distribution to other parties;
- d) The decisions taken by the responsible body are not subject to external influences; The decisions are in a format that has been made known to the institution concerned (for example, commendations, recommendations, and formal decisions).

ZIMCHE is independent in its quality assurance processes. It has a policy on conflict of interest which is implemented consistently in Council meetings. If a potential member of a review panel is conflicted, they would not be engaged. For example, when programmes of an institutions are reviewed academics from within cannot be engaged. Council and HEQAC have some members who are employees of some institutions. When reports on programmes offered by their institutions are discussed, such members recuse themselves.

There is consistency in the processes and the manner in which instruments are applied and institutions approached. The reporting template that is used is very comprehensive and it is the same for all programmes that are reviewed. This ensures consistency even when there are different teams of reviewers. ZIMCHE has confidence in the recommendations that its expert peer reviewers make following robust discussions. At times however, HEIs do not always agree with some recommendations. In such situations the Secretariat looks for additional opinion from other experts. At times HEQAC invites the concerned institutions to make its representations which might affect a decision directly to it.

Standard 6. Periodic Review of Institutions and Programmes

Standard External quality assurance of institutions and programmes shall be undertaken on a cyclical basis.

Guidelines

The length of the review cycle is clearly defined and published:

- a) For academic programmes, the review cycle is consistent with the duration of the programme, or it reflects the defined validity of the accreditation period;
 - b) Depending on the context of the QA system, for institutions, the cyclical institutional review is carried out preferably every five years; and
 - c) Every cyclical review results in a report of general findings of the review.
-

Institutions and programmes are accredited every five years. The institutional accreditation process involves visiting institutions and carry out a thorough assessment of the following aspects of the institution:

- Governance structure
- Academic management structures and systems
- Qualifications of key posts holders
- Facilities available
- Student enrolment processes and statistics
- Staff recruitment and promotion policies
- Student Welfare policy
- Library facilities and Internet provision

Programme accreditation involves thorough assessment of the following aspects:

- Duration of the programme
- Enrolment statistics
- Funding for the programme
- Infrastructure for academic use
- Library provisions
- ICT facilities
- Special facilities for the programme e.g. laboratories, workshops etc.
- Programme administration personnel and
- Staff to teach on the programme

The functions described above are supported by the use of Peer Reviewers who are specialists in the aspects that are emphasised during accreditation. The functions attain their objectives from the use of accreditation instruments that are approved by Council. These instruments are also regularly reviewed to make them relevant. The standard operating procedure for the programme accreditation require that the process be completed within 6 months. All things being equal, the 6 months' deadline is met by the agency.

Audit visits are carried out regularly to ensure that institutions and programmes are up to date with changing performance expectations of stakeholders. The audit visits target aspects that have already been discussed under institutions and programme accreditation. This is done by having targeted audits under the following headings:

- Institutional mandates and audit

- Academic Staff audit
- Academic Programmes audit
- Facilities Audit
- Student Welfare survey

These functions are carried out with assistance of Peer Reviewers who are specialists in the aspects requiring assessment and scrutiny. Objectivity is assured by use of instruments and discussion guides when student welfare surveys are being carried out.

Ideally, an audit report should be approved by the agency within 3 months. However, delays by institutions in confirming the audit findings may delay the approval of the report.

Standard 7. Complaints and Appeals

Standard The procedure for lodging complaints and appeals shall be clearly defined and communicated to the institution concerned.

Guidelines

In order to safeguard the rights of the institution and ensure fairness in the decision making process, it is important that the institution has access to the processes that allow it to raise issues of concern with the agencies if it can demonstrate that the outcome of the external review is not based on sound evidence. It is, therefore, critical that:

- a) There is an established appeals system;
- b) The institution is allowed to raise issues of concern consistent with the appeals system;
- c) There is a procedure for addressing complaints raised by the general public;
- d) There are clearly defined complaints and appeals processes and procedures, which are consistently applied; and
- e) Appeals and complaints are handled professionally, within an agreed time periods

ZIMCHE has various systems of appeal within directorates. Institutions and individuals may lodge complaints or appeal through the office of the CEO or relevant directorate. Complaints and appeals can either be a formally written letter, email or informal or formal visits to ZIMCHE offices by individuals and institutions.

