Higher Education Commission Fiji

Pioneering your future.

QUALITY STANDARDS

FOR FIJI HIGHER EDUCATION

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The Quality Standards relate to:

- Recognition/Registration of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (including review processes, and assessments of approval to provide education and training services of accredited Fiji National Qualifications Framework (FNQF) qualifications); and

- Accreditation of FNQF Qualifications 1 – 10.

The Quality Standards will form the basis of Higher Education Commission Fiji's (HECF) legislative powers and they will define the criteria as mentioned in relevant legislation.

The Quality Standards outline the quality assurance of HEIs, and qualifications provided in Fiji. Each Quality Standard will be supported by an information guide to assist HEIs in meeting these standards. The HECF is establishing a National Register for Fiji Higher Education, that will be publicly accessible. This Register will include details of:

- Accredited FNQF qualifications; and
- Registered HEIs.

The Register gives credibility and leverage both locally and more importantly offshore, for both the recognition of qualifications and the profile of Higher Education Institutions. It also has leverage in terms of government strategic goals and directions towards consistently strengthening the quality of education provided by HEIs in order to produce quality graduates and eventually a skilled workforce.

Confidence in FNQF qualifications issued by Registered HEIs facilitates student and labour mobility. These Quality Standards and the Register provide confidence to the public that the Registered HEIs and the accredited FQF qualifications that they provide are quality assured.

The Quality Standards have been developed to meet Fiji's current and future needs and expectations. Over time, these Quality Standards will be reviewed to ensure that they still meet the desired expectations and needs of Fiji.

QUALITY STANDARDS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

GOVERNANCE

1. Institutional Governance

1.1   The HEI is legally recognised under a law of Fiji.

1.2   Owner(s), members of the governing body, and leaders are 'fit and proper'.

1.3   The membership of the governing body and its leaders are sufficiently experienced or qualified for the effective governance of the HEI.

1.4   The HEI's focus is the provision of quality education, training and assessment services.

1.5   The HEI through its documentation and actions promotes quality education and research[1] (if applicable), free intellectual enquiry, academic integrity and honesty.

1.6   The HEI has clear, appropriate, accountable and sound governance arrangements; and management structures and personnel for the sound and effective conduct of education, training and assessment services.

1.7   The HEI's governance arrangements ensure:

a.   Oversight and accountability for all of the HEI's operations, including strategic planning.

b.   That the HEI meets any HECF reporting requirements or directives.

c.   That the HEI complies with relevant legislation and regulation requirements of Fiji.

d.   That the HEI meets the *Quality Standards for HEIs*, that the HEI is subject to external review, and that the HEI cooperates with the HECF on any such reviews.

e.   Appropriate delegated authority as is necessary for effective governance.

f.   True and accurate records of the governing body's business are maintained.

g.   Cyclical monitoring of its own effectiveness.

2. Academic Governance

2.1   The HEI implements academic governance arrangements that:

a.   Ensure all academic matters are governed well, including developing, monitoring and reviewing academic policies and procedures and their effectiveness;

b.   Provide effective academic oversight and monitoring of the quality of education, training, assessment and research.

c.   Promote and foster innovation.

d.   Promote equity and access to programmes, and facilitate pathways and articulation arrangements; and

e.   Ensure that any services related to programmes leading to a qualification (such as agents recruiting learners or other organisations delivering education and training) undertaken partially or wholly on its behalf through a third party meet the *Quality Standards for HEIs*[2].

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[1]Research requirement are limited to Universities and University Colleges. Refer to Standard 15.
[2]A third party provides programmes (e.g. twinning, franchising) or other services (e.g. marketing, recruitment, support, administrative) on behalf of the HEI.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

3. Quality assurance

3.1   The HEI implements a coherent and accessible quality management system that covers all aspects of its business including (but not limited to) the following:

a.   Financial controls.

b.   Recruitment and management of staff.

c.   Phases of the learner cycle, e.g. recruitment, admissions, progression and support, recording and reporting outcomes, certification, grievances, and refunds.

d.   Academic, administrative and support services, including those provided partially or wholly on the HEI's behalf.

