



**Higher Education
Commission Fiji**

Pioneering your future.

EVIDENCE GUIDE TO THE QUALITY STANDARDS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Introduction

The Quality Standards for Fiji Higher Education have been developed to meet Fiji's current and future needs and expectations and relate to both Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and qualifications. The specific Quality Standards (QS) related to HEIs (Quality Standards for Higher Education Institutions) define the required criteria for HEIs to be able to be registered on the National Register for Fiji Higher Education.

This Evidence Guide to the Quality Standards for HEIs has been developed to support HEIs in meeting these requirements. The Evidence Guide is **advisory only** and may be updated from time to time.

The Evidence Guide has, for each QS or a cluster of QS, two sections:

1. **Explanatory Guide** – which provides general advice in regard to evidence to meet the QS and/or examples of good practice.
2. **Related legislation or policy** – which outlines any related requirements as specified in the Higher Education Act 2008, related legislation or Higher Education Commission Fiji (HECF) directives. If there is no specific related legislation or policy, then this section is not included.

Governance

1. Institutional Governance

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

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is that a HEI demonstrates that:

- It is legally recognised under a law in Fiji and has a valid registration.
- Its business registration certificate, if applicable, is valid and available.
- The ownership of the HEI is lawfully constituted. The HEI is to provide a Memorandum or Articles of Association (if applicable).

A HEI may be legally recognised in various ways. A HEI may be a university recognised under its own Act of Parliament, a government/statutory organisation with enabling legislation, an organisation registered under the Religious Bodies Act, an organisation registered under the Charitable Trust Act, or an organisation registered under the Companies Act. In the case of the University of the South Pacific (USP), it is owned by 12 Pacific nations and is established through a Charter that establishes a body corporate.

The legal documents are valid representation of how the institution is legally constituted. If applicable:

- The relationship(s) between the institution and its holding (parent) company,

and between other organisations are clearly defined.

- The details of the parent company are clearly stated.
- Proof is provided that it is an authorised agency, branch, centre or campus of an overseas HEI.
- Proof is provided that the parent company is operating lawfully in its country of origin.

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

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is to ensure that the HEI’s governing body members and leaders are fit and proper to take a leadership role in the provision of quality education, training, and assessment services in Fiji.

The term ‘owner’ includes:

- Any person who owns 15% or more of the organisation.
- Any person who is entitled to receive 15% or more of dividends paid by the organisation.
- Any trustees of a trust associated with the organisation.

Members of the governing body are those appointed to provide oversight and accountability for all of the HEI’s operations, including strategic planning. Leaders of a HEI are those who have a role in the management or is partly responsible for management or decision making of the applicant HEI. They have the capacity to significantly affect the operations or financial standing of the organisation.

The HEI provides evidence that the owner(s), members of the governing body and its leader(s) are ‘fit and proper’. The HEI is to use the HECF Fit and Proper Declaration form and submit completed forms to HECF for consideration.

At all times the HEI is ensure that fit and proper declarations are obtained from individuals prior to any appointment.

The HEI notifies the HECF of any changes to the governing body membership or leaders within 10 working days of any change and provides updated evidence of individuals being ‘fit and proper’. The HEI maintains the relevant records of members of the governing body.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest HEI’s compliance to this standard may include:

- Signed fit and proper person declaration.
- Due diligence has been undertaken as part of the recruitment and selection process.

Related legislation and policy**Higher Education Act 2008, section 19.1(b)**

Applicants for Registration will have their senior or high-level executives assessed, including administrative and academic staff.

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

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is that the HEI has in place experienced and qualified governing body members and leaders for the conduct of the HEI.

The HEI demonstrates that the membership of its governing body is sufficiently experienced and qualified through:

- Selection processes that ensure a balance of experience and qualifications to effectively undertake its functions.
- Due diligence in selection of members.
- Membership demonstrating consideration of gender and disadvantaged or vulnerable groups.

The HEI demonstrates that the head of the institution (or other leaders) are appropriately qualified academically and professionally through:

- Selection processes that ensure leaders are suitable for the role.
- Leaders that have the requisite qualifications and experience to effectively undertake their role.
- Due diligence in selection of leaders.

The HEI maintains the relevant records of members of the governing body and its leaders.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Full Curriculum Vitae (CV) of governing body members.
- Due diligence has been undertaken as part of the recruitment and selection process.
- Evidence the governing body is formally constituted (e.g., constitution, directors' resolution).
- Terms of Reference (TOR).

Related legislation and policy**Higher Education Act 2008, section 19.1(b)**

Applicants for Registration will have their senior or high-level executives assessed, including administrative and academic staff.

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

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is that the HEI commits to the provision of quality education, training and assessment services.

The HEI could use its vision, mission, and goals to articulate its commitment.

The HEI's vision, mission, and goals:

- Reflect the national strategic development goals of Fiji and universal parameters for higher education.
- Clearly articulate commitment of the HEI to the delivery of quality education and research.

In addition, the mission and goals should:

- Reflect a desire to develop, sustain, and improve the delivery and quality of education and training.
- Reflect the pursuit of a lifelong learning approach to education and training.
- Recognise the role of new technology in enhancing teaching and learning.

This commitment is then demonstrated through a range of HEI documents and actions.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Strategic plans.
- Annual operational plans.
- Annual reports.
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and performance targets.

1.5 The HEI, through its documentation and actions, promotes quality education and research¹ (if applicable), free intellectual enquiry, academic integrity and honesty.

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is that the HEI promotes quality education and research (if applicable), free intellectual enquiry, academic integrity and honesty throughout its documentation.

The HEI will, through various documentation, promote these aspects mentioned in

¹ Research requirements are limited to Universities and University Colleges. Refer to Standard 15.

the QS which may include:

- HEI's vision, mission, and goals.
- Policies and procedures related to academic integrity and honesty.
- HEI's research strategy and policy.
- Policies and procedures related to discipline.
- Academic governance arrangements.

The HEI's commitment is then demonstrated through its actions when implementing these requirements.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Strategic plans.
- Annual operational plans.
- Annual reports.
- Corporate, Organisation, Institutional Governance structure.
- Policies and procedures on academic integrity and honesty, research (if applicable) and discipline.
- TOR of academic governance.

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. The HEI meets any HECF reporting requirements or directives.
- c. The HEI complies with the relevant legislation and regulation requirements of Fiji.
- d. The HEI meets the Quality Standards for Higher Education Institutions, that the HEI is subject to external review, and that the HEI cooperates with the HECF on any such reviews.
- e. Appropriate delegated authority 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.

Explanatory Notes

These two QS relate to the broader HEI institutional governance. How the governance arrangements are established will vary from institution to institution. The QS does not prescribe a specific arrangement.

Institutional governance is defined as the framework of structures, rules, systems and processes of a HEI through which:

- Institutional directions and targets are set (strategic planning).
- Authority is delegated.
- Organisational performance is monitored, including against these QS.
- Risks are identified, managed, and controlled.
- Organisational accountability is maintained, especially in relation to legislation and regulations and reporting requirements of HECF.
- Governance arrangements are reviewed for effectiveness.
- Institutional culture is developed and influenced.

HEIs may have a formally constituted governing body (e.g., a board of governance) or an advisory governing body that has formal processes accepted by the HEI's community, whose members, as a group, are accountable for the governance and performance of the HEI.

HEIs should have in place:

- An organisational structure that is clearly defined, outlining accountability and reporting lines, and management that is directly accountable to the governing body and responsible for the HEIs operations.
- Job descriptions for key roles and responsibilities.
- Recording and reporting of the governing body activities.
- Retention of records of the governing body.

The HEI operations may be governed by its statutes or by-laws or rules. The HEI should have in place processes to address:

- Conflict of interest in administrative practices.
- Intellectual property rights. Intellectual property rights is a broad term which the law provides to protect creative effort, and especially to protect economic investment in creative effort. It includes copyright, patents, designs, trademarks, circuit layouts, and confidential information. A policy and procedure should be developed that covers the following:
 - Copyright ownership.
 - Reproduction of copyrighted materials for teaching and research.
 - Rights to the results of extramural projects or programmes.
 - Permit use of HEI name.
 - Patents.
- Privacy controls and information access by learners and the public.

If applicable, the relationships between the institution and its holding (parent) company and other organisations are clearly defined.

HEIs should identify the relevant legislation and obligations which must comply with.

