



**BOTSWANA**  
Qualifications Authority

# **QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARD 3 CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES FOR ACCREDITATION OF LEARNING PROGRAMMES**

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**REVISION HISTORY**

Date	Summary of changes	Version

## **SECTION A**

### **1. PREAMBLE**

#### **1.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

Learning Programme (LP) is a process whereby a learning programme leading to qualifications registered on the National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCQF) is evaluated for quality in terms of quality assurance standards set by the Authority and are approved for delivery by a registered and accredited Education and Training Provider (ETP) that are confirmed to have the capacity and capability to offer the learning programme. Therefore, an accredited learning programme is a learning programme that has gone through the process of approval by the Authority, leading to a qualification registered in the NCQF.

Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA) is mandated by the Botswana Qualifications Authority Act, 2013, to maintain a National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCQF) and to coordinate a quality assurance system for education, training, and skills development. Pursuant to, Section 4 sub section 2 (m) of the Act, BQA must accredit LPs across all the education sub-systems - General Education (GE), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Higher Education (HE).

In accordance with Botswana Qualifications Authority (Accreditation of Learning Programmes) Regulations, 2016 any registered and accredited Education and Training Provider (ETP) wishing to offer a LP must apply to BQA for accreditation of such a LP. A registered and accredited Awarding Body wishing to have its programmes offered by an independent ETP is also required to apply for LP accreditation.

The accreditation of LP requires all prospective applicants to submit an application based upon the criteria set out in this document, Quality Assurance Standard 3 (QAS 3) - Criteria and Guidelines for Accreditation of LPs. The development of this document has taken into cognisance other relevant Acts, national policies, institutional quality settings, regulatory structures and global trends in so far as the accreditation of LPs is concerned.

#### 1.2 AIMS FOR ACCREDITATION OF LPs

Accreditation of LPs aims to:

- 1.2.1 ensure quality teaching and learning provision;
- 1.2.2 promote coherence in qualifications;
- 1.2.3 enable access, equity, relevancy, mobility and progression;
- 1.2.4 ensure that education and training standards are continuously maintained; and
- 1.2.5 contribute towards the credibility and marketability of the education and training system.

#### 1.3 PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to set out criteria and offer guidance, to registered and accredited ETPs and Awarding Bodies on the process of accreditation of LPs. It will also ensure that the process of accrediting LPs is structured, transparent and consistent.

#### 1.4 INTERPRETATION

Listed below are definitions of terms used in this document.

**“Accreditation”** - a process of ensuring that ETPs and any programme of education and training offered, conform to any quality assurance standards set by the BQA;

**“Assessor”** –means a person who collects evidence of learners work to measure and make judgement about achievement or non-achievement of specified NCQF standards or qualifications;

**“Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)”** – means the process of collecting credit points for learning achieved and relocation and recognition of such credits from either a local or an external education and training provider;

**“Credit”** - means the amount of learning recognised through qualifications and unit standards registered on the NCQF, measured in terms of notional learning hours;

**“Domain”** - means a grouping of unit standards in a specific area of education or training within sub-fields;

**“Education and Training Provider (ETP)”** – means a person or entity that provides or organises a programme of education and training, including the provision of professional development services;

**“Field”** - means a particular area of learning used as an organising mechanism for the National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCQF);

**“Learning outcomes”** - means statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes;

**“Learning programme”** - means the sequential learning activities, associated with curriculum implementation, leading to the achievement of a particular qualification;

**“Level”** - means a stage in a hierarchical system used for grouping qualifications that are broadly equivalent;

**“Moderation”** – a process which ensures that assessment of outcomes described in the NCQF standards or qualifications are fair, valid, reliable and consistent;

**“Moderator”** – a person that that ascertains whether or not the assessment of outcomes described in the NCQF standards or qualifications are fair, valid, reliable and consistent;

**“National Credit and Qualifications Framework”** - an instrument developed under section 4 (2) (d) for the classification of qualifications according to set criteria for specified levels of learning achieved;

**“Notional learning time”** - means the number of hours an average learner needs to achieve specified learning outcomes. This time includes directed and self-directed activities as well as assessment time;

**“Open and Distance Learning”** - means an approach to teaching and learning that offers open and flexible access to learning opportunities to anyone, anywhere, and at any time. The teaching and learning modalities as well as the admission criteria are flexible without compromising the necessary quality considerations.