3.2   The HEI ensures that where services are provided on its behalf by a third party the provision of those services is the subject of a written agreement that includes at minimum:

a.   Allocation of clear roles and responsibilities.

b.   Learners access to facilities and resources.

c.   That the third party will cooperate with the HECF for the purpose of external reviews and provision of data and information.

d.   That the third party will adhere to any conditions applied as a result of unacceptable practice identified.

e.   A process for responding to allegations and complaints of the third party.

f.   A process for appealing a third party's decisions, including assessment decisions.

3.3   The HEI implements a system of assuring the quality of its programmes leading to a qualification that includes:

a.   Oversight by a committee that has been designated academic responsibility and provides for independent decision making.

b.   Processes for internal approval of the programme include input from industry, enterprise, professional associations or community representatives, educators and learners.

c.   Processes for internal approval of the programme ensure:

i.   Programmes are based on graduate profiles, learning outcomes.

ii. That they meet an industry or community need.

iii. That they are designed with learner needs in mind.

iv. That pathways and articulation arrangements are facilitated.

v.   That they are referenced to external benchmarks.

vi. That there is a clear 'coherence' and logic to the design of the programme.

d.   Assurance that the decision to internally approve or reapprove a programme includes an evaluation of the programme design, time allocation, delivery and assessment, and that the facilities and resources required to provide the programme will be available when needed.

4. Continuous Improvement

4.1   The HEI implements continuous improvement of all its services, including any academic, administrative and support and welfare services provided on the HEI's behalf, through systematic reviews.

4.2   The HEI ensures that all programmes are subject to cyclical review, are informed by interim programme monitoring and lead to improvements in programme provision. The cyclical review includes:

    a.   A review of the programme outcomes including the design and content of each unit standard or other component of the qualification, the graduate profile and learning outcomes, methods of assessment, learner achievement, and emerging industry or community developments or needs.

    b.   Reference to external benchmarks and expertise.

    c.   Input from industry, enterprise, professional associations or community representatives, educators and learners.

SUSTAINABILITY

5. Financial sustainability

5.1   The HEI has the financial capacity and mechanisms that sustain the quality of provision of education, training and assessment services.

5.2   The HEI demonstrates sound and transparent accounting and financial practices.

5.3   The HEI has arrangements that protect learners' interests in the case of closure or withdrawal of programme offerings.

INFRASTRUCTURE

6. Infrastructure

6.1   The HEI's infrastructure, general facilities and accommodation (if relevant):

    a.   Are fit for purpose, meet any regulatory requirements, and provide a safe environment for learners and staff.

    b.   Are subject to suitable monitoring and appraisal to ensure the continuous health and safety of its learners and staff.

    c.   Are adequate for the number and profile of learners and staff (e.g. utilities), and accessibility for those with disabilities.

7. Information management and services

7.1   The HEI's information management and ICT services are maintained and secure for:

    a.   Retaining and retrieving all records related to the functions of a HEI.

    b.   Preventing unauthorised access and use of confidential information.

7.2   The HEI has clear and effective disaster recovery and business continuity plans that are communicated to staff and are implemented as required to ensure the safety of all data, including learner data.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

8. Marketing and representation

8.1   The HEI represents itself and its offerings with accuracy and integrity.

8.2   Accurate and relevant information for applicants is accessible and made publicly available to enable informed decisions, and includes:

    a.   Admission requirements specific to the intended qualification.

    b.   Any recognition by industry, regulatory or licensing bodies of its qualifications.

    c.   Accreditation status of the qualification.

    d.   Programme design (e.g. courses of study for a qualification) and any additional requirements, e.g. structured workplace learning.

    e.   The relationship between the HEI and its parent organisation.

    f.   Any recognition of the qualifications by its parent institution.

    g.   Access to credit and recognition of prior learning opportunities.

    h.   Any academic agreements that may apply to other institutions, e.g. cross credit arrangements or eligibility status for continuation of studies in its parent institution.

    i.   Any arrangements in place with third parties for the provision of programmes or services.

    j.   Academic policies and procedures, and other welfare and grievance processes.

    k.   Rights and obligations of the applicant and of the HEI and its staff.

    l.   Fees and other associated costs to undertake the programme, and the HEI's refund processes.

    m. Access to support services.