For example, related to:

- Occupational health and safety (OHS).
- Fire.
- Child welfare and safety.
- Disabilities.
- Insurance coverage.
- Immigration.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Evidence of ability to comply with Quality Standards for Fiji Higher Education and Higher Education Act 2008 and Higher Education Regulations 2009.
- Policy Framework and reporting arrangements for addressing lapses in compliance with the Quality Standards for Fiji Higher Education.
- Evidence for oversight over all representations made to students.
- Framework for the election and integration of student representatives.
- Government structure.
- Evidence the governing body is formally constituted (e.g., constitution, directors' resolution).
- Terms of Reference of governing structure and/or committees.
- Delegations of powers and responsibilities.
- Institutional governing body meeting minutes for at least 12-18 months, including papers or reports tabled for discussion.
- Framework for periodic review of effectiveness of government body and arrangements.
- Policy, compliance and quality assurance framework in governance, accountability, and monitoring.
- Record-keeping processes.
- Strategic and Operational Risk register.

Related legislation and policy

Higher Education Act 2008, section 19(1a)

Applications for Recognition by degree awarding institutions and universities must demonstrate that they will comply with relevant guidelines.

Higher Education Act 2008, section 50

The HEI is to provide any information as required by the Commission 'relating to any aspect of the institution's operation'.

The Commission may use such means as it considers necessary to acquire information.

Higher Education Act 2008, section 19.1(e)

Applicants for Registration must demonstrate a willingness by the institution or person to participate in periodic review processes, including national quality assurance processes.

Higher Education Regulations 2009, regulation 33(2)

Applicants for Registration must 'submit information as the Commission may require for the purpose of monitoring compliance' with the Act and for 'maintaining its information management system'.

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.
- 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 Higher Education Institutions².

Explanatory Notes

Academic governance is defined as the framework of policies, structures, systems, and processes that provide leadership to and oversight of a HEI's academic activities (teaching, learning and assessment, and research and research training if applicable).

The governance of the academic community is usually through a single body (e.g., an academic board, with or without sub-committees) and/or variety of other structures (e.g., faculty boards, teaching and learning committees or course advisory committees).

However, the academic governance of the HEI will vary, and the QS does not prescribe a specific arrangement.

² A third party provides programmes (e.g., twinning, franchising) or other services (e.g., marketing, recruitment, support, administrative) on behalf of the HEI.

Traditional functions of academic governance include:

- Scrutiny and peer review of academic activities, carried out independently and separately from the staff who are directly involved in those activities.
- The provision of academically informed advice to assist institutional decision making and monitoring, e.g., for institutional approval of programmes or analyses of the learner cohort progress.

Academic governance assumes that the HEI has the academic expertise and experience sufficient to provide leadership, judgement, and scrutiny at the level of academic activity concerned.

A degree of separation between institutional governance and academic governance is ideal.

The system will include:

- Approving programmes and (in the case of HEIs with self-accrediting authority) accrediting qualifications.
- Monitoring and revising programmes and qualifications (if relevant) to ensure applicability.
- Setting the HEI's academic benchmarks (such as success rates, required staff qualifications, completion rules, pathways, etc.).
- Developing and reviewing the academic policies that guide all academic activities.
- Providing competent academic leadership.
- Offering academic advice to institutional decision-making processes.
- Allowing for learner participation in academic governance.
- Monitoring third party agreements and provision.

For non-degree awarding HEIs, there is an academic manager or Dean who is responsible for the academic affairs of the HEI.

For a degree awarding HEI, there are structures, including relevant positions for academic governance. For these HEIs, it is expected that it will have:

- Academic committee or Senate for the overall academic governance.
- Faculties and departments are headed by suitably qualified individuals.
- There are committees or forums to vet examination papers and ensure quality control of examination results.

If applicable, the HEI has proof of the recognition of its qualifications by its parent institution.

If applicable, the HEI has proof of the eligibility of its learners by its parent institution.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Full CVs for key personnel responsible for academic oversight.
- Evidence of ability to comply with Quality Standards for Fiji Higher Education, Higher Education Act 2008, and Higher Education Regulations 2009.
- Terms of Reference of academic governing body(ies).
- Organisational structure of academic governance.
- Institutional benchmarks for academic quality and outcomes.
- Policy and processes for academic oversight to ensure the quality of teaching, learning, research, and research training.
- Policy framework and reporting arrangements for protecting the integrity of awarding of qualifications.
- Minutes of academic body(ies) meetings for the previous 12-18 months.
- Policy framework and reporting arrangements for:
 - Developing, monitoring, and reviewing academic policies and their effectiveness.
 - Reviewing the implementation of delegations.
 - Setting and monitoring:
 - Quality assurance processes.
 - Institutional benchmarks for academic quality and outcomes.
- Framework for periodic review of effectiveness of academic governance arrangements.
- Record-keeping processes.
- Framework for the inclusion and integration of student representatives.

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.

Explanatory Notes

A HEI has in place a coherent quality management system that addresses its core business. This QS relates to most of the other QS and is not limited to the list above.

A quality management system aims to direct and control an organisation with regard to quality, and in this instance, in relation to assuring the quality education and training. Quality management system documentation could include:

- Documented statements of a quality policy and quality objectives.
- A quality manual.
- Documented procedures and records appropriate to key functions.
- Documents, including records, determined by the organisation to be necessary to ensure the effective planning, operation and control of its processes.

It is important in any quality management system, that is:

- Coherent, internally consistent and interlinked.
- Available to staff and learners, and the public.
- Regularly reviewed for effectiveness and applicability.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Quality assurance framework to guide and supervise operational matters.
- Quality assurance policy and procedures.
- Website content and page.
- Policy framework and reporting arrangements.
- Review schedule and timeframes.
- Relevant policies and procedures.
- Work instructions and templates to support their implementation.
- Templates, procedures and processes required for implementation and reporting purposes.
- Record-keeping processes.
- Feedback forms.
- Evidence of internal quality controls or monitoring strategies.
- Risk assessment framework, including but not limited to:
 - Risk management plan associated with operational activities.
 - Status report templates.

- 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 a minimum:
- a. Allocation of clear roles and responsibilities.
 - b. Learner access to facilities and resources.
 - c. The third-party will cooperate with the HECF for the purpose of external reviews and the provision of data and information.
 - d. The third party will adhere to any conditions applied as a result of the 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.

Explanatory Notes

This QS is directly related to QS 2.1e, 8.2 and 13.7e. The intent of this QS is to ensure that any services provided by a third party are quality assured by the HEI. The HEI is accountable for any services provided on its behalf. The written agreement forms the basis of the arrangements with the third party. A current written agreement is where the HEI outlines some critical requirements which are specified in the QS.

Other additional requirements documented within the agreement should include:

- Dates of the agreement.
- Disputes and exit clauses.
- Monitoring strategies of the agreement.
- Monitoring strategies of the services provided.

To demonstrate systematic management and internal quality assurance of third-party arrangements, the HEI should consider;

- A register of agreements
- Minutes of meetings with third parties.
- Evidence of monitoring strategies being implemented, e.g., analysis of feedback from learners and third-party educators, quality auditing reports, auditing reports of learner files.
- Evidence of actions taken as the result of monitoring strategies.

Refer to Fact Sheet #12 Third-Party Arrangements, accessed at www.hec.org.fj. In relation to agents recruiting international learners, refer to Fact Sheet #13 International Learners, accessed at www.hec.org.fj.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Formal contract template.
- Written arrangements, including designated roles and responsibilities for compliance and quality assurance.

- Formal agreements with third parties within 12 months.
- Code of conduct.
- Quality assurance or monitoring mechanism implemented.
- Policy on third-party engagements.
- Documented arrangements with third parties, especially regarding (if relevant):
 - Placements.
 - Collaborative research.
 - Research training.
 - Joint award of qualifications.

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 including 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 and learning outcomes.
 - ii. They meet an industry or community need.
 - iii. They are designed with learner needs in mind.
 - iv. 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.

Explanatory Notes

The programmes that HEIs design to meet the requirements of an accredited qualification are at the core of the HEIs business. To assure the programmes the HEI should have robust processes in place, including a committee that has, as part of its Terms of Reference, the designated responsibility to make decisions regarding approving and reviewing programmes. This committee should have a level of independence from that of any financial or institutional decisions and ensure that the programmes designed are coherent and designed to meet the graduate profile and learning outcomes of a qualification.

The committee should have documented processes for the development of programmes, approval of programmes and review of programmes. Programme design benefits from input by key stakeholders, external experts and should be evaluated against external reference points.

Approving a programme also requires a HEI to take responsibility for ensuring that it has the capacity to provide education and training services for the programme.

This includes ensuring:

- Sufficient finances are in place to support the programme.
- Sufficient and appropriate educators, training and assessment materials, equipment and facilities.