Institutions are allowed to raise issues of concern in any reports or decisions made by ZIMCHE. Institutions are encouraged to engage ZIMCHE if they do not agree with decisions made in their draft report before the final report is submitted to council for approval. ZIMCHE also have social forums which the public can use to raise complaints these include the website, facebook and Twitter.

Depending on the nature of complaints and appeals ZIMCHE takes due process in addressing all complaints and appeals. Professional attention and thoroughness is done to address issues raised. However there is no a clearly laid complains and appeals procedures manual for the organisation.

Part C:

Standard 1. Legal Status

Standard

The QAA shall be an autonomous legal entity with clearly defined mandate, scope and powers. It will be recognised as a quality assurance agency at a national/regional level.

Guidelines

When external quality assurance is carried out for regulatory purposes, institutions have the security that the outcomes of the process are accepted within the higher education system, the stakeholders and the public. The QAA is established by a competent authority.

The Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) was established by an act of Parliament, Chapter 25:27, promulgated in 2006 to promote and co-ordinate education provided by higher and tertiary education institutions, and to act as a regulator in the determination and maintenance of quality standards in higher and tertiary education.

Standard 2. Vision and Mission Statement

Standard

The QAA shall have written and published vision and mission statements or objectives taking the higher education context into account.

Guidelines

The vision, mission and objectives show that:

- a) Quality assurance is a major activity of the agency;
- b) There is a systematic approach to achieving the vision, mission and objectives of the QAA;
- c) The objectives are implemented in line with a practical management plan that is linked to the agency's resources; and
- d) The custodianship and oversight of vision and mission are appropriate for the mandate and objectives of the agency.

The vision and mission of ZIMCHE as spelt in its Strategic plan (2017-2022) are shown below:

VISION

An internationally acclaimed quality-assured higher and tertiary education system by 2025.

MISSION

To regulate and engender a culture of self-assessment in higher and tertiary education in order to bring about industrialisation, modernisation, sustainable and equitable socio-economic development.

Standard 3. Governance and management

Standard

The QAA shall have clearly defined structures that ensure sound and ethical governance and management, including good practices of quality assurance that support its mission and legal mandate.

Guidelines

The QAA:

- a) Has qualified and experienced leadership to oversee the development and
- b) management of best practices in quality assurance in higher education;
- c) Has relevant governance bodies, such as the governing board and various
- d) committees, each with a clear mandate, powers, responsibilities and tenure; which are well coordinated to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of its vision, mission and strategic objectives;
- e) Has procedures for the appointment of the governing board and the Chief Executive;
- e) Has policies and procedures for financial and management decisions;
- f) Has clear communication system of its activities for disseminating information for public accountability;
- f) Ensures regular consultation with stakeholders, and follow-up actions on key issues of policy and operations;
- g) Promotes a high degree of institutional integrity and responsiveness in the management of institutional affairs by advocating and demonstrating honesty and non-discrimination in the treatment of its staff and members of the public;
- g) Has effective processes for deterring, detecting and dealing with misconduct by staff; and
- h) Has effective, systematic, timely and fair processes for the investigation of complaints, grievances and appeals by staff.

ZIMCHE is made up of 21 Council members drawn from reputable international HE and QA concerns. These highly experienced experts are leaders who are able to guide and offer advice pertaining to HE and QA issues. Council is the governing authority, it meets at least four times a year and its key responsibility is to provide direction on policy matters. Council executes its functions through six specialist Committees namely: EXCO; HEQAC; HEFFC; HRC; ARC and SSC. These Committees, occasionally with the help of experts, research, deliberate and make recommendations to Council on specific issues.

The Secretariat operates through three directorates and units. ZIMCHE has established an Internal and Quality Assurance Audit function. In addition, the Auditor General has an annual obligation to audit ZIMCHE whilst MoHTE and ZIMDEF also audit ZIMCHE from time to time. The highest authority, the Government of Zimbabwe governs ZIMCHE through the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology, which can invite ZIMCHE to stand before it as and when there are issues of concern.

ZIMCHE has developed a robust system when formulating and/or adopting internal policies or guidelines for the purposes of decision-making guidance to inform rational outcomes. The procedure starts with the directorate or unit when formulating a policy, the document is then subjected to directorate/unit quality assurance system first, then senior management value add at the second level and executive management is the third and last level at secretariat level. The policies will then be interrogated by the relevant Council committee before approval by full Council.