8.3   Information must be provided prior to enrolment, to payment of fees and, to signing any agreement.

9. Learner admissions, welfare and support

9.1   Learner admission policies and procedures:

    a.   Are applied systematically and fairly.

    b.   Ensure that credit transfer is applied consistently and in a timely manner.

    c.   Maximise credit transfer without damaging the integrity of the qualification.

9.2   Learners are provided with:

    a.   Support to evaluate if they have the required academic preparation and proficiency needed to participate in the intended programme.

    b.   Academic counselling opportunities for the selection of components within programmes where options exist.

    c.   An orientation programme which is tailored to meet the specific needs of the learner, including international learners and to enable successful transition to study in Fiji.

    d.   Monitoring of participation and assessment outcomes to evaluate progress and implement strategies that promote successful completion, including during any structured workplace learning.

    e.   Support and welfare services to maximise learners' chances of successful completion of studies.

9.3   To support the welfare and rights of all learners, the HEI implements:

    a.   A grievance policy that fairly and efficiently deals with learners' complaints and appeals.

    b.   A refund policy for learners, which is clear and reflects equity and transparency of processes.

    c.   A disciplinary policy that fairly and efficiently handles issues of discipline, including academic misconduct of learners.

    d.   Rules and regulations which explicitly state the responsibilities and rights of learners.

    e.   A policy on excursions and structured workplace learning that makes provisions for the safety and security of learners.

    f.   A policy that guards against victimisation.

    g.   Strategies that ensure learners with special needs, and whose special needs are not an impediment for undertaking the programme, are not precluded from and are supported in their programme.

9.4   The HEI must implement a documented policy and procedure which is communicated to staff and learners for managing critical incidents that could affect a learner. The HEI must retain a record of critical incidents for at least 7 years or at least 2 years after the affected and learner has ceased to be enrolled (whichever is the longest).

9.5   The HEI resources and implements a strategy for learners to represent the legitimate concerns of the learner body, to participate in decision making processes of the HEI, and to provide for learner advocacy.

9.6   The HEI ensures that the number and profile of administrative and support staff are suitable to meet its operations and services.

10. Educator qualifications and experience

10.1   The HEI assures the competence and professional practice of its educators through fair and transparent recruitment, professional development, feedback and performance review processes.

10.2   Educators are suitably qualified and experienced for the qualifications or the components that they are providing. Refer to Attachment 1.

10.3   The number and profile of educators for each qualification is sufficient to meet the learning outcomes, the programme design, and the needs of the learner cohort.

11. Learning facilities and resources

11.1   For each programme leading to a qualification, the HEI ensures that:

   a.   The implementation of the programme design and practices is consistent with the graduate profile and learning outcomes, and is appropriate and supports each learner to meet the requirements of each component.

   b.   The facilities, equipment, resources, tools, ICT, individual workspace and learning materials are consistent with and support the requirements of the number of learners, the programme design, and the learning outcomes and assessment of the qualification.

12. Assessment

12.1   The HEI's assessment system:

   a.   Ensures that the assessment of learning outcomes, including recognition of prior learning, meets the principles of good assessment and the principles of quality evidence. Refer to Attachment 2.

   b.   Allows for learner assessment appeals and re-assessment.

   c.   Ensures that assessment outcomes are systematically internally moderated, and are externally moderated if required.[3]

13. Recording and Reporting Learner Achievement

13.1   The HEI accurately records and retains learner data, including learner participation, achievement and outcomes.

13.2   The HEI accurately reports learner achievement, including recognition of prior learning and credit transfer outcomes.

13.3   The HEI collects and reports learner data that is compliant with FEMIS requirements.

13.4   The HEI ensures that learners have the right to access their records.

13.5   In the event of closure, the HEI has a clear and effective process to transfer learner data to HECF in the required format and in a specified timeframe.

13.6   For National Qualifications, HEIs must recognise for credit transfer purposes, any relevant National Qualifications and/or their components issued and authenticated by another HEI.

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[3]National Qualifications are subject to external moderation.

13.7 A HEI that issues testamurs or academic transcripts:

    a. Does so only to learners that meet the requirements and completion rules of the qualification (including its unit standards or other components).

    b. Accurately reports the outcome of the unit standards or other components in a timely manner.

    c. Accurately distinguishes between qualifications (or its unit standards or other components) that are internally approved and those that are accredited and recorded on the National Register for Fiji Higher Education.

    d. In accordance with any directives set by the HECF.

    e. Accurately identifies any third parties involved in the provision of education, training and assessment services.