The HECF has developed Fact Sheet #11 Programme Plans and a programme plan template to assist HEIs in documenting the programme design; accessed at www.hec.org.fj.

This QS is directly linked to QS 4.2.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Programme/course approval processes.
- Course Advisory Committee meeting minutes.
- Academic Board meeting minutes.
- Academic Board meeting minutes showing deliberations on course design matters.
- Documented evidence of course development and ongoing improvements.
- Independent external review report.
- Internal self-audit procedures on programme.
- Evidence of overarching academic scrutiny.
- CVs of industry representatives, external reviewers, Course Advisory Committee and Academic Board members.
- References can be made to other applicable evidence for standard 2.1, 4.2, 9.2, 10.3, 11.2, and 12.1, if applicable.

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.

Explanatory Notes

The quality assurance system includes and embeds a whole institution approach to continuous improvement of all the HEI's services.

The quality assurance system embeds the notion of monitoring, review and improvements, such as the Plan, Do, Check, Act cycle. In short, the following applies:

- Plan involves establishing the objectives and processes necessary to deliver results in accordance with customer expectations and the institution's policies.
- Do includes implementing the processes.
- Check includes monitoring and measuring processes as well as learner and graduate outcomes against the policies and objectives and reporting the results.
- Act includes taking actions to continually improve process performance.

An approach to continuous improvement requires HEIs to take responsibility for their own provision of quality education and training services. This responsibility and accountability to the Fijian community includes systematically implementing self-assessment (or self-evaluation) processes.

Self-assessment focuses on identifying, responding to and meeting learner and stakeholder needs, evaluating the effectiveness of organisational processes and practices, and achievement of learner and graduate outcomes. Self-assessment includes a HEI using its own evidence to evaluate its effectiveness in providing quality education and training. HEIs may choose to involve people from outside the HEI in their self-assessment but it is generally an internal process.

Processes include:

- Systematically collecting and analysing a range of data.
- Administration guidelines for the collection of data.
- Ensuring that data is relevant and sufficient.
- Demonstrating improvements.

A range of sources of data could include:

- Learner satisfaction surveys.
- Employer satisfaction surveys (destination surveys).
- Graduate outcomes.
- Records of grievances.
- Internal self-audit against the QS.

It is best if data is both qualitative and quantitative. The self-assessment (or self-evaluation) leads to a quality improvement plan that is implemented.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Performance review processes and templates.
- Feedback forms.
- Record-keeping processes.
- Data reporting processes and templates.
- Continuous improvement processes.
- Templates required for implementation and reporting purposes (e.g., feedback forms, review reports, data collection and analysis survey results).
- Survey results, findings, and reports.
- Review schedule and timeframes.
- Mechanisms to test and evaluate the appropriateness of academic, administrative, welfare and support services.
- Methods to improve academic, administrative, welfare and support services.
- Processes for continuous improvement, including the review of:
 - Admission policies.
 - Teaching and learning practices.
 - Subgroup-specific support strategies.

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

- a. A review of the programme outcomes, including the design and content of each unit standard or other components 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.

Explanatory Notes

To ensure that a HEI's programmes continue to meet the requirements of the accredited qualification and that of its target audience (e.g., industry, enterprises, community, professional associations) the programme should be subject to cyclical review.

It is suggested that HEIs develop and implement a procedure for the formal review of the qualification (and its programme).

There is no set time frame for review; it may be annually or possibly every 3 years. However, it will be within the accreditation period of a Fiji National Qualifications Framework (FNQF) accredited qualification which is within a 5-year period.

The monitoring and review of a programme may include:

- Content of the programme in the light of any changes in expectations of target audience.
- Mode of delivery and technologies used.
- Learner and graduate outcomes data.

Reviews could include external experts, external stakeholders, and current and past learners. The information is analysed, and the programme revised.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Programme/course review policy.
- Review schedule and timeframes.
- Proposed external course reviewers.
- Review schedule and timeframes.
- Templates required for implementation and reporting purposes.
- Record-keeping processes.
- Scheduled benchmarking activities.
- Proposed benchmarking partners.
- Continuous improvement processes.
- Academic governance requirements.

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.

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is that the HEI has the financial capacity to support quality education and training.

The HEI demonstrates that it:

- Complies with Fiji tax laws.
- Has sound transparent accounting and financial practices.
- Is financially viable.

The HEI demonstrates:

- Financial planning is linked to HEI goals and strategic plan.
- Financial performance is assessed against financial plans.
- Financial data analysis indicates sufficient financial resources for the institution's mission and goals.

- Financial controls are in place to deal with financial operations.

Financial statements are audited by a chartered accountant with a public practising certificate. Audit financial statements must be made available. This means that audited accounts should be available 6 months after the year end.

Performance measures to determine financial viability include where applicable (but are not limited to):

- Liquidity ratios (current ratio and quick ratio).
- Profitability ratios (net profit ratio, operating profit margin, return on assets ratio, and return on equities ratio).
- Leverage ratios (debt to equity ratio and debt to asset ratio).
- Budget versus actual.
- Operating surplus/deficit.
- Core earnings.
- Net cash flow from operations (projected or existing).
- Statutory compliance.
- Insurance.

The HEI implements a strategy to protect learner fees, especially if the HEI cannot provide a programme and learners have enrolled and paid fees. HEIs may implement a guarantee, or a bank draw down facility, or a fixed deposit held in trust especially set up for the purpose of protecting learner fees.

A guarantee or term deposit should be equivalent to the amount of fees that they have collected in the last teaching period, e.g., semester. This amount should be monitored and adjusted to ensure that the facility is kept up to date as the fees taken change, e.g., increases.

In relation to a draw down facility:

1. The organisation is to keep aside a draw down facility separately which is not to be used for operational activities.
2. The organisation must capture in their finance or operations policy and procedures regarding the use and controls surrounding what is essentially a trust fund account.
3. The movements of funds must be independently audited.
4. All fees received must only be recognised as income once the learner has enrolled in the class and has attended at least one class. However, this will depend upon the institution's income recognition policy, if they have any.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

Financial sustainability:

- Two 5-year financial forecasts, one name 'base case' and another named 'sensitised'. The sensitised forecast should be based on the worst-case scenario in the higher education student projection. Both forecasts need to comprise of:
 - Profit and loss statement.
 - Balance sheet.
 - Cash flow statement.
 - Detailed assumptions, including but not limited to:
 - Student and staff numbers.
 - Attrition.
 - Revenue.
 - Expense.
 - Borrowing.
 - Resourcing.
 - Most recent 3 years audited financial statements.
 - Capital expenditure plan.
 - Marketing/student recruitment plan (including details on agent commission if applicable).
 - Business plan.
 - Most recent bank statements.
 - Related party audited financial statements and most recent bank statements (if applicable).
 - Start-up funding arrangements.
 - Details of contingency funding arrangements.
 - Details on all current borrowing (if applicable).
 - Details of overdraft facilities (if applicable).
 - Details on all projected loans and if the proposed lender is a shareholder(s) or director(s) then evidence demonstrating the leaders(s) has the financial capacity to fund the loans (if applicable).
 - Details of financial guarantees and evidence demonstrating the guarantor has the financial capacity to fund the guarantees (if applicable).

Financial accountability:

- Financial management policy and procedure.
- Fraud control policy and procedure.
- Insurance policy.
- Corporate governing board meeting minutes.
- Details of financial expertise in members and support staff (e.g., Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Executive Officer (CEO), governing board, finance team) and/or position descriptions.

Student protection arrangements:

- Tuition safeguard arrangements.
- Business continuity plans.
- Business cessation policy and procedures.
- Policy and procedures to safeguard learners' interest in the event of an institution closure or withdrawal of programme offered.

Related legislation and policy

Higher Education Act 2008, section 19.1 (d)

Application by HEIs for Registration must demonstrate financial capacity of the institution to deliver its proposed programmes and to sustain them appropriately.

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.

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is to ensure the HEI has safe and appropriate facilities and infrastructure in place for the conduct of education, training, and assessment.

To demonstrate this QS the HEI:

- Has a valid workplace registration certificate in accordance with Section 29 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1996.
- Implements an OHS policy that is compliant with the Government's OHS legislation.
- Implements processes to monitor and appraise the safety and suitability of the infrastructure and facilities.
- Adequate insurance coverage.

To demonstrate this QS the HEI's infrastructure and general facilities are:

- Located in an environment which is conducive to teaching and learning.
- OHS compliant with a valid and current 'on-site' inspection certificate which is no more than one year old.

