



Council on Higher Education (CHE)

SCHEDULE 6

Guidelines for self-Evaluation [Revised]

1.0 Definition of Self-Evaluation

Self-Evaluation (also known as self-assessment or self-review) is a holistic evaluation of the capacity of an academic entity such as a department, faculty, school, college or entire institution to offer a programme of study. A self-evaluation process provides an academic entity with an opportunity to systematically review the progress made over a specified period of time, identify strengths and weaknesses in its offering of the programme and plan for improvement.

2.0 Purpose of Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation is an important self-enlightening process in an educational organisation and ideally, should be an internally-driven process. The primary purpose of self-evaluation is to enable those running the programme designated for accreditation to identify what they are doing well and what they are doing poorly with a view to instituting improvement measures. It is about knowing where one stands in order to determine where next to go and how and when to get there. By doing self-evaluation an institution running the programme will be able to account for the quality of all its programme activities. Self-evaluation presents an opportunity for a department/institution to reflect on its programme offering against a set of approved criteria. It forms a basis for a cycle of self-improvement plans. Thus, it is essentially a positive and constructive undertaking meant to enhance institutional/faculty/departmental as well as programme delivery processes; it is neither punitive nor meant to be confrontational. An effective self-evaluation system is premised on a collegial rather than on a managerial or bureaucratic rationality.

3.0 Preparations for Self-Evaluation

To derive maximum benefits from self-Evaluation, there is need for putting the house in order first and foremost. A lot of preparation is needed in order to undertake an informative self-evaluation exercise. The following activities are an essential component of preparations for self-evaluation.

- 3.1 Select specific programme for each self-evaluation;
- 3.2 Focus the self-evaluation exercised on each of CHE's Minimum Programme Accreditation Standards. There are 13 of these standards;

- 3.3 Put together a panel of reviewers – normally the Dean nominates the panel members and appoints the chair of the panel. Panel members may include the programme chair, and staff at different levels of seniority. In small institutions all staff in a programme may be included in the review panel. Where possible, incorporating an experienced person from outside (the department or even institution) may be helpful;
- 3.4 Establish the quality assurance unit which will facilitate the training of the programme panel of evaluators on how to conduct the process, including the interpretation of quality criteria to be used. For consistency purposes, it is advisable to provide a template form to be used during the evaluation process;
- 3.4 Panel gets together and formulates questions based on the quality criteria for the relevant focus areas targeted by the evaluation. They discuss the themes and issues to be considered during the evaluation process;
- 3.5 Prepare relevant documents to be reviewed together with the evidence;
- 3.6 Preparations for self-evaluation take time; make sure you give sufficient lead-in time.

4.0 Doing Self-Evaluation

- 4.1 Be analytical, self-critical, reflective and evaluative rather than descriptive;
- 4.2 Follow the format recommended by CHE for the development of the report;
- 4.3 Reduce detailed descriptions if necessary – bear in mind that details can be provided in depth in supplementary information/evidence;
- 4.4 Ensure that every claim is grounded in evidence and use of examples where appropriate;
- 4.5 Identify the strengths of the programme in relation to each standard and provide clear evidence that supports each observation;
- 4.6 Be honest about the weaknesses/challenges or areas that need improvement and state the strategies put in place to deal with each weakness/challenge;
- 4.7 Be aware that if a weakness or area of improvement has just been identified in the programme and not yet addressed, there is still time - something introduced just before the review can be regarded as “wet paint”;
- 4.8 Ensure that claims such as “the programme regularly discusses” are evidenced in minutes / notes of meetings;
- 4.9 Show that the department/faculty/institution is committed to a self-critical evaluation, reflection and genuine improvement;
- 4.10 Don’t try to hide problems. It is better to identify them and show how they are being attended to than to hide them;

4.11 Don not underestimates the time required to develop the Self-Evaluation Report.

5.0 Minimum Programme Accreditation

The CHE Minimum Programme Accreditation Standards will serve as a basis for doing the Self-Evaluation. These standards consist of the following 13 categories of criteria:

- a) Goals and Objectives of the Programme;
- b) Financing of the Programme;
- c) Programme Design & Development;
- d) Teaching & Learning Strategy;
- e) Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms;
- f) Physical Resources & Infrastructure;
- g) Staffing;
- h) Admissions;
- i) Assessment of Learner Attainment;
- j) Student Support Services;
- k) Research & Innovation;
- l) Community/Industry Engagement;
- m) Internationalization.

For each of these 13 categories of criteria, self-evaluation must:

- (i) Provide a detailed description of the current state of affairs;
- (ii) Analyse the status quo to establish whether each criterion is fully met;
- (iii) Provide evidence of the extent to which the criterion is fully met;
- (iv) Provide a detailed description of the current strengths and weaknesses;
- (v) Make specific suggestions on areas that need to be improved.

NB Enterprising institutions always strive to go beyond the stipulated minimum standards in their quest for excellence.

6.0 Self-Evaluation Report Structure

The self-evaluation report is the main vehicle for the institution to convey information about its capacity to offer a high quality programme. Equally, and perhaps more importantly, it is the starting point for critical reflection by the institution about the way it manages and handles quality as a central value in its offering of the programme. For this reason the report should not only be descriptive, it should also be evaluative, reflective and synthetic. It should evaluate strengths and weaknesses in the context of constraints, threats, and opportunities as well as showing the interconnectedness of the various elements of strategic planning and quality management in the provision of the programme