13.8 If a HEI issues certificates of completion (or similar) as evidence of participation, these certificates of completion are clearly differentiated from a testamur or academic transcript issued for the completion of a qualification or of its components.

14. Transition of qualifications

14.1 The HEI implements a transition policy that ensures:

    a. No new learner enrolment occurs in a qualification beyond its accreditation expiry date.

    b. When a qualification is expired, and within a period of one year from the accreditation expiry date:

        i. All enrolled learners' education, training and assessment is completed and the relevant testamurs or academic transcripts are issued; or

        ii. Enrolled learners are transferred to the replacement qualification.

RESEARCH

15. Research

15.1 HEIs that are a University or a University College, must undertake research and associated activities in accordance with the HEI's research strategy and policy that is designed to:

    a. Monitor and promote research activity through a research committee.

    b. Promote and contribute to research relevant to Fiji and/or the broader Pacific region and to the strategic development of the region.

    c. Facilitate participation of staff in research opportunities and discourse.

    d. Promote and contribute to research collaboration.

    e. Promote and encourage publication, such as in peer reviewed international journals.

    f. Clarify requirements for publication, authorship and intellectual property.

    g. Clarify and confirm ethical conduct of research and responsible research practice through a research ethics policy.

    h. Maintain accurate and up to date records of research outputs of staff and research candidates.

15.2 Research is conducted, or overseen, by staff with qualifications, research experience and skills relevant to the type of research undertaken and their role in the research.

QUALITY STANDARDS FOR HEIs: ATTACHMENT 1 EDUCATORS

Regulations 2009, section 201 (d) and (e) specifies the requirement for educators.

Schedule 1

For FNQF qualifications levels 7 – 10, the HEI's academic governance arrangements ensure that the quality standard is met. Educators must have a qualification at least one level higher than that being taught.

Schedule 2

For FNQF qualifications levels 1 – 6, the following applies for HEIs.

Educators must have relevant industry experience and/or qualifications at least one level higher than being delivered and assessed and must hold one of the following:

- National Certificate in Teaching of TVET (Level 4); or
- Australian Qualifications Framework Certificate IV in Training and Assessment; or
- New Zealand Certificate in Adult and Tertiary Teaching (Level 4); or
- A recognised equivalent to one of the above.

Educators must demonstrate that their relevant industry knowledge and skills, and their training and assessment knowledge and skills, are current.

Educators, undertaking assessment only activity, must have relevant industry experience and/or qualifications at least one level higher than being assessed and must hold one of the following:

- National Certificate in Teaching of TVET (Level 4); or
- Australian Qualifications Framework Certificate IV in Training and Assessment; or
- New Zealand Certificate in Adult and Tertiary Teaching (Level 4); or
- New Zealand Qualifications Framework unit standard 4098 (or equivalent on the NZQF); or
- HECF WA00014; or
- A recognised equivalent to one of the above.

Educators, undertaking assessment only activity, must demonstrate that their relevant industry knowledge and skills, and, assessment knowledge and skills are current.

QUALITY STANDARD FOR HEIS: ATTACHMENT 2 ASSESSMENT

Principles of good assessment

Validity	Validity is concerned with the extent to which an assessment decision, which is based on evidence of performance, is justified.
Reliability	Reliability is concerned with how accurate or precise the tasks are; how much error is included in the evidence; that the evidence is consistently interpreted; and, that assessment outcomes are comparable across assessors.
Fairness	Fairness is concerned with considering the individual learner's needs and characteristics, and any reasonable adjustments to assessment that need be applied. In addition, learners must know and understand the assessment process and the criteria to be applied.
Flexibility	Flexibility is concerned with reflecting the needs and characteristics of the individual learner, providing recognition of prior learning, and drawing on a range of methods appropriate to the context.[4]

Principles of quality evidence

Principles of quality evidence provide guidance on the collection and evaluation of evidence. Evidence should be:

- Valid: the evidence relates to the standard being assessed.
- Authentic: the evidence is the learner's own work.
- Sufficient: the quality and quantity of evidence enables a judgement to be made.
- Current: the evidence is from the present or the recent past.[5]