- National Fire Authority (NFA) approved with an on-site inspection certificate that is no more than one year old.
- Approved and licensed by the relevant municipality to operate as an HEI.
- Regularly monitored through safety checks and maintained to ensure OHS and NFA standards are met and will continue to be met.
- Adequate for the number of profile of learners and staff (gender and those with disabilities), e.g., utilities (toilets, handbasins, electricity, water, telephones, internet capacity).
- Regularly upgraded/maintained.

The HEI also ensures that:

- Movement through and around the overall learning environment is safe and secure from physical abuse, hassle, bullying or endangerment from others, either within the environment, or getting in and out of the environment.
- Barriers to access are removed.
- Special provision is made for those with disabilities, e.g., disabled toilet, ramps.
- The location is clear from external disturbances and noise pollution.
- Teaching and learning timetabling practices are conducted in a way that do not impose security risks on learners unless appropriate practices are put into place to minimise these risks.
- Accommodation (where relevant):
 - Is not only compliant with OHS and NFA but is adequate in terms of preserving overall wellbeing and dignity for adults.
 - Has good standard of housekeeping, hygiene, cleanliness, and sanitation.

The HEI has:

- Adequate common rooms for learners.
- Adequately equipped resource centre/library that supports the programmes being offered.
 - If possible, the library's author and subject catalogues including names of journals and periodicals are computerised.
 - Online journals are made available to learners.

The HEI assures that the buildings and other infrastructure are regularly upgraded and maintained through:

- Maintenance and upgrading being a formal part of the institution's planning and allocation of resources, including financial resources.
- Replacement plan for education and other equipment, including new technology.
- Periodically assessing for efficiency and ability to support the HEI's programmes.

The HEI assures that the HEI environment is clean, and that reduce/re-use/recycle practices are implemented.

The HEI should have a committee with oversight of OHS, that meets regularly and monitors workplace safety to ensure a safe environment for learners and staff.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Learning facilities complies with local regulatory requirements (OHS and NFA certifications).
- Capital and maintenance plan.
- Policies and procedures on OHS and critical incidence reporting.
- Evidence of general infrastructure, learning facilities and resources are fit for purpose and conducive to student learning.
- Procedures or mechanisms to ensure student and staff safety against hazards.
- Floor plans with estimates of capacity and how they compare to projected enrolments.
- Photos of facilities.
- Descriptions of fittings and equipment, especially for specialist laboratories.

Related legislation and policy

Higher Education Act 2008, section 19.1(c)

Applications for Registration must demonstrate that their facilities and plans for facilities meet national standards.

7. Information management services

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

- a. Recruiting and retrieving all records related to the functions of a HEI.
- b. Preventing unauthorised access and use of confidential information.

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is that the HEI has in place appropriate information management and ICT services that are maintained and secure.

Information management includes the collection, storage, dissemination, archiving and destruction of information. The HEI should have clear and unambiguous processes for these actions. All records should be retained in a manner so that they are readily retrieved. The HEI should review and monitor these processes to ensure that they are being followed by staff.

The HEI should also ensure that there are processes and protocols in place to ensure:

- Unauthorised access is prevented.
- Confidential information is protected.

HEIs could demonstrate adherence through:

- Policies and procedures for the collection, storage, dissemination, archiving, and destruction of records.
- Confidentiality and privacy statements on key documentation, such as learner agreements, enrolment forms, staff contracts.
- Password protection on electronic data.
- Systematically managing records.
- Staff meeting their responsibilities in terms of data management.
- Limiting the number of staff with access to 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.

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is to ensure that the HEI data and records of various forms are protected from damage or destruction through the event of a disaster.

The HEI needs to have in place:

- A disaster recovery plan which is documented that outlines a structured approach and instructions for the steps to be undertaken in the event of unplanned incidences. This plan is a step-by-step strategy consisting of precautions to minimise the effects of a disastrous event so that the HEI can continue to operate or resume its core business.
- A business continuity plan that outlines the system for the prevention and recovery of data and records and to deal with potential threats, including those electronic, to the HEI.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Disaster recovery plan for ICT services and learners' data.
- Business continuity plan for ICT service and learners' data.
- Risk management plan.

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 are 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 qualification) and any additional requirements, e.g., structure 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.

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is to ensure applicants are provided with accurate and timely information to make an informed decision about their enrolment with the HEI. This information should be in a format that is easy to understand and to access. Information may be in various media formats.

The accurate list of programmes offered are to be provided in an annual prospectus (or similar). The prospectus should clearly distinguish between those accredited and listed on the National Register for Fiji Higher Education, and those programmes that have not been quality assured through HECF processes.

Any advertisements or other documentation, such as annual prospectus (or similar), should include the HEI registration code.

To ensure the accuracy of information provided to prospective learners, HEIs:

- Have a process to collate and review information which is implemented at least once a year.
- Have a staff member or marketing unit responsible for the accuracy and currency of information.
- Seek feedback from learners as to the accuracy of information.
- Ensure documented and dated permissions are obtained and retained in relation to identification or photographs of any learner in these materials.

Learners enter into an agreement with the HEI for services to be provided. Information provided to learners before enrolment, paying fees or signing an agreement for services form the basis of the agreement as this information outlines the commitments made by the HEI.

The agreement must be in a format that can easily be understood by learners. The agreement should include (but is not limited to):

- The qualification to be provided and its competition rules.
- Clear identification whether the qualification offered is accredited and listed on the National Register for Fiji Higher Education, or if the programme offered is not quality assured through HECF processes.
- Start and expected finish dates of the programme leading to a qualification.
- Details of fees and charges, and refund policy and the process for requesting refunds.
- Summary of the HEI's grievances processes and how to access.
- Other services or support that the HEI has committed to provide to the learner.

Learners are to be provided with a copy of their agreement. If learners change their qualification, they are to enter into another agreement with the HEI.

In relation to third parties, this QS is directly related to QS 2.1, 3.2, and 13.7e. learners (and potential learners) are to be fully aware of these third-party arrangements. Therefore, marketing materials needs to clearly state any involvement by third parties, what services are being delivered on the HEI's behalf, and the duration and extent of the agreement. Refer to Fact Sheet #12 Third-party Arrangements, accessed at www.hec.org.fj. In relation to international learners, refer to Fact Sheet #13 International Learners, accessed at www.hec.org.fj.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Approved marketing plan.
- Website content and copy.
- Written agreements with students/parents/guardians.
- Advertising material.
- Course flyer and/or outline.
- Conditions of enrolment into a course.
- Institutional enrolment requirements, including but not limited to:
 - Health requirements.
 - Security checks.
 - Language requirements.
 - Requirements for work placements (as applicable).
 - Information to students regarding their enrolment rights and obligations.
 - Charges associated with proposed studies, including any additional charges.
 - Record of Prior Learning (RPL) policy and assessment arrangements.
 - Change of enrolment policy.
 - Tuition assurance arrangements.
 - Fees and charges policy.
 - Refund policy.
 - Pre-enrolment and post-enrolment information for international students.
 - Written agreements with students/parents/guardians.
 - Conditions of enrolment into course.
 - Website content and copy regarding the professional accreditation of the course (if relevant).

Related legislation and policy

Higher Education Regulations 2009, section 30

The HEI is to 'publish at least once a year a comprehensive calendar, prospectus, or brochure for the information of students and the public'.

Higher Education Regulations 2009, section 33

The HEI must 'with respect to all its official documents, advertising and marketing material':

- 'Ensure that all information about its programmes and accreditation status is accurate'.
- 'Make no false, fraudulent, or misleading statements'.
- 'Not display the logo of the Commission on its letterhead, official documents, marketing, or advertising materials'.

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.

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is the protection of learner academic rights in the admission process.

The HEI can demonstrate adherence to this QS through:

- Clear admission and selection processes, that minimise any barriers to applicants from vulnerable or disadvantages groups.
- Clear entry requirements, including any recognition of experience or learning, for entry purposes only.
- Credit Transfer is offered and applied as soon as possible in the admission and enrolment process.
- Processes and decisions are applied fairly and consistently and reported in a transparent way.
- Clear and concise rules on the application of Credit Transfer and the integrity of a HEI's qualifications.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Admission criteria.
- Policies and procedures for diversity and equity.
- Information to students regarding their enrolment rights and obligations.
- Charges associated with proposed studies, including any additional charges.
- RPL policy and assessment arrangements.
- Change of enrolment policy.
- Credit Transfer policy and procedures.
- Written agreements with students/parents/guardians.
- Conditions of enrolment into course.

For those HEIs providing education and training services of National Qualifications (NQs), Credit Transfer is to be applied as per the requirements of QS 13.6.

In relation to international learners, refer to Fact Sheet #13 International Learners, accessed at www.hec.org.fj.