**“Part qualification”** - means an assessed unit of learning that is registered by the Authority as part of a qualification;

**“Qualification”** - means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards;

**“Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)”**- means an assessment process that involves assessment of an individual’s relevant prior learning (including formal, informal and non-formal learning) to determine the credit outcomes of an individual’s application for credit;

**“Registration and Accreditation of an ETP”** – means a process that an ETP shall undertake with the Authority as a pre-requisite for LP accreditation to ascertain the ETPs capacity to provide for a defined scope of education and training in accordance with the Act;

**“Sub-field”** - means a specific area of education or training at qualifications level within a field.



## **SECTION B – THE CRITERIA**

This section provides requirements to be met by ETPs for accreditation of LPs leading to qualifications or part qualifications registered on the NCQF.

### **CRITERION 1: LEARNING PROGRAMME GENERAL INFORMATION**

BQA requires the ETP to indicate key information about the LP for which accreditation is sought.

The applicant shall:

- a) provide the name of the ETP, title, level of the LP, type of qualification, credit value, duration of programme, month and year developed, and frequency of review period;
- b) ensure the credit value indicated conform to the weighting characteristic of those of the qualification;
- c) indicate the learning field, subfield and domain within which the programme falls;
- d) ensure that the LP accreditation application is within the ETP's approved scope of accreditation; and
- e) indicate the registered qualification or part qualification on the NCQF, upon which the LP is based.

### **CRITERION 2: LEARNING PROGRAMME STRUCTURE, DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY**

BQA requires the ETP to adequately structure and align the LP to the qualification.

The applicant shall ensure that:

- a) all components of the LP such as options for progression, including the sequence of compulsory, elective components, pre and co requisites, and all entry and exit points are presented;
- b) the LP is modularised or organised into learning units showing that the modules or courses are aligned to the stipulated LP exit outcomes;
- c) the credit weighting of each module is appropriate and add up to the credit value indicated for the LP;
- d) the proposed modes of delivery which allow for flexibility, access and equity are stipulated.

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- e) LP outcomes are aligned to those of the qualification;
- f) LP is comparable to similar learning programmes offered locally, regionally and internationally.
- g) evidence of Internal Quality Assurance mechanism for LP development and delivery is submitted including but not limited to:
  - i internal Quality Assurance Structure. (e.g Curriculum Development Team, Quality Assurance Team, Academic Board, Senate);
  - ii engagement of Academic Experts/Specialists with relevant credentials;
  - iii functions of IQA Structure; and
- h) there is evidence of arrangements for establishing and maintaining strategic partnerships with relevant industry, ETPs, awarding bodies, professional bodies and other key stakeholders to increase capacity to provide for:
  - programme delivery, assessment and certification;
  - quality assurance system development and review; and
  - staff development and/or capacity building.

### CRITERION 3: LEARNING PROGRAMME ENDORSEMENT

The Authority requires ETPs to seek endorsement from relevant Professional Bodies and Regulatory Agencies for LPs that are developed against endorsed qualifications.

The applicant shall ensure that:

- a) the learning programme meets the quality assurance standards and requirements as prescribed by the Professional Body and/or the Regulatory Agency;
- b) relevant information and evidence are provided as and when required by the Professional Body and/or the Regulatory Agency for purposes of learning programme endorsement;
- c) significant changes that affect the terms and conditions of endorsement are disclosed to the relevant professional body before implementation of the changes; and
- d) evidence of endorsement (e.g letter of endorsement or certificate of endorsement) obtained from the Professional Body and/or the Regulatory Agency is submitted to the Authority as part of the application for learning programme accreditation.

#### **CRITERION 4: WORK-PLACEMENT/INTERNSHIP**

BQA seeks to establish that there is effective coordination of work-placement or internship. The arrangement for work-placement or internship should include adequate infrastructure, effective communication, record of learner progress, monitoring and mentoring.

The applicant shall provide:

- (a) procedure(s) for pre-placement preparation covering health and safety issues, accountabilities, supervision, and regular monitoring;
- (b) clear roles and responsibilities of key players (workplace supervisors and mentors, academic staff, learners, etc.);
- (c) documented risk management plan for each placement; and
- (d) a contract template capturing an agreement between the learner and the ETP stipulating identified procedures and expected outcomes of the placement.

#### **CRITERION 5: LEARNING SUPPORT**

BQA requires the ETP to establish a learner support system which is regularly reviewed and evaluated for continuous improvement.

The applicant shall:

- a) provide implementation guidelines on learner support;
- b) Document a learner support system which shall include but not limited to:
  - i tutorial sessions;
  - ii learner research project supervision;
  - iii internship coordination and support visits by teachers;
  - iv arrangements for supporting learners with special needs;
  - v orientation to the teaching and learning methods on the programme, particularly if electronic learning methods are used.

