



**BOTSWANA**  
Qualifications Authority

# **QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARD 3(4) CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES FOR ACCREDITATION OF DOCTORAL DEGREE LEARNING PROGRAMMES**

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# QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARD 3(4)- CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES FOR ACCREDITATION OF DOCTORAL DEGREE LEARNING PROGRAMMES

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**QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARD 3(4)-  
CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES FOR ACCREDITATION OF  
DOCTORAL DEGREE LEARNING PROGRAMMES**

**REVISION HISTORY**

Date	Summary of changes	Version

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARD 3(4)- CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES FOR ACCREDITATION OF DOCTORAL DEGREE LEARNING PROGRAMMES**

### **1. PREAMBLE**

- 1.0 Doctoral education is an important segment of the higher education system, connecting education, research and innovation. It is an essential part of the traditional identity of a university and, in most countries in the world, only universities can award a Doctoral degree.
- 1.1 Because of its nature, which is training through research, Doctoral Degree has to be differentiated from other degrees namely Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Over the last two decades, universities have made great efforts to enhance their quality assurance systems and, accordingly, Doctoral education must be focused on quality as well.
- 1.2 Doctoral Degree learning programmes need to be developed and maintained by meeting several criteria, but it is important to bear in mind that research is at the core of Doctoral education. Due to that, elements of the quality process are different from the Bachelor's and Master's Degree learning programmes.
- 1.3 The Botswana higher education system has been working intensively on improving quality assurance systems in higher education institutions which are facing many challenges, social, economic, and structural.
- 1.4 Being a country in the process of change, with a growing number of higher education institutions and a high percentage of young people entering higher education, so far, the focus has, primarily, been Bachelor's and Master's Degree level programmes.
- 1.5 With an increased institutional awareness of the need for quality learning programmes and increased institutional motivation to enrol and train more Doctoral Degree candidates, it has been recognised that Doctoral Degree learning programmes need to be evaluated and accredited concerning Doctoral Degree-specific criteria.
- 1.6 Botswana Qualifications Authority has identified key challenges facing the nation's higher education provision. Doctoral education is one of these priorities. Existing legislation, Botswana Qualifications Authority (Accreditation of Learning Programmes) Regulations, 2016 and Quality Assurance Standard 3 (QAS 3) Criteria for Learning Programme Accreditation have already covered some aspects of Doctoral education and some Doctoral Degree learning programmes have already been accredited under that legislation and criteria.
- 1.7 The new criteria seek to extend and develop the scope of that legislation and criteria to further enhance the quality of Doctoral Degree learning programmes.

### **2. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Quality Assurance Standard is to set out criteria and provide guidance on the evaluation of Doctoral Degree learning programmes for accreditation.

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### 3. INTERPRETATION OF THE TERMS

**“Critical mass”**- In Doctoral education, the size and number of resources (equipment, facilities, learners, academic staff, supervisors, etc) needed to produce top-quality research.

**“Doctoral Degree candidate”**- A person enrolled on a Doctoral Degree learning programme, conducting research and aiming to defend a thesis and to be awarded a Doctoral Degree.

**“Doctoral Degree learning programme”**- An organised set of courses and research opportunities within one or more disciplines

**“Research misconduct”**- This is an unacceptable practice that occurs when an individual deliberately, dangerously or negligently deviates from the accepted practices to be followed in carrying out research. This may include plagiarism, fabrication and falsification of the data and results.

**“Supervision”**- Interaction in the form of coaching, monitoring and support between responsible supervisor(s) and the Doctoral candidate, as opposed to taught courses or technical activities.

**“Transferable skills”**- Skills learnt in one context (e.g. research) that are useful in another, including employment, in areas such as science, business or governmental and local community organisations. They make it possible to develop, and apply, both subject-specific and research-related skills effectively.

### 4. INTRODUCTION

4.1 Doctoral education represents the highest level in the NCQF and, has an important role to play in creating new knowledge and contributing to a knowledge-based society.

4.2 Traditionally, Doctoral Degree holders predominantly remained in academia as researchers and teachers. Today, however, graduates of Doctoral education should be prepared for a wide range of careers, including that outside academia. To prepare them for these wider roles and responsibilities, Doctoral education requires several changes and to be structured to support the more varied mission of modern Doctoral education.

4.3 Since the early 1990s, the form of Doctoral Degrees has diversified, leading to differently structured degrees to accommodate the needs of increasingly diverse professions employing Doctoral graduates. Doctorates other than the Doctor of Philosophy have evolved, leading to the emergence of the titles 'professional' doctorate, and 'practice-based' doctorate.

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- 4.4 While Doctoral education is a global endeavour, it is also an important factor in enabling higher education institutions to be a key regional player in societal and economic development.
- 4.5 Doctoral education offers training through research for research, and it is in its essence very different from the two degrees, Bachelor's and Master's Degrees that are based on teaching. It should also be adaptable to individual needs, allowing Doctoral candidates to choose their path and navigate through selected fields of research. It is a very demanding higher education process and requires higher education institutions to be prepared, with different skills and tools. Thus, Doctoral education places a demand on institutions as well as on the supervisor and Doctoral candidate.
- 4.6 This document provides a set of criteria for evaluating Doctoral Degree learning programmes for accreditation regardless of the research field and type.
- 4.7 The stated Criteria are anchored on established good practices in the European and Australian institutions.
- 4.8 The Criteria cover seven major components. Each component is divided into two types of criteria: Core and Supplementary. While core criteria must be met in the process of evaluation, Supplementary criteria offer other desirable features that reflect good practice followed in many higher education institutions.

## 5. THE CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING DOCTORAL DEGREE LEARNING PROGRAMME

### 5.1 Compliance Level

The criteria are divided into two types, core and supplementary. There are, in total, 52 criteria: 36 core and 16 supplementary criteria. All the core criteria are mandatory to achieve a positive evaluation. A Doctoral Degree learning programme can be accredited in the case of full or substantial compliance.

COMPLIANCE LEVEL	COMPLIANCE DESCRIPTION
<b>Fully Compliant</b>	To be fully compliant, the learning programme must meet <b>all the core</b> criteria.
<b>Substantially Compliant</b>	To be substantially compliant, <b>all the criteria must be met</b> .
<b>Partially Compliant</b>	If the learning programme <b>meets some but not all of the</b> criteria, it will be evaluated as partially compliant, <b>regardless of the number of supplementary</b> criteria met. If the programme is evaluated as partially compliant, it cannot be accredited.
<b>Non-Compliant</b>	A learning programme that <b>fails to meet any core criteria</b> , regardless of how many supplementary criteria it meets, will be evaluated as non-compliant.



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### 5.2 The Criteria for Evaluating Doctoral Degree Learning Programmes for Accreditation

CRITERION 1: INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE, ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, AND FUNDING	
<b>Core</b>	<p>1.1 i) <b>Physical Facilities:</b> A brief description of the physical facilities that will support the Doctoral Degree programme. These should include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Information resources (including accessible library with relevant databases)</li> <li>b) Laboratories/Studios;</li> <li>c) Workshops;</li> <li>d) Lecture/Tutorial/Seminar/Office/ Meeting rooms.</li> </ul> <p>ii) <b>Equipment:</b> A brief description of equipment available for use for the Doctoral degree programme irrespective of its location. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Laboratory/Studio equipment;</li> <li>b) Workshop equipment;</li> <li>c) Information Technology equipment (software and hardware)</li> </ul> <p>1.2 <b>Regulations:</b> The ETP has established institutional regulations for Doctoral Degree learning programmes that are either</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) part of the existing Academic Regulations, but as a separate named section, or</li> <li>b) a free-standing document but read together with other existing Regulations.</li> </ul> <p>1.3 The ETP has well defined policies and procedures for financial resources, specifically to support its Doctoral Degree learning programmes. ETPs must submit proof of funding or budget for supporting research.</p> <p>1.4 <b>Human Resources:</b> The profiles of academic staff include but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. a Doctoral Degree, at a rank of Senior Lecturer, published at least ten research output such as journal articles in Peer Reviewed journals, books and/or Chapters published in recognised publishing outlets, with at least three (3) publications in the past five (5) years. The relevance of publications is defined according to international criteria for a particular field of study.</li> <li>2. The academic staff should have supervised candidates at graduate level.</li> <li>3. A minimum of 5 years teaching experience at University level.</li> </ul> <p>1.5 <b>Administrative Support:</b> The ETP must have a dedicated Office responsible for Graduate Studies matters relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Student Admissions</li> <li>(ii) Monitoring of Student progress</li> <li>(iii) Supervision</li> <li>(iv) Student assessments</li> </ul>

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<b>Supplementary</b>	<p>1.6 <b>Funding:</b> Doctoral Degree opportunities are shown on the ETP website and include all relevant information.</p> <p>1.7 The ETP has a clear strategy for the delivery of its Doctoral Degrees. If this is embedded in a general institutional strategy, it is explicitly recognised in a separate section.</p>
<b>CRITERION 2: SELECTION AND ADMISSION CRITERIA</b>	
<b>Core</b>	<p>2.1 The ETP must have a process for admission and selection of Doctoral Degree candidates for admission.</p> <p>2.2 Doctoral candidates must be selected based on a competitive and transparent process. The process should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Admission requirements specifying; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relevant Master's degree equivalent to NCQF Level 9 from a recognized institution; or</li> <li>2. A candidate registered for a relevant Master's degree and whose registration has been upgraded (pertinent documents indicating how this is done in the university to be given).</li> </ul> </li> <li>b) Medium of instruction / Language requirements;</li> <li>c) Requirements for submission of applications; and</li> <li>d) Guidelines for processing applications.</li> <li>e) Identification of suitable supervisors</li> </ul> <p>2.3 In the selection process, ETPs must submit selection criteria for doctoral students.</p> <p>2.4 ETPs must submit selection criteria for doctoral candidates' potential for research should be assessed.</p> <p>2.5 Both, full-time and part-time Doctoral candidates must have a clearly defined time for completion of their studies.</p>
<b>Supplementary</b>	<b>NONE</b>
<b>CRITERION 3: DOCTORAL LEARNING PROGRAMME STRUCTURE/CONTENT</b>	
<b>Core</b>	<p>3.1 Doctoral Degree learning programmes must be research-based although they may include coursework and other activities that contribute to critical thinking and the development of research skills.</p> <p>3.2 Doctoral Degree learning programmes must have a time limit of 3 to 6 years for full-time Doctoral learners and 6 to 8 years for part-time learners.</p> <p>3.3 The learning programme should enable individual research opportunities; courses should not exceed 1/3 of 360 credits; the learning programme must develop transferable skills, and provide sufficient training in the methodology, ethics, and integrity of research.</p> <p>3.4 The learning programme must have an established process for monitoring the progress of Doctoral candidates.</p> <p>3.5 A Doctoral candidate must have a supervisor(s) allocated on admission.</p> <p>3.6 Acceptance of a Doctoral research proposal must be subject to clearly defined and transparent procedures.</p>
<b>Supplementary</b>	<p>3.7 The learning programme should encourage mobility and participation in learning opportunities in other institutions. This may include but not limited to presentations at academic conferences, workshops and other relevant activities.</p>



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### **CRITERION 4: RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT/CAPACITY**

<b>Core</b>	<p>4.1 Infrastructure and facilities must be up-to-date and relevant to the doctoral programme.</p> <p>4.2 It must be evident, and documented, that research is performed according to acceptable ethical standards.</p> <p>4.3 An Ethics Committee should be responsible for approving research involving humans and animals.</p> <p>4.4 No supervisor should be allocated more than two (2) doctoral candidates per one academic year.</p> <p>4.5 The ETP undertakes self-evaluation each year on the basis of the annual reports of supervisors and doctoral candidates for continuous improvement of the Doctoral Degrees programmes.</p>
<b>Supplementary</b>	<p>4.6 Taking into account the field of research, employment opportunities, and research capacity, the ETP should consider the scheduling of enrolment of new cohorts of learners.</p> <p>4.7 The ETP should support research quality by reporting on annual research output, external research funding, etc.</p>

### **CRITERION 5: SUPERVISION**

<b>Core</b>	<p>5.1 A Doctoral candidate must have at least two supervisors (main supervisor and co-supervisor), in relevant research areas.</p> <p>5.2 Supervisors should be members of the academic staff of the ETP. However, through contractual arrangements, supervisors could also be from other recognised ETPs depending on the availability of the expertise.</p> <p>5.3 Supervisors must hold a Doctoral Degree and at least at a senior lecturer position, published at least ten research outputs such as journal articles in Peer Reviewed journals, books and/or Chapters published in recognised publishing outlets, with at least three (3) publications in the past five (5) years.</p> <p>5.4 Supervisors and Doctoral Degree candidates must meet regularly (at the very least monthly) to discuss the candidates' research and monitor progress. These meetings must be documented.</p> <p>5.5 Responsibilities of the ETP, supervisor and Doctoral learner must be set out clearly in a policy document.</p>
<b>Supplementary</b>	<p>5.1 The ETP should have a process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, and functions of their Doctoral Degree learning programme i.e.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>learners, staff and scholars exchange programs;</li> <li>research and education partnerships between ETPs regionally and internationally.</li> </ol> <p>5.2 The ETP provides professional development opportunities for supervisors.</p> <p>5.3 Participation by the ETP in national, regional and international academic networks and similar activities relevant to the doctoral programme should be documented.</p>

### **CRITERION 6: ASSESSMENT**

<b>Core</b>	<p>A brief description of the mode and the process of assessment to cover but not limited to the following:</p> <p>6.1 Student Assessment</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Coursework, and Thesis examination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Continuous assessment for coursework may include practicals, assignments, research papers and/ or project reports;</li> <li>ii) Examinations may include written and/or oral examinations; and</li> <li>iii) Thesis examination as indicated in b).</li> </ul> </li> <li>b) Thesis Only examination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Records of student-supervisor(s) interactions;</li> <li>ii) Research progress reports (research proposal, journal and conference papers, conference abstracts, seminar presentations);</li> <li>iv) Thesis submission according to ETP guidelines.</li> <li>v) Doctoral candidates must confirm that the Doctoral thesis is their original work.</li> </ul> </li> <li>c) Procedures for thesis examination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Examination of the thesis shall be both written and oral.</li> <li>ii) The ETP must have Regulations for Preparation and Submission of the thesis covering but not be limited to: form, content, length, binding requirements, and submission requirements.</li> <li>iii) The ETP must have a documented protocol for the examination process including the appointment of examiners (internal and external), composition of the examination committee, which should comprise at least three members. All the members of the committee for the evaluation of the public defence must be established authorities in the research field. The committee must have at least one external member from a domestic or international institution.</li> <li>iv) The institution must have clear regulations governing the instance of a negative assessment.</li> <li>v) ETPs must have clear policies and procedures to address any kind of misconduct such as unethical practice, plagiarism, fabrication of data, etc.</li> <li>vi) A supervisor may not serve as a member of the examination committee but must be there as an observer in a public defence.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Supplementary</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>CRITERION 7: DOCTORAL RESEARCH OUTCOME</b>	
<b>Core</b>	<p>7.1 The outcome of the Doctoral learning programme is a thesis which must be made available electronically and through the institution's library, and elsewhere as may be required by law.</p> <p>7.2 The thesis should reflect original thinking and represent a valuable addition to the knowledge base of the topic.</p> <p>7.3 Doctoral Degree learning programmes should provide a successful candidate with a set of competences that will provide him, or her, with a choice of career paths.</p>

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### **Supplementary**

7.1 Where a Doctoral candidate does not complete his/her Doctoral Degree studies successfully the ETP may wish to consider issuing a transcript that shows the courses he/she attended during the study.

### **6. APPROVAL**

This Quality Assurance Standard was approved by ..... and signed on behalf by:

Issue No:	Version	Name	Designation	Signature	Date

  
**BOTSWANA**  
 Qualifications Authority