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 a 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.

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is that applicants and learners are provided with support to maximise their chances of successful completion of their studies. This support starts at the beginning of the cycle of a learner, in the application processes, and continues throughout their studies.

At the application and enrolment stage, applicants require assistance to identify whether they have sufficient skills and knowledge and appropriate to the qualification sought. A HEI should have in place:

- Learning needs assessment, and language, literacy and numeracy assessment to be able to assess applicants and advise on options and identify support specific to the learners' needs.
- Academic counsellors to advise on programme and/or component selection.

Once accepted into a programme, new learners are provided with an orientation programme that is tailored to meet their specific needs. Orientation programmes assist the new learners to familiarise themselves with the HEI's rules and expectations, as well as the various services available.

An orientation could include an overview of:

- Academic support services to assist the learner, including study skills, writing skills, and referencing protocols.
- Other support and counselling services, general or personal.
- Library familiarisation.
- Protocols for using workshop or laboratory facilities.
- Grievance policy.
- Health services, availability, or referral information.
- Emergency or evacuation plans.

- Critical incident procedures.

HEIs should also consider a programme specific orientation to assist new learners.

To support the learner throughout the learning cycle, the HEI needs to develop and implement processes and tools to collect, monitor, and act on information of learner progress. Monitoring of learner outcomes and their progress is best gathered and implemented at programme level. Monitoring of progress should be implemented for all learners, even those on extended structured workplace learning activities.

The HEI needs to be able to identify learners at risk of not completing and implement intervention strategies to assist, such as:

- Additional support in study skills, report writing skills, and research skills.
- Additional time with the educator to confirm and practice the skills and knowledge.
- Counselling, e.g., financial, personal, health, academic.
- Mentoring support.

The HEI needs to ensure that structures are in place to provide appropriate and effective welfare and support services to be able to maximise all learners' chances of successful completion of studies. The support provided will be context specific, and may include academic, financial, and personal counselling. The welfare and support should take into consideration the learner cohort and any vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

Support services could include:

- Academic support services.
- Tutoring support.
- Study skills programmes.
- English language support.
- Counselling and mental health support.
- Career services.
- Housing and rental services.
- Financial support services.
- Health and disability services.

The HEI should monitor the provision of welfare and support services to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of learners and promote social inclusion.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Student handbook.
- Learning management features.
- Orientation programme materials tailored to each proposed student cohort.

- Information for international students on living and studying in Fiji.
- Support strategies to:
 - Assess the needs and preparedness of individual students and student cohorts.
 - Undertake early assessments that provide formative feedback on academic progress.
 - Undertake early reviews that identify needs for additional support.
- Support service flyers and /or posters.
- Arrangements for their implementation.
- Templates to report trends in student retention, progression, and attrition.
- Monitoring processes for student progression.
- Student support strategies and services.
- Processes for identifying student subgroups.
- Processes to monitor and report student participation, progress, and completions.
- Policies and processes for international students.
- Pre-and post-enrolment information for international students.
- Feedback and monitoring strategies to ensure student wellbeing and safety.

In relation to international learners, refer to Fact Sheet #13 International Learners, accessible at www.hec.org.fj.

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 to undertaking the programme, are not precluded from and are supported in their programme.

Explanatory Notes

As in any quality management system, the HEI has key policies and procedures relevant to the learner and its core business. This QS outlines key policies that are considered critical to the operations of the HEI.

Grievances

The policy and procedure should include both complaints and appeals and outlines a process for:

- Lodging a complaint or an appeal if it cannot be resolved informally.
- Acknowledging the receipt of the complaint or appeal, outlining expected timelines.
- Beginning the assessment of the complaint or appeal within 10 working days of the receipt.
- Conducting the assessment in a fair and transparent way, ensuring that the committee to hear the complaint or appeal is independent from the complaint or appeal.
- Ensuring that the parties have an opportunity to represent their case, and are supported in this process.
- Providing a written response to the complaint or appeal, including the reasons for the outcome.
- Recording and retaining records of the complaint or appeal.
- Notifying the appellant of the opportunity to take any outstanding concerns of the HEI to the HECF.

In relation to the international learners, refer to Fact Sheet #13 International Learners, accessible at www.hec.org.fj.

Refunds

The refund policy and procedure should include:

- Provision for the refund of fees to learners.
- Conditions for the refund of fees are clearly spelt out and reflect fairness.
- Process for requesting a refund.
- Timelines for paying a refund and also informing how the refund was worked out.
- Ensuring that it is known to learners before or during enrolment.

Discipline

The discipline policy and procedure should outline:

- The scope of the policy and procedure.
- Roles and responsibilities of the discipline committee.
- Process for addressing and investigating any breaches in a fair and transparent way.

- Process for ensuring that the committee to hear the grievance or appeal is independent from the grievance or appeal.
- Providing a written response, including the reasons for the outcome.
- Recording and retaining records of the investigation.

Responsibilities and rights of learners

The HEI should outline the responsibilities and rights of learners, which may take the form of rules and regulations approved by the governing body. The rules and regulations may be broad ranging but will address academic rules.

Excursions and structured workplace learning

The HEI has a policy and procedure on excursions and structured workplace learning (e.g., practical attachments) which make adequate provisions for the safety and security of learners and staff.

The policy and procedure:

- Clearly outlines the obligations of persons responsible, including learners.
- Establish agreements between the HEI and the organisation.
- Includes the following provisions for:
 - Identifying dangers and assessment of risks.
 - Determination of fitness of key persons involved, e.g., supervisors.
 - Persons with disabilities or from other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.
 - Insurance cover where possible.
 - Catering and hygiene.
- Field work and excursion procedures are clearly stated.
- Disciplinary action on those who breach procedures.

Victimisation and bullying

The HEI needs to be able to lead the HEI community in ensuring that all learners, especially those from vulnerable or disadvantaged groups are not discriminated against, victimised, or bullied. The HEI can articulate its approach in all of its documentation and actions.

Special needs and social inclusion

The HEI needs to be able to lead the HEI community in ensuring that barriers to inclusion are eliminated and those with special needs are catered for. The HEI can articulate its approach in all its documentation and actions.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

Grievances

- Student handbook.

- Student Grievance policy and procedures.
- Student grievance forms: academic and/or non-academic matters.
- Grievance registry.
- Website content and copy.
- Staff Professional Development modules.
- Flowchart on grievances and appeals process.
- Timeframe for grievances management.
- Provision for confidentiality, reviews by third parties, independent professional advice, advocacy, and other support for the complainant/appellant.
- Record-keeping processes.
- Template advising student of decisions outcomes and reasons.
- Official communications material intended for students during the grievance process.

Disciplinary

- Student handbook.
- Student Disciplinary policy and procedures.
- Disciplinary registry.
- Website content and copy.
- Staff Professional Development modules.
- Flowchart on disciplinary and appeals process.
- Timeframe for disciplinary management.
- Provision for confidentiality, reviews by third parties, independent professional advice, advocacy, and other support for the alleged offender/appellant.
- Record-keeping processes.
- Template advising student of decision outcomes and reasons.
- Official communications material intended for students during the disciplinary process.

Refund

- Student handbook.
- Student Refund policy and procedures.
- Website content and copy.
- Staff Professional Development modules.
- Flowchart on refund and appeals process.
- Timeframe for refund management.
- Record-keeping processes.
- Template advising student of decision outcomes and reasons.
- Official communications material intended for students during the refund process.

Excursions and structured workplace learning

- Learner Workplace excursion policy and procedures.
- Learner signed consent form on workplace excursion or practical attachments.
- Signed agreement of workplace excursion or practical attachment between the HEI and organisation(s).
- Mitigation factors against potential risks.

Others

- Policies and procedures for diversity and equity.
- Policy and procedures against student victimisation.
- Proper record-keeping.

Related legislation and policy

Higher Education Regulations 2009, Section 34.2 (c)

HEIs who have had their Registration revoked are to make reimbursement as may be reasonable to enrolled students.

- 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 seven (7) years or at least two (2) years after the affected learner has ceased to be enrolled (whichever is the longest).

Explanatory Notes

A written critical incident policy and procedure needs to be in place and communicated and readily available to staff and learners. The policy and procedure should include the allocation of roles and responsibilities of a critical incident committee, steps to be taken, and the process to record the event, the immediate actions taken, follow up actions and any remediation actions. It should also include contact details for police, emergency services and fire authorities.

A critical incident is a traumatic event or threat inside or outside Fiji which causes distress, fear, injury, or extreme anxiety. A critical incident may be non-life threatening. A critical incident is not limited to, but may include:

- Death or serious injury or any threat of these.
- Severe abuse, including sexual abuse, verbal abuse, domestic violence, psychological aggression.
- Natural disasters.
- Missing learners.

