

## **TRAINING DOCUMENT – DO NOT SHARE**

### **HAQAA3 EXPERT TRAINING: CHECKING A SAR**

**28 OCTOBER 2025**

#### **EXAMPLE – SAR of NCHE Malawi – Full agency review – 2024**

##### **Part B. Standard 3. Implementation Processes of External Quality Assurance**

**The standards, processes, and procedures for EQA shall be predefined, reliable, published, and consistently implemented for purposes of accountability.**

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) ensures the reliability of quality assurance tools and processes by benchmarking against regional and global frameworks, such as those from South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, England, and the United States of America. This commitment to global standards is reflected in the [Minimum Standards](#), each broken down into indicators to ensure consistency and accountability. Once developed, these tools are disseminated to HEIs and published on the NCHE's website. The NCHE is also developing scoring rubrics for accreditation tools. The institution and programme accreditation processes follow well-defined steps outlined in the [NCHE Accreditation Evaluation Framework](#) and described in section 5.2.3 of Chapter 5. The process starts with submission of an application by the HEI, self-assessment exercise, onsite visit, approval of the assessment report by the Council, and finally development of improvement plans by the HEIs. The NCHE provides the [Self-Assessment Report \(SAR\) Template](#) and [Improvement Plan Template](#) used by the HEIs in order to assist them in the process of self-evaluation, preparation for accreditation and for continuous improvement in line with the ASG-QA. The SAR template helps institutions document their institution profile, strengths, and areas needing improvement, while the Improvement Plan guides them in addressing any observations made during the assessment.

The Self-Assessment Report (SAR) must be submitted well in advance to the NCHE before the accreditation assessment commences. Once the NCHE approves the SAR, assessment dates are set, and the NCHE formally communicates the assessment programme to the institution through a letter from the CEO. The SAR is shared with reviewers during the site visit for them to verify a number of quality issues in the SAR. However, it is worth noting that gaps exist in the usage of the HEI's SARs by expert reviewers who do not dedicate much time to use and verify issues in the SAR. Moving forward, we will work on emphasizing and further enhancing

capacity building for review panels to dedicate appropriate time to using the institutional SARs during registration and accreditation assessments.

The site visits comprise an entry meeting, assessment of curriculum and supporting documents, infrastructure inspections, independent interviews with academic staff, support staff and students, and an exit meeting. The NCHE ensures that interview questions are context-specific and tailored to the field under review. Reviewers work collaboratively to develop questions targeted at the different stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the institution's performance. After the site visit assessment, the assessors produce a report which NCHE sends to the HEI for factual error checks before submitting it to the Council for approval (See example of a [factual error checked report](#), comments from HEI are in red). Beginning this year, a [post assessment evaluation tool](#) is administered to get feedback from the HEI on the overall accreditation process and how best it can be improved.

The Department of Standards and Audits at the NCHE monitors the implementation of improvement plans, ensuring institutions enhance their educational quality. Additionally, this department conducts quality audits and spot checks to verify HEI compliance (See example of a [quality audit report](#) . In addition, the assessment process is governed by clear and detailed guidelines, as outlined in the [Accreditation Evaluation Framework](#), [Reviewers' Guidelines](#) for the Assessment of HEIs and the Code of Conduct for reviewers. By adhering to these rigorous processes and benchmarks, the NCHE demonstrates its compliance with ASG-QA standards and its commitment to enhancing the quality and reliability of assessment of the quality of higher education in Malawi. This systematic approach fosters a culture of continuous improvement and accountability within Malawian HEIs, ensuring that they meet both national, regional and international expectations for quality education. The description of how the NCHE aligns with Standard 3 is summarised in Table 8.3.

**Table 8.3:** Summary description of how the NCHE aligns with Standard 3

ASG-QA –STANDARD 3	DESCRIPTION OF HOW NCHE IS ALIGNED TO ASG-QA -STANDARD 3	EVIDENCE /DATA OR INFORMATION SOURCE
The standards, processes, and procedures for EQA shall be predefined,	a) The NCHE ensures that minimum standards and relevant tools and processes are reliable, and in line with good quality assurance practices by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Minimum Standards</a></li> </ul>

<p>reliable, published, and consistently implemented for purposes of accountability.</p>	<p>benchmarking against standards from mature quality assurance agencies in the region and beyond.</p> <p>b) The steps in accreditation evaluation including self-assessment are clearly defined by the NCHE Accreditation Evaluation Framework. The HEIs are informed through a formal letter from the NCHE and orally at the entry meeting during site visits.</p> <p>c) NCHE has a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) template and improvement plan template. Improvement plan template is used by institutions to document how they will work and improve on the observations made during the assessment.</p> <p>d) The assessment guidelines are stated in reviewers' guidelines for assessment of HEIs and code of conduct.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Accreditation Evaluation Framework</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Samples of Self-Assessment Report.</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Samples of Improvement Plan.</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Reviewers Guidelines</a></li> </ul>
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