Standard 4. Independence of QAA

Standard

The QAA shall be independent in its operations, outcomes, judgements and decisions.

Guidelines

The QAA makes independent decisions and judgements that are not subject to change by third parties. Independence of an agency includes the following:

- a) Organisational independence demonstrated by official documentation, such as legislative acts or statutes and instruments of governance that stipulate the independence of the agency's work from third parties (e.g. HEIs, governments, other stakeholders);
- b) Operational independence: the definitions and operations of the agency's procedures and methods, nomination and appointment of qualified external experts (including the provision of no objection); and
- c) Independence of formal outcomes: the final decision of quality assurance activities remains the responsibility of the QAA.

The Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) was established by an act of Parliament, Chapter 25:27, promulgated in 2006 to promote and co-ordinate education provided by higher and tertiary education institutions, and to act as a regulator in the determination and maintenance of quality standards in higher and tertiary education.

Standard 5. Policies, Processes and Activities

Standard

The QAA shall undertake its quality assurance activities in accordance with the standards and guidelines articulated in Part B of the ASG-QA.

Guidelines

It is important that HEIs trust QAAs; the agencies are transparent, and describe and publish their objectives and activities, scope of work, expertise; and interaction with HEIs and other stakeholders.

The external quality assurance standards and processes are appropriate for the core activities of an institution or programme. These include:

- a) Teaching and learning, research and community work/engagement;
- b) Resources such as finances, staff, and learning resources;
- c) Specific areas such as levels of achievement, relative benchmarking and types of
- d) measures, and general guidelines; and
- e) Specific learning outcomes.

In order to carry out its core function of external quality assurance, the QAA conducts institutional audits/accreditation and programme accreditation/reviews on a regular basis, and provides in advance the framework to the concerned institution. To ensure transparency, the QAA's review/assessment processes include:

- a) Validation of the institution's self-assessment against the agency's standards and
- b) processes;
- c) Appointment of an external peer review panel comprising subject matter
- d) specialists and experts in higher education QA matters;
- e) Site visit by the review panel and interviews with various staff members and
- f) stakeholders of the institution;

- g) Oral report before the review panel leaves the institution;
- h) Preliminary report presented to the institution for factual corrections;
- i) Final report of external review to the institution; and
- j) Follow-up activity of recommendations raised in the final report.

ZIMCHE's quality assessments are based on self-evaluation reports submitted by HEIs followed by assessment by external peer review teams. Whilst shortcomings may lead to suspension of a programme or withdrawal of the HEI's right to award degrees (de-registration), the academic and institutional audits are in the first instance, improvement-oriented. HEIs are given ample time to rectify the anomalies identified before punitive measures are taken. All HEIs are obliged to establish internal/institutional quality assurance units. This gives ZIMCHE a pivotal role in the HES in that it operates at a macro-level and can add value to the system. Furthermore, it represents Zimbabwe in regional and international quality assurance networks and fora.

Various quality assurance standards and criteria are specified by ZIMCHE. In addition to the said standards, approval of new programmes is done in line with the HEI's mandate, adherence to the national critical skills requirements, needs analysis and benchmarking evidence. ZIMCHE carries out the evaluation using expertise from peer reviewers and relevant professional bodies. The standards are listed below and the document is attached.

1. Strategic Statements of the HEI
2. Governance & Leadership
3. Integrity
4. Planning
5. Internal & External Audit, Financial Reporting & Risk Management
6. Infrastructure, ICT & Library Resources
7. Research, Consultancy & Extension
8. HEI Self-Assessment & Evaluation
9. Student Support & Development
10. Professional Staff
11. Mode of Delivery
12. Assessment of Student Learning
13. Student Admissions & Retention
14. Academic Programmes
15. Programme Design & Admin

ZIMCHE derives its strength from the fact that all programmes, whether local or cross border are subjected to review leading to possible accreditation before they are offered in Zimbabwe.

Standard 6. Internal Quality Assurance Policies, Criteria and Processes

Standard

The QAA shall have in place policies and processes for its own internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of its activities.