Processes should be in place to ensure records of critical incidences are retained further the required duration.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Critical incident policy and procedures.
- Critical incident registry.
- Critical incident or Operational Risk or OHS Committee.
- Risk Management Plan or Risk Assessments.
- Schedule of proposed policy implementation (e.g., emergency drills).
- Orientation programme materials.
- Student handbook.

In relation to international learners, refer to Fact Sheet #13 International Learners, accessible at www.hec.org.fj.

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

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is for the HEI's to have processes in place for the learner body to have a voice to express legitimate concerns, to participate in decision making processes, and to advocate for learners on their behalf.

HEI needs to ensure that there is a process in place to engage the learner body this may be through:

- Student committee with the remit to undertake such functions.
- Nomination of a representative of the learner body.

It is suggested that for large or very large HEIs that there is a formally convened student association whose mandate is to represent legitimate concerns of learners and advocacy services to the HEI management and teaching staff.

It is suggested that for a very large HEI, that the HEI employs learners at an average graduate salaried rate, full-time, to represent the legitimate concerns of learners, and gives them appropriate offices and resources to be able to run the relevant association.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Framework for the election and integration of student representatives.
- Student representation or student committee Terms of Reference or protocols.
- Student committee or student representative meeting minutes.
- Feedback and monitoring strategies to ensure student affairs and interests are advocated to the HEI.

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

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is that the HEI has sufficient administrative and support staff to support its core business, the provision of quality of education and training services.

The HEI is responsible for ensuring that the number and profile of administrative and support staff are suitable to meet its goals, services, and operations.

The HEI needs to demonstrate that it has considered the education and training services it provides, the number and profile of its learner cohorts, and the support services it provides to be able to determine the number of administrative and support staff.

The profile and number of staff may vary across HEIs but should be monitored through continuous improvement processes to ensure that the number and profile of staff continue to meet the operational needs.

The HEI implements a policy and procedure on staff recruitment, appraisal, and development which is fair and is consistent with the HEI's mission and goals. The policy and procedure effectively provide for:

- Recruitment, selection, appraisal, and dismissal.
- Response to staff performance that is fair.
- Self-assessment by staff of their competence.
- Professional development.

The HEI should have a head office on the premises to provide support for learners and staff. In addition, small HEIs and those acting as agencies for overseas institutions are to have adequate staff present on the premises for the day-to-day operation of the institution.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Recruitment policy and strategies.
- Professional development opportunities.
- Staff performance appraisal.
- Staffing development plan.
- Mechanisms to test and evaluate the appropriateness of administrative and support staff to meet service deliveries.

Related legislation and policy

Higher Education Act 2008, Section 19.1 (b)

Applicants for Registration will have their administrative staff assessed.

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, and 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 are sufficient to meet the learning outcomes, the programme design, and the needs of the learner cohort.

Explanatory Notes

The Higher Education Regulations have been supplemented by Attachment 1 to the Quality Standards for Higher Education Institutions.

HEIs have the primary responsibility for the quality of their academic staff and for the provision of supportive environment.

The HEI implements a policy and procedure on academic staff recruitment, appraisal, and development which is transparent and fair and is consistent with the HEI's mission and goals. The policy and procedure effectively provide for:

- Recruitment, selection, appraisal, and dismissal.
- Response to staff performance that is fair.
- Self-assessment by staff of their competence.
- Opportunities and promotion of professional development.

It is suggested that HEIs have in place a process to identify the support needs of academic staff. Technical and education support for academic staff should be aligned to the current emerging technologies being deployed by the HEI. Processes should also be in place to regularly evaluate the support services and any resources provided to academic staff.

The HEI establishes the needs of the programmes offered which are supported by an appropriate number and profile of staff. The HEI is able to justify the ratio of academic staff to learners in each programme.

Refer to Fact Sheet #6 Meeting Assessor Requirements, accessible at www.hec.org.fj.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Policy and procedures on Human Resources recruitment, selection, appraisal, and dismissal (samples files will be requested).
- Policy and procedures on staff performance appraisal are fair (samples may be requested).
- Staff succession plan.
- Evidence that academic staff are suitably qualified and experienced in their position (Academic staff CVs – will be requested depending on programmes sampled).
- Staff training and development plan.
- Evidence mentioned in standard 9.6 is applicable.

Related legislation and policy

Higher Education Act 2008, Section 19.1 (b)

Applicants for Registration will have their academic staff assessed.

Higher Education Regulations 2009, Section 20.1 (d) and (e)

Evidence that each member of the staff possesses academic qualifications higher than the level at which he or she is teaching.

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 qualification's 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.

Explanatory Notes

To meet the requirements of the learning outcomes, the HEI needs to be able to provide sufficient and appropriate resources for teaching, learning, and assessment.

This QS relates specifically to the programmes designed by the HEI and facilities and resources in place to support these programmes and the needs of diverse learners, including those from vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

The HEI ensures that for effective teaching and learning:

- The workspace per learner is appropriate, depending on the programme.
- Classroom, workshops, and laboratories are adequately sized to accommodate learners.
- Classrooms, workshops, and laboratories are consistent with the requirements of the programme and the number of learners.
- ICT provision for staff and learners is adequate.
- Machinery and equipment are regularly monitored and maintained to ensure safety.
- The requisite equipment, tools, and materials including photocopiers are readily available to meet the requirements of the programmes and the needs of diverse learners.
- Teaching aids such overhead projectors, boards, multimedia projectors, video and audio equipment, computer and language laboratories are readily available.
- Teaching aids are adequate and consistent with the requirements of the programme.

The HEI assures that machinery and equipment is regularly upgraded and maintained through:

- Monitoring, maintenance, and upgrading being a formal part of the institution's planning and allocation of resources, including financial resources.
- Replacement plan for education and other equipment, including new technology.
- Periodically assessed for efficiency and ability to support the HEI's programmes.

The resource centre/library is adequately equipped to support the programmes being offered and available to all learners.

Computer/internet facilities for staff and learners is readily available, including:

- ICT usage ratios of equipment (computer and printer) to learner and to staff is acceptable.
- If available, the HEI's website provides access to research and other teaching and learning information.

Teaching and learning resources include textbooks, teaching aids, manuals, specialist learning aids, assistive devices, mobility devices, computers and other media. Teaching and learning resources specifically designed for the programme:

- Address the requirements of the learning outcomes.
- Provide for a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning.
- Allow for innovation.

HECF has developed the Fact Sheet #11 Programme Plans and a programme template to assist HEIs in the design of a programme. These documents can be accessed at www.hec.org.fj.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Floor plans with estimates of capacity and how they compare to projected enrolments.
- Photos of facilities.
- Descriptions of fittings and equipment, especially for specialist laboratories.
- ICT facilities and services accessible to students.
- Reading resources from library and e-journals are available.
- Accessibility to appropriate learning resources, tools, and materials are available to ensure students meet course/unit learning outcomes as prescribed in the course/unit outline.
- (** specific courses/units learning resource listings and material will be requested from pre-selected programmes identified by HECF during the Review).

12. Assessment

12.1 The HEI's assessment system:

- a. Ensures that the assessment of learning outcomes, including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), 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

Explanatory Notes

Critical to the quality of FNQF qualifications is the integrity and validity of assessment of the learning outcomes. HEIs are to put in place and implement an assessment system that ensures this integrity and validity of assessment judgements.

The assessment system needs to include:

- How academic staff are provided professional development in assessment and assessment tool development.
- How learners will be assessed.
- A process to ensure that all evidence and records are accurate prior to reporting results (sometimes referred to as verification).
- An avenue to appeal assessment decisions and offer re-assessment.
- How assessment judgements will be moderated.

The assessment system documentation should include:

- Selection and competence of assessors.
- Professional development and performance review of assessors.
- Requirements for assessment tool development, for determining appropriate assessment methods and tasks, and for the validity and reliability of assessment judgements.
- Verification of assessment.
- Complaints and appeals of assessment processes or judgements.
- Guidelines for providing feedback.
- RPL.
- Internal audit of assessment for ensuring internal consistency of recording assessment outcomes and of grading consistency.
- Internal moderation that evaluates the validity and reliability of assessment and assessor judgements.
- Rights and responsibilities of learners in the assessment process.
- Quality review and continuous improvements processes.

How a HEI undertakes internal moderation of assessment and assessor judgements will vary. HEIs that provided FNQF qualifications level 1-6 may emulate the external moderation process used for NQs, using a consensus moderation approach. Other HEIs may have a different process; however, the focus is still on evaluating and improving the validity and reliability of assessment and assessor judgements.