- vi consideration and selection of venues and times for contact sessions, travel time and expense for learners. Care is taken to place suitable sites of learning close to where learners live/work.
- vii opportunities for individual academic support for learners either by telephone, by appointment, or online.
- c) Make arrangements for periodic review or evaluation of the implementation of the learner support system which involves staff members and learners.
- d) Where entry is open, ensure that care is taken to provide sufficient academic support to students who may be under-prepared. This may be by the provision of access to bridging courses, additional units within existing courses, or increased support.
- e) Ensure that numbers of students enrolled in a programme do not exceed the capacity of the staff and the administrative infrastructure to provide for learner support and assessment needs; and
- f) student support mechanisms take into account the unique needs of students who study under adverse conditions (e.g. remote rural areas) or who are physically disadvantaged.

#### **CRITERION 6: ASSESSMENT AND MODERATION**

BQA requires the ETP to establish assessment and moderation processes that are fair, consistent, secure, and appropriate.

The processes should:

- (a) outline assessment strategies for the LP consistent with those of the qualification;
- (b) ensure that the assessment strategies provide for; alignment of formative and summative assessments to learning outcomes, equity and access, communication with and involvement of learners in planning for assessments, use of appropriate assessment methods and integration to avoid duplication of efforts on the learners;
- (c) ensure the level of complexity, scope and sequencing of assessment activities adequately capture the learning outcomes for the LP;
- (d) ensure a schedule of assessments including the type, credit, due date, and assessment criteria for each assessment is provided to learners at the commencement of each LP;

- (e) make provision for the implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) policies for the LP;
- (f) ensure procedure(s) for updating and amending learner attainment records are in place;
- (g) ensure that the personnel conducting assessments and moderation are registered and accredited with BQA; and
- (h) make provision for appointment of assessors and moderators.
- (i) ensure that assessment, especially of experiential or workplace learning, is designed in terms of predetermined outcomes and criteria;
- (j) ensure that a range of parties is involved in the assessment of learners: for example, there might be self-assessment, peer assessment, tutor assessment and/or assessment by workplace mentors;

#### **CRITERION 7: CERTIFICATION AND AWARDS**

BQA requires the ETP to establish a process of awarding the qualification upon successful completion of the LP. The ETP or independent awarding body responsible for the award of the qualification should have an effective system for the registration and certification of learners.

The ETP shall:

- (a) ensure there are efficient arrangements in place for the integrity of certification processes for the qualification obtained through the LP;
- (b) ensure that certificates can only be issued when all the requirements for the qualification have been met;
- (c) ensure that the certificates reflect as a minimum the title of award, level, date of issue, name and logo of awarding body as well as signatures of relevant persons from the awarding body;
- (d) have a procedure for efficient and confidential reporting of credit to BQA National Learner Record Database;
- (e) ensure that certificates exhibit sufficient security features to guard against forgery and/or aid identification of false copies of the certificate; and
- (f) have a procedure in place for the issuing of replacement certificates.

#### **CRITERION 8: LEARNING PROGRAMME EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

BQA seeks to establish that there is effective LP evaluation and review processes.

The applicant shall ensure:

- (a) there is a procedure for LP evaluation and review;
- (b) there is provision for involvement of stakeholders with clear roles, responsibilities and levels of accountability in LP evaluation and review; and
- (c) that the LP evaluation and review is consistent with the evaluation and review of the associated qualification.

#### **CRITERION 9: HUMAN RESOURCES**

BQA seeks to establish that there is capability and capacity regarding staffing, to support sustained delivery of the LP in all delivery modes.

The applicant shall:

- (a) provide information on the required minimum qualification and experience of the academic and support staff;
- (b) ensure that enrolment projections are consistent with the human resources to be made available for the LP; and
- (c) provide a development or resourcing plan that is consistent with the envisaged increase in enrolments.

#### **CRITERION 10: FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

BQA seeks to establish that there is capability and capacity to support sustained delivery of the LP in all delivery modes, with regard to appropriate financial resources.

The applicant shall:

- (a) provide information on funding for the LP; and
- (b) ensure the budgetary provision is consistent with the projected enrolments and staffing levels.

## **CRITERION 11: PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

BQA seeks to establish that there is capability and capacity to support sustained delivery of the LP in all delivery modes, with regard to availability of physical resources.

The applicant shall:

- (a) make provision for required equipment and specialist facilities;
- (b) ensure prescribed resources, inclusive of library facilities, internet access and online resources are consistent with the provision typical of the LPs to be offered;
- (c) ensure the environment is conducive to teaching and learning and facilities are accessible and inclusive of all learners;
- (d) ensure teaching and learning facilities comply with the applicable laws relating to the occupational health and safety of persons on the premises and have licenses as issued by the relevant authorities
- (e) In web-based/online courses, the following additional criteria apply:
  - i The teaching and learning platform service is speedy and reliable: it is easy to connect to the site, and the site loads quickly with a minimum number of crashed sessions.
  - ii The site clearly displays its institutional links and acknowledges sources of material used.
  - iii Support in the use of various functions on the site is provided both in the site itself and from external technical assistance.
  - iv Ensure staff have the resources, research facilities and conducive working conditions to provide rich and coherent learning experiences through a variety of open, distance and flexible delivery modes;
  - v Ensure staff is supported to utilise appropriate resources including learning management systems that enhance learning within open, flexible and distance educational contexts.