Guidelines

The QAA is accountable to its stakeholders and observes high professional standards and integrity by adhering to its guiding and ethical principles, and makes available internal quality assurance policies, standards, processes and procedures on its website. The QAA's decisions are impartial, rigorous, thorough, fair and consistent, even if the judgements are made by different panels. The policies, therefore, ensure:

- a) Objectivity and fairness in all its judgements, decisions and conclusions;
- b) Standards and guidelines for external quality assurance for HEIs are of a general nature, not prescriptive and do not interfere with institutions' autonomy but help to guarantee all stakeholders and the international community of overall professionalism, visibility, transparency, credibility, integrity, and public accountability in the higher education sub-sector;
- c) Contribution to established national, regional, continental and international mechanisms for integrity, transparency and public accountability; and
- d) Professionalism and public acceptance:
 - i. All persons involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically,
 - ii. Timely internal and external feedback mechanisms lead to continuous improvement within the agency,
 - iii. Guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination,
 - iv. Outlines the appropriate communication with relevant authorities in those jurisdictions in which they operate, and
 - v. Any activity carried out and materials produced by consultants are in line with its standards and guidelines and those of the ASG-QA.

The QAA ensures that standards and processes used for external quality assurance are pre-determined, pre-defined, published and made available to institutions ahead of external quality assurance procedures. The QAA ensures that:

- a) The standards and processes used to ensure quality and relevance of HEIs, such as institutional or programme self-assessment and quality assurance procedures, have appropriate follow-up mechanisms for recommendations and actions for further improvement.
- b) There is thematic analysis (production of a summary of reports), carried out from time to time, which describes and analyses the general trends in the findings of external reviews, assessments as well as evaluations of institutions and their programmes for possible policy direction.

ZIMCHE has internal quality assurance systems for different aspects of its operations. There are several policies that guide the operations as well as a client charter and Audit Charter. With regard to human resources there is a Performance Management and Development Policy which is a framework for managing performance of staff. All members of staff sign performance agreements at the beginning of every financial year which are aligned to their job descriptions and objectives outlined in the strategic plan. Annually performance appraisals are done.

At the level of governance structures both Council there is no performance appraisal mechanism in place. From the planning point of view the Annual Operational Plan is developed every year through a consultative process where all managers and professionals sit together in a workshop setting. Once developed it is reviewed half-way through the year where all managers go on a retreat outside the office. The mid-term review is informed by a half-year report which tracks performance of each directorate. It is during this exercise that changes are made to the plan if necessary and budgets are also adjusted accordingly.

In addition to the Council committees, ZIMCHE several Secretariat committees including a Risk Management Secretariat Committee. At the end of each year books of accounts of ZIMCHE are audited by the office of the Auditor-General. To this end ZIMCHE has consistently received unqualified audit since its inception. Issues raised by auditors and remedial actions proposed through management letters are always taken very seriously.

ZIMCHE undertakes a client satisfaction survey at major Fairs and exhibitions. The purpose of the surveys is to obtain feedback from HEIs about its operations and the service it provides to them. The survey provided a lot of useful information.

Standard 7. Financial and Human Resources

Standard

The QAA shall have adequate and appropriate human, financial and material resources to carry out its QA mandate effectively and efficiently.

Guidelines

The QAA is adequately funded to realise its vision, mission and objectives to:

- a) Ensure it has adequate facilities commensurate with its QA activities;
- b) Recruit adequate and qualified human resources, to carry out its QA activities; cognisant of gender, disadvantaged groups and persons with disabilities;
- c) Carry out its external QA mandate professionally, effectively and efficiently;
- d) Ensure improvement of its practices and development; and
- e) Inform the public about its activities and results/outcomes.

ZIMCHE lacks adequate financial and human resources to enable it fully execute its mandate considering the size of the HE sector and the large number of programmes requiring accreditation and re-accreditation. Despite operating under a limited budget, ZIMCHE has achieved great success in contributing to the improvement of quality HE, due to the outstanding commitment and professionalism of its Council, Secretariat staff and Peer Reviewers. ZIMCHE has formulated excellent policies, standards and procedures. The strategic plan spells out a clear direction. The QA processes are thorough and rigorous and make use of comprehensive and benchmarked QA tools as well as experienced, well-balanced and knowledgeable Peer Reviewers.