³ National Qualifications are subject to external moderation.

NQs are subject to external moderation facilitated by HECF. HEIs are required to actively participate in these external processes.

RPL is a form of assessment, as such, the HEI needs to ensure that there are processes in place to support the RPL and ensure that there are no barriers to the process. The HEI processes will include:

- Application form.
- Evidence gathering tool for applicants to use.
- Decision form to record decisions.

HECF has developed a series of fact sheets and templates to support this QS. Refer to:

- Fact Sheet #1 Assessment System.
- Fact Sheet #2 Assessment Tools.
- Fact Sheet #3 Recognition of Prior Learning.
- Fact Sheet #4 Internal Moderation.
- Fact Sheet #5 Simulations.
- Fact Sheet #7 Using third parties to collect assessment evidence.
- Fact Sheet #8 Structured Workplace Learning.
- Fact Sheet #9 Preparing for external moderation.
- Fact Sheet #10 Mapping assessment tools.

These fact sheets and templates can be accessed at www.hec.org.fj.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Assessment policy and procedures.
- Assessor guidelines and engagement protocols.
- Assessor selection/engagement protocols.
- Assessor or selection/engagement templates.
- Marking criteria.
- Instruction to examiners.
- Internal and/or external moderation policy and procedures.
- Internal and external assessment moderation and validation processes.
- RPL policy.
- RPL assessment arrangements.
- Credit transfer policy and procedures.
- Assessment appeals (including re-appeal) policy and procedures.
- Appeals template and decision-making template.

- ** Sample courses/units will be selected from sampled programmes and reviewed against this standard. The following will be requested by HECF:
 - Assessment rubric of the sampled units/courses.
 - Assessment tasks and solution of sampled units/courses.
 - Mapping of all formal assessment tasks against the course learning outcomes and the unit learning outcomes.
 - Sampl assessed student files will be requested for audit purpose.

Related legislation and policy

- HECF Policy 3-1: Assessment of FNQF Qualifications 1-6
- HECF Procedures 3-1a: Assessment of FNQF Qualifications 1-6
- HECF Policy 3-3: External Moderation of FNQF National Qualifications Levels 1-6
- HECF Procedures 3-3a: External Moderation of FNQF National Qualifications Levels 1-6
- HECF Guidelines 3-3a: External Moderation of FNQF National Qualifications Levels 1-6

13. Recording and Reporting Learner Achievement

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

Explanatory Notes

A HEI is responsible for the recording and retention of learner data – specifically individual learner details, participation, and achievement and outcomes data.

Learner data could include enrolment rate, examination pass rate, retention/drop-out rate, repetition rate, completion rate, further study rate.

Data outcomes should be able to be disaggregated to identify outcomes for different modes of delivery and the performance of different population groups, e.g., male/female, learners with or without disabilities, mother tongue language, ethnicity.

The HEI needs to have clear processes in place for assessors to record learner data and ensure that this is collated and retained.

The duration of the retention of data will depend on the type of data. The HEI must implement documented processes for retention of learner data, especially individual learner details, participation, and achievement and outcomes data.

The protection of this data is linked to the requirements of Quality Standard 7.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Learning management system features and content capturing student records.
- Information systems management policy and protocols.
- Student record management oversight, policy, and procedures.
- Sample students' records may be requested during audit.

Related legislation and policy

Higher Education Regulations 2009, Section 34 (2b)

HEIs who have had their Registration revoked are to issue to each enrolled student a copy of his or her academic transcript.

Higher Education Regulations 2009, Section 30

The HEI is to 'keep a comprehensive record of the academic and other achievements of each student enrolled'.

13.2 The HEI accurately reports learner achievement, including RPL and credit transfer outcomes.

Explanatory Notes

All learners have the right to have documented records of their achievements and outcomes. The HEI is responsible for ensuring that any reporting of these outcomes is accurate.

The HEI should establish protocols for reporting outcomes, including:

- Regularly issuing reports or documentation.
- Reporting to only those that require such records, e.g., learners, employers.
- Reporting is a systematic and consistent format.
- Reviewing reports or other documentation to ensure alignment with recorded data.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Learning management system features and content capturing student records.
- Information systems management policy and protocols.

Related legislation and policy**Higher Education Regulations 2009, Section 30**

The HEI is to 'make available on request to an enrolled student or past student, a transcript of his academic record'; and make available on request to an enrolled student or past student, a copy of a certificate awarded to the student or, where the institution is a local agency of the awarding institution, ensure that the awarding institution provides a copy of the certificate to the student.

Higher Education Regulations 2009, Section 33 (2)

The HEI must 'submit information as the Commission may require for the purpose of monitoring compliance' with the Act and for 'maintaining its information management system'.

HECF Directive #1

The HEI is to adhere to the HECF Directive #1 Issuing FNQF Documentation, accessible at www.hec.org.fj.

13.3 The HEI collects and reports learner data that is compliant with Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS) requirements.

Explanatory Notes

The HEI is required to ensure that learner data is recorded and retained according to FEMIS requirements. The HEI is to ensure that the data standard is met, and that data is checked for integrity to the standard.

The HEI should establish protocols for ensuring that learner data is compliant with FEMIS requirements, including:

- Outline of the roles and responsibilities of managers of the data.
- Reviewing data on a regular basis to ensure that it confirms with the data standard.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Information repository shell with key information fields that is compliant with FEMIS specifications, as stated in this Standard.
- Information systems management policy and protocols.

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

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is to ensure that learner data records are available to learners. The HEI is responsible for developing and implementing processes that include:

- Informing learners about how to access their records.
- Ensuring that staff understand and meet their responsibilities in allowing access.
- Maintaining the integrity of data.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Policy and procedures on accessing student records.
- Student handbook.
- Website content and copy.
- Information systems management policy and protocols.

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.

Explanatory Notes

If the HEIs cease operating or have their Registration revoked they must transfer learner data to HECF, so that the data can be retained.

HEIs should have in place a documented process to communicate to HECF in a timely manner of the time of cessation and to prepare the learner outcomes data for transfer.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Business cessation policy and procedures.
- Business continuity plan.

Related legislation and policy

Higher Education Regulations 2009, Section 34 (2b)

HEIs who have had their Registration revoked are to issue to each enrolled student a copy of his or her academic transcript.

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

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is to facilitate recognition for learners who enrol in NQs and who may change HEIs or enrol in additional NQs.

The HEI ensures that:

- Potential learners are made aware of the opportunities for recognition of NQs and their components (if relevant) issued by other HEIs through marketing information.
- It has in place and implements a process to ensure recognition of NQs and/or their components, resulting in Credit Transfer.
- It does not charge for Credit Transfer as it is a simple administrative process.
- Learners' enrolment forms and outcomes data confirms that Credit Transfer has been applied (if applicable).

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include (if applicable):

- RPL policy and procedures.
- Credit Transfer policy and procedures.
- Credit transfer arrangements and decision making.
- Student handbook.
- Website content and copy.
- Learner management information system on records keeping.

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.

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is to ensure that learners are provided with a testamur and academic transcript that clearly reflects the status of the learning that has occurred.

All learners, past or present, have a right to have their achievements and outcomes confirmed. Past learners may require re-issuance of certification documents for employment or further study purposes.

The HEI implements processes:

- To ensure that only learners that meet the requirements and completion rules of the qualification are issued with a testamur.
- To ensure that only learners that meet the requirements of individual components of a qualification are issued with an academic transcript.
- To ensure issuance of testamur and academic transcripts in a timely manner.
- To ensure that the testamur and academic transcript are issued to the learner and not another party.
- To protect the integrity of the testamur and academic transcripts issued.
- To maintain records of the issuance of the testamur.

For those qualifications accredited and recorded on the National Register for Fiji Higher Education, certification documents are to have a consistent format so that they can be recognised locally and internationally as a qualification that is accredited by HECF, meet the requirements of the FNQF, and are provided through a registered HEI.

For those qualifications that may be approved internally but not accredited and recorded on the National Register for Fiji Higher Education, the certification documentation cannot imply that it is accredited in Fiji. Therefore, references cannot be made to:

- Higher Education Commission Fiji.
- Fiji National Qualifications Framework.
- HEI Registration number.

In relation to QS 13.7e and third parties, this QS is specifically related to QS 2.1e, 3.2, and 8.2. as learners are enrolled with the HEI, they are issued FNQF documentation (testamurs and academic transcripts) by the HEI. QS 13.7e indicates that the testamur and academic transcripts issued to completing learners need to identify the third party. The documentation issued needs to make clear if the third party provided all or part of education, training and assessment services on behalf of the HEI.