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[4]Adapted from: ASQA. 2015. *Guide to developing assessment tools*. Canberra, Australian Government, and Gillis, S. Bateman, A. and Clayton, B. 2009. G*uide for developing assessment tools 2009*. Canberra, National Quality Council, New Zealand Qualifications Authority. 2001. *Learning and assessment: A guide to assessment for the National Qualifications Framework*. Wellington, New Zealand Qualifications Authority.
[5]ibid

QUALITY STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION OF FQF QUALIFICATIONS 1–10

GENERAL ACCREDITATION DESIGN STANDARDS

1.   Identified need

1.1   The accredited qualification is based on a proven industry, enterprise, education, legislative, regulatory or community need.

1.2   The accredited qualification is developed in consultation with, and endorsed, by appropriate industry, enterprise, education sector, regulator, professional, or community group(s)[6].

2.   Duplication

2.1   The accredited qualification does not duplicate an existing National Qualification by title, by coverage, by graduate profile, or by outcomes.

2.2   The accredited qualification provides a sound rationale as to how this accredited qualification differentiates from an accredited qualification from another higher education institution already providing a similar qualification.

3.   Learning outcomes based

3.1   The accredited qualification is based on learning outcomes.

3.2   FNQF qualifications 1-10 use:

- Unit Standards; or
  - o Other components (such as courses, units, modules); or
  - o A combination of unit standards and other components; or
  - o A combination of unit standards and/or other components and additional credits that meet the requirements of the graduate profile.

4.   Identified outcome

4.1.   The accredited qualification leads to an identified outcome that meets the proven industry, education, legislative, regulatory or community need and is consistent with the FNQF.

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[6]For qualifications level 7 – 10, international accreditation from relevant quality assurance regulators or professional associations is gained and/or international peer review is undertaken.

ACCREDITATION DESIGN STANDARDS

5.   Design

5.1   The accredited qualification title, level, credits, purpose, graduate profile, learning outcomes, and coherence meets the specifications of the FNQF.

5.2   The accredited qualification confirms recognition to be given to the qualification by licensing, regulatory,professional or industry bodies where applicable.

5.3   The accredited qualification complies with the titling conventions for FNQF qualifications.

5.4   The accredited qualification specifies the components, their level and credit points.

5.5   The accredited document, for each specified component, outlines clear and measurable learning outcomes that explicitly describe what learners are expected to know and able to do as a result of the satisfactory completion of the component, and specifies criteria for assessment.

5.6   The accredited qualification specifies the structure and completion rules of the qualification.

5.7   The accredited qualification specifies any entry requirements to the qualification and justifies any explicit limitations to access.

5.8   The accredited qualification identifies exit points from the qualification provide for coherent vocational or educational outcomes where applicable.

5.9   The accredited qualification provides information on educational pathways and articulation where applicable.

5.10   The accredited qualification provides information on any conditions related to recognition of prior learning, credit transfer or exemptions.

5.11   The accredited qualification provides guidance on appropriate delivery and learning modes, any advice on limitations on delivery and learning modes, and any requirements for structured workplace learning.

5.12   The accredited qualification specifies appropriate assessment methods, which:

- will support valid, reliable, flexible and fair assessments;

- will support the collection of evidence that is sufficient, valid, authentic and current;

- are consistent with the assessment requirements in the components of the qualifications;

- ensure that any legislative or regulatory requirements, where relevant, are met.

5.13   The accredited qualification specifies the requirements for internal or external moderation of assessment, or both

5.14   The accredited qualification specifies required specialist facilities and resources, the academic/vocational requirements of educators essential for the delivery and assessment of the accredited qualification, and the suggested ratio of educators to learners.

5.15   The accredited qualification specifies transition arrangements of learners, if relevant (i.e. in the case of revised qualification).

6. Monitoring

6.1 The accredited qualification identifies appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes which will ensure that the qualification content and outcomes are reviewed and remain current and relevant throughout the accreditation period.