Standard 8. Benchmarking, Networking and Collaboration

Standard

The QAA shall promote and participate in international initiatives, workshops and conferences, and collaborate with relevant bodies on QA to exchange and share experiences and best practices.

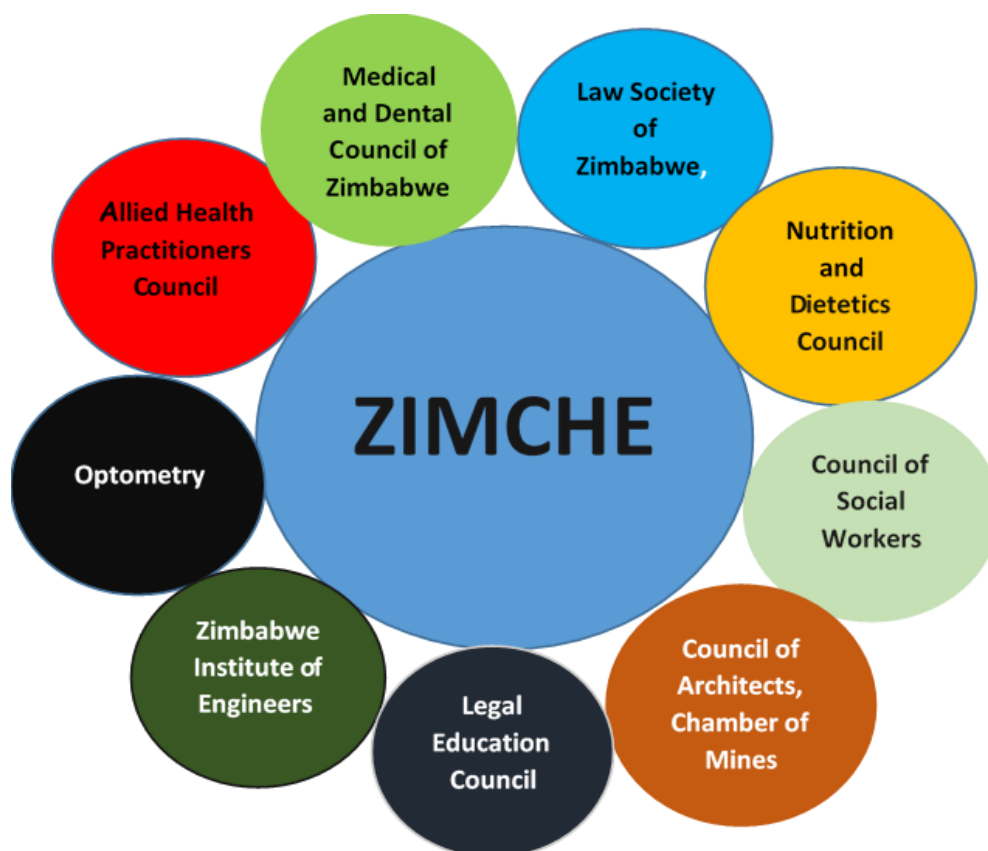
Guidelines

It is important that the QAA remains relevant in its activities. The QAA:

- a) Collaborates with all relevant bodies, such as professional bodies, for QA and accreditation;

- b) Shares accurate, reliable and easily accessible information about standards for registration/licensing and QA of all modes of education delivery;
- c) Contributes to the development and/or updating of the appropriate regional, continental and other international conventions on the recognition of courses and qualifications, and serves as national or regional information centres as appropriate;
- d) Participates in bilateral or multilateral agreements for facilitating the recognition or determination of equivalences of each country's qualifications based on the procedures and standards included in established international agreements for recognition of courses and qualifications; and
- e) Contributes to regional, continental and international efforts to improve the accessibility of up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive information about recognised HEIs or providers.

ZIMCHE collaborates with local professional bodies and associations as exemplified below.



ZIMCHE also collaborates with regulatory bodies and institutions in other countries. It has signed agreements of cooperation with the Namibian National Council for Higher Education and the University of Nottingham. These MOUs specifically focus on collaboration in the area of quality assurance, research and capacity building. CHE has already benefited a great deal from these collaborations.