The HEI should have mechanisms in place to reduce fraudulent reproduction of certification documentation.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include (if applicable):

- Sample student testamur.
- Sample student record of results.
- Outline of safety measures protecting against fraudulent issue.
- Graduation policy and procedures.

Related legislation and policy

Higher Education Act 2008, Section 51 (1)

A HEI intending to wind up its operations shall inform the Commission in writing at least 12 months before the intended date of closure.

Higher Education Act 2008, Section 51 (2)

The HEI shall ensure that the future of the education and training of its students is not jeopardised.

Higher Education Regulations 2009, Section 30

The HEI is to 'make available on request to an enrolled student or past student, a transcript of his academic record'; and make available on request to an enrolled student or past student, a copy of a certificate awarded to the student or, where the institution is a local agency of the awarding institution, ensure that the awarding institution provides a copy of the certificate to the student.

HECF Directive #1

The HEI is to adhere to the HECF Directive #1 Issuing FNQF documentation, accessible at www.hec.org.fj.

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 its components.

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is that learners are provided with documentation that clearly reflects the status of the learning that has occurred. Participants in learning programmes that are not accredited by HECF and therefore do not have a recognised outcome cannot imply otherwise.

Such programmes could include:

- Professional development workshops.
- Moderation workshops.
- Information sessions.
- Non formal learning programmes.

The documentation issued cannot include any references to:

- Higher Education Commission Fiji.
- Fiji National Qualifications Framework.
- HEI Registration number.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include (if applicable):

- Sample student testimonial.
- Sample student record of result.
- Sample certificate of completion (or participation).
- Outline of safety measures protecting against fraudulent issue.
- Graduation policy and procedures.

Related legislation and policy

HECF Directive #1

The HEI is to adhere to the HECF Directive #1 Issuing FNQF documentation, accessible at www.hec.org.fj.

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 testimonials or academic transcripts are issued; or
 - ii. Enrolled learners are transferred to the replacement qualification.

Explanatory Notes

The intent of this QS is to ensure that when a qualification is updated or ceases to be provided, that there are mechanisms in place:

- To protect the current learners and maximise Credit Transfer.
- Protect new learners from enrolling in a superseded qualification.

At the core of this QS is the key principle that learners are entitled to graduate with a qualification that most closely represents the current needs of industry or the community.

The *HECF Directive #2: Transition of learners'* places timelines:

- For either completing learners or transferring learners to a new qualification; or
- For completing learners in the case of an expiring qualification with no replacement qualification.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Transitional (Qualification) policy and procedures.
- Transitional process.

- Academic governance arrangements.
- Record-keeping process.

Related legislation and policy

HECF Directive #2

HECF Directive #2 Transition of learners, accessible at www.hec.org.fj.

Research

15. Research

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

- Monitor and promote research activity through a research committee.
- Promote and contribute to research relevant to Fiji and/or the broader Pacific region and to the strategic development of the region.
- Facilitate participation of staff in research opportunities and discourse.
- Promote and contribute to research collaboration.
- Promote and encourage publication, such as in peer-reviewed international journals.
- Clarify requirements for publication, authorship and intellectual property.
- Clarify and confirm ethical conduct of research and responsible research practice through a research ethics policy.
- 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.

Explanatory Notes

A HEI may undertake research as a part of the institution profile or provide research training.

Research training is defined as a formal programme of postgraduate study that leads to the acquisition of advanced skills, techniques, and knowledge in the conduct of research, and requires the production of a substantial original research output, such as a thesis. Research training usually refers to research master's and doctorate degrees, Levels 9 and 10 on the FNQF. HEIs undertaking research training need to comply with QS 1-14.

Research is defined as any academic activities that contribute to new knowledge through original investigation. HEIs undertaking research need to also comply with QS 15.

Research should be systematic, planned, and purposeful. In addition, research carried by staff and learners should be well managed, and meet any legislative requirements, professional standards, or expectations of the community.

Research conducted by or on behalf of or supported by the HEI, must comply with the intellectual property rights policy established by the HEI. Refer to QS 1.7.

In the first instance, a Hei can develop a research strategy to set the direction of and inform the HEI's research activity and priorities.

The HEI can also develop an appropriate and adequate set of policies for the internal management of research activities, demonstrating an understanding of the issues involved in the conduct of research and of external requirements that guide this conduct.

A research policy can specify the objectives of research within the institution, research approaches, the code of conduct for research, and the responsibilities of any bodies responsible.

In general, it could include:

- A mission statement concerning research.
- Governance of research. Objectivity in research.
- Research approval process.
- Research ethics and integrity in research.
- How to cope with sponsored projects and sponsored research services, conflicts of interest, conflict of commitment, and research misconduct.
- Policy on consultancy.
- Policy on undergraduate and graduate research.
- Research supervision and research risk compliance.
- Policy on environment health and safety.
- Research development fund policy.
- Policy on the protection of human subjects in research.
- Policy on the use of animals in research.
- Research quality and research assessment.

The HEI also needs to implement effective staff recruitment, appraisal, and development processes to support their research strategy.

Indicative evidence requirements to attest the HEI's compliance to this standard may include:

- Research Policy.
- Policy framework and reporting arrangements to ensure the quality of research, research training and on breaches of academic or research integrity.
- Academic governance requirements.
- Code of ethics.
- Codes of conduct for research and supervision.
- Research Partnership Agreements.
- An aggregated list of scholarly and research output for any academic staff members appointed or identified so far.

Appendix 1: Quality Standards for HEIs – Attachment 1 Educators

Regulations 2009, Section 20 1 (d) and (e) specify the requirement for educators.

Schedule 1

For FNQF qualifications level 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:

1. 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:
 - a. National Certificate in Teaching of TVET (Level 4); or
 - b. Australian Qualifications Framework Certificate IV in Training and Assessment; or
 - c. New Zealand Certificate in Adult and Tertiary Teaching (Level 4); or
 - d. A recognised equivalent to one of the above.
2. Educators must demonstrate that their relevant industry knowledge and skills, and their training and assessment knowledge and skills, are current.
3. 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:
 - a. National Certificate in Teaching of TVET (Level 4); or
 - b. Australian Qualifications Framework Certificate IV in Training and Assessment; or
 - c. New Zealand Certificate in Adult and Tertiary Teaching (Level 4); or
 - d. New Zealand Qualifications Framework unit standard 4098 (or equivalent on the NZQF); or
 - e. HECF WA00014; or
 - f. A recognised equivalent to one of the above.
4. Educators undertaking assessment-only activity must demonstrate that their relevant industry knowledge and skills and assessment knowledge and skills are current.

Appendix 2: Quality Standards 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 to 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

⁴ Adapted from: ASQA. 2015. Guide to developing assessment tools. Canberra, Australian Government, and Gillis, S. Bateman, A. and Clayton, B. 2009. Guide 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*

Definitions

Term	Definition
Academic transcript	An academic transcript is a 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 collecting and evaluating evidence to establish the level of an individual's performance against prescribed learning outcomes.
Award of 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 testamur. The term 'conferral' may also be used to describe this process.
Barrier-free	Barrier-free includes removing the physical, communication, attitudinal, financial and institutional barriers that persons with disabilities or from other vulnerable groups may face in accessing education.
Complainant	Any expression of dissatisfaction that a Higher Education Institution'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: cross credit, advanced standing, block credit, specified credit, and unspecified credit.
Fiji National 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 have 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 recognised graduate profiles and unit standards which reflect a meaningful milestone or an endpoint 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 organisation and accredited or recorded by the HECF.
Qualification	A qualification is formally accredited and specifies the required number and range of credits and other requirements at specific levels of the Fiji National Qualifications Framework.
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 an FNQF qualification or an accredited component, e.g., unit standard.
Registration	Registration of HEIs means the provision of a certificate of Registration issued under the relevant Act 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.
Social inclusion	Social inclusion is a process that ensures that those at risk of social exclusion (such as people with a disability or those from a vulnerable group) gain the opportunities and resources they need to participate fully in education and economic, social, and cultural life.
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 work-based learning, workplace attachment, practicum, or internship.
Teaching and learning resources	Teaching and learning resources include textbooks, teaching aids, manuals, specialist learning aids, assistive devices, mobility devices, computers and other media.
Testamur	A testamur is an official certification document that confirms that a qualification has been awarded to an individual.
Vulnerable or disadvantaged groups	Vulnerable or disadvantaged groups are those that may be excluded on the basis of gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or socio-economic status.