6.2 The accredited qualification has a specified accreditation period of up to five (5) years.

7. Format

7.1 The accredited qualification including its components is in the format required by HECF, or as agreed by HECF.

DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Academic transcript	An academic transcript is an historical record of components of a qualification undertaken by a learner, such as courses, papers, units or unit standards. Transcripts may state credit points and grades achieved for each component.
Accreditation	Accreditation is the process of approval undertaken by an accrediting authority to confirm that a qualification and its components lead to a registered FNQF qualification.
Assessment	The process of collection and evaluating evidence to establish the level of an individual's performance against prescribed learning outcomes.
Award of a qualification	Award of a qualification occurs when a learner has met the requirements of the qualification and the qualification is certified through the provision of a testamur. The term 'conferral' may also be used to describe this process.
Complainant	Any person or group that lodges a complaint
Complaint	Any expression of dissatisfaction that a Higher Education Institute's service has either failed to match the standard of service promised or standards that would be reasonable to expect.
Credit	Credit is the value assigned to the specific learning outcome, representing the notional learning time required to demonstrate that all the specified outcomes have been met. One credit is estimated to be 10 notional hours of learning.
Credit transfer	Credit transfer is an evaluation of formal learning undertaken to determine if the outcomes are equivalent to those in another qualification or component of a qualification. It may include but is not limited to the following processes known as cross-credit, advanced standing, block credit, specified credit, unspecified credit.
Fiji Qualifications Framework	The FNQF is an instrument for the development and classification of qualifications to a set of criteria for levels of learning achieved. Such a framework is used as a tool for standardising qualifications as well as a tool for regulating the use of titles for qualifications and its components.
Higher Education Institutions	*As per legislation*

TERM	DEFINITION
Learning outcomes	A learning outcome is what a learner should know and/or be able to do as a result of being involved in a learning process. The learning should indicate a conceptual as well as a practical grasp of the knowledge or competency required and be applicable outside the environment in which it was acquired.
Moderation	Moderation is a quality review process. It involves checking that the assessment tool produced valid, reliable, sufficient, current and authentic evidence to enable accurate judgements to be made as to whether the requirements of the relevant aspects of the unit standards has been met. It includes reviewing and making recommendations for future improvements to the assessment tool, process and/or outcomes.
National Qualifications	National Qualifications are packages of nationally recognized graduate profile and unit standards, which reflect a meaningful milestone or an end point on a learning pathway. National Qualifications are developed by Industry Standards Advisory Committees (ISACs).
Programme	A set of structured learning and assessment activities designed by a HEI to meet the requirements of a qualification or a component of a qualification.
Provider Qualifications	Provider qualifications have been developed by a registered organization and accredited or recorded by the HECF.
Qualification	A qualification is formally accredited and specifies the required number and range of credits and such other requirements at specific levels of the FNQF.
Quality Standards	Technical specifications which are measurable and have been drawn up by consensus and approved by HECF. These quality standards relate to quality requirements for the recognition/registration of HEIs and accreditation of qualifications.
Recognition	Recognition of HEIs means the status awarded to an institution that possesses features of a higher education institution and meets the criteria prescribed.
Recognition of prior learning	The recognition of learning gained and currently held, regardless of how, when, and where the learning occurred. It involves the assessment of an individual to make a judgement in relation to the required learning outcomes. It may involve the evaluation of formal learning previously undertaken (which may or may not be competency-based), but will include the evaluation of skills and knowledge obtained through non formal and informal learning.

TERM	DEFINITION
Record of achievement	A record of achievement is a record that summarises the credits achieved towards a FNQF qualification or an accredited component, e.g. unit standard.
Registration	Registration of HEIs means the provision of a certificate of registration issued under relevant the promulgation and regulations.
Service provision	Any aspect of the HEIs operation designed to provide an individual with a definable service. This would include an academic provision in terms of quality of teaching, academic support services such as IT and technical support, library services, academic advising/personal tutoring; learner administrative and support services, and central services including finance, catering, accommodation and facilities.
Standards	The registered statement of desired education and training outcomes and their associated assessment criteria. These standards are components of a qualification; also known as subjects, units, modules, courses, papers, competencies, or unit standards. They are the smallest part of a qualification that can be separately assessed and certified.
Structured Workplace Learning	Structured Workplace Learning involves the educator planning with the workplace representatives the learning that needs to occur, and how workplace evidence shall be collected for assessment purposes. For learners it provides the link between HEIs and industry. Structured Workplace Learning may also be termed workbased learning, workplace attachment, practicum or internship.
Testamur	A testamur is an official certification document that confirms that a qualification has been awarded to an individual.