The staff members of ZIMCHE have taken a number of study trips to learn how other quality assurance agencies work. Such trips have been made to Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania and South Africa. ZIMCHE is also an active member of a number of quality assurance bodies such as AfriQAN, Association of African Universities (AAU), Southern African Quality

Assurance Network (SAQAN) and African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN). The Acting Chief Executive is a member of the SAQAN executive committee and participates in the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) training initiative. These interactions have been very enlightening and have informed the systems and processes that CHE has developed.

Staff members have also participated in various international conferences and workshops including those organised and/or funded by AfriQAN, UNESCO, SADC Regional office, South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), European Commission, etc. The CHE has consistently been attending the International Conferences on Quality Assurance of Higher Education in Africa (ICQAHEA) since 2010. These provided opportunities for networking and further exposure on the work and contribution of other QA agencies and regional networks and relevant bodies. Upon returning from conferences and study tours staff members are required to write reports. The reports usually include sections on “lessons learnt” and “recommendations” which inform review of policies and guidelines, change of strategy, and development of future plans, among others.

In an effort to promote and strengthen QA systems in Southern Africa and in keeping with the encouragement from AfriQAN to establish sub-regional QA networks. In keeping with its regional leadership ZIMCHE lead a SADC team in harmonising credit accumulation and transfer systems through the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAAQA) Initiative, funded by the European Union in partnership with the African Union.

Standard 9. Periodic Review of QAAs

Standard

The QAA shall undergo periodic internal and external reviews for continuous improvement. Guidelines

The QAA has a system for continuous QA of its own practices and activities that emphasises flexibility in response to the changing nature of higher education, effectiveness of its operations, and its contribution towards the achievement of its objectives. The QAA, therefore:

- a) Conducts a comprehensive internal self-assessment of its processes, practices and activities periodically, including data analysis;
- b) Subjects itself to periodic external review on the basis of self-assessment by regional, continental or international QA bodies; and
- c) Ensures that required recommendations are disclosed and implemented for improvement; and
- d) Depending on the context of the QA system, for QAAs, the cyclical review is carried out preferably every five years.

The client satisfaction surveys referred to earlier, benchmarking missions, the internal meetings and performance assessments allow ZIMCHE to review its processes and improve them. This is the first time ZIMCHE is participating in an external review exercise.

Chapter 9: International Activities

ZIMCHE has also been of assistance to SAQA, individuals, employers or professional bodies who wish to know the status of institutions that have issued certain qualifications. When SAQA performs a background check on the qualification submitted for evaluation, they contact ZIMCHE to verify the status of the awarding institution. Sometimes when a qualification holder wishes to become a member of professional body ZIMCHE is contacted to verify the status of the awarding institution.

One other reason for participating in international networks is to facilitate equivalence of quality of education offered which is one of the main objectives of SAQAN. Reference is always made to documents such as SADC Protocol on Education and Training (1997), Arusha Convention (1981- Now Addis Ababa Convention of 2014). The issue of equivalence is one of the key areas that Zimbabwe has to pay attention to by establishing systems and procedures that will be implemented rigorously and systematically.

ZIMCHE has joined African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN) launched in May 2016 whose main aim is to share information about qualifications across borders. The Chief Executive is a member of the team spearheading implementation of AQVN objectives.

Chapter 10: Engagement with stakeholders

ZIMCHE engages internal and stakeholders in all its activities. These include inter alia: government, HEIs, professional bodies, development partners, employers, students, parents, academics, industry and commerce, Peer Reviewers, international partners and sister QA agencies.

Chapter 11: -Areas of future development

The areas of future development listed below stem from ZIMCHE's aspirations as it forges ahead with achieving its vision and mission as set out in its strategic plan:

- Continuous improvement of the QA system by way of further developing its strengths, eliminating weaknesses and mitigating risks.
- Empower and capacitate HEIs to develop a quality culture that promotes creativity and innovation as well as relevant and world-class graduates and research outputs.
- Create active partnerships with various stakeholders
- A home that is well endowed and reflect the status and ambience of a QA Agency
- Generate adequate financial and material resources through resource mobilisation activities such as partnerships and collaborations as well as donations.
- Training facilities to raise funds through training programmes with participants from higher education institutions and other stakeholders.
- Staff development and exchange programmes for the agency staff to capacitate them to handle current and future challenges and provide effective and efficient service delivery.
- Affiliation to regional and international quality assurance agencies to enable the use of common and alignment of standards and guidelines.