## **SECTION C: LEARNING PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION PROCESS**

All enquires on LP Accreditation will be attended to at the Authority's One Stop Shop operated by the Customer Service Division.

### **1.1 SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION**

A customer who is ready to apply should complete an application form and the application template for learning programme accreditation. It is important that the applicant ascertains that the LP for which accreditation is sought is based on a qualification registered in the NCQF. The applicant should ensure that the correct application fee is paid during the submission of an application to avoid delays in processing of an application. The Authority will acknowledge receipt of the application.

### **1.2 DESK EVALUATION**

The Authority will evaluate the application documents and may request for additional information from the applicant. Following desk evaluation, BQA will undertake validation to the ETP where necessary. A validation report will be produced for consideration by relevant committees of the Authority.

### **1.3 DECISION OF ACCREDITATION**

The reports produced from the assessment of an application will go through the Authority's decision-making structures which consider recommendations, make further recommendations and make the decision depending on the level of the learning programme and the decision-making structure. The applicant will be notified about the decision.

### **1.4 APPEALS**

An applicant aggrieved by a decision of the Authority may appeal the decision in writing within 21 days of being notified of such decision.

## **SECTION D - POST ACCREDITATION ACTIVITIES**

To maintain accreditation of a learning programme, an ETP must continue to comply with the Act, the Regulations and these criteria and guidelines. The primary responsibility for managing compliance lies with the ETP itself, as part of its on-going self-assessment.

### **1.1 ADVERTISING AND USE OF BQA LOGO**

Permission for the use of the logo in cases of registered and accredited ETPs will be granted by the Chief Executive Officer of BQA after a written request before the printing or publication of any commercial or non-commercial material.

BQA will respond in writing approving or disapproving use of the logo and will guide the ETP on acceptable use of the logo. ETPs are reminded that the BQA logo cannot be used on the certificates they award.

### **1.2 LEARNING PROGRAMME AUDIT**

The Authority shall conduct audits of learning programmes at predetermined intervals as per the audit schedule available at BQA.

The ETP will be expected to submit a learning programme self-evaluation report three months prior to an audit. The report should be compiled in accordance with the Guidelines for Development of Self Evaluation Report (learning programme) available at BQA. The information contained in the report will be used to guide the audit.

Following the audit, BQA will develop an audit report based on the findings. The audit report will detail judgement as to the level of confidence placed in the ETP's quality management system and its implementation.

### **1.3 RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION**

- (a) An ETP which wishes to remain registered and accredited shall, at least six (6) months before the period of registration and accreditation expires, apply for renewal.
- (b) An application for renewal shall be made to the Authority on the prescribed Form.
- (c) The application shall be accompanied by a non-refundable fee and relevant documentation and information.

### **1.4 NOTIFICATION OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGES**

Major changes to learning programmes have the potential to impact on the provision of teaching and learning and the ETP's capacity to meet the requirements and must be reported to BQA. Major changes may be planned or due to circumstances which are unplanned. If any changes in circumstances of the learning programme occur or changes are proposed or likely, an ETP should notify BQA as early as possible to confirm the process to be followed and the level of approval required. Significant changes include the following, but not limited to:

- (a) a change in the name of a learning programme;
- (b) a change in ownership;
- (c) a change in legal status;
- (d) a decision to cease operations;
- (e) a change in the duration or credit value of a learning programme;
- (f) a change in the content of a learning programme of more than 30% of the core components;
- (g) discontinuation of a learning programme;
- (h) a change in location of sites used;
- (i) a change in the composition of the governing body;
- (j) a change in senior management or senior academic personnel;
- (k) a change in funding sources;
- (l) a change in any franchising or partnership arrangements;
- (m) an increase or decrease in enrolment of more than 10%;
- (n) a change in learner-teacher ratio;
- (o) a change in accreditation status of staff;
- (p) the opening of a new site locally; or

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- (q) a change in the mode of delivery of any programme or course and assessment.

### 1.5 REVOCATION OF ACCREDITATION

- (a) The Authority may revoke accreditation of a learning programme where the Authority has good cause to believe that the accredited learning programme no longer meets the criteria set for learning programme accreditation.
- (b) Where the Authority decides to revoke the accreditation of a learning programme, a written notice shall be issued to the governing body of the ETP outlining the conditions of revocation.

### SECTION E APPROVAL

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

Issue No:	Version	Name	Designation	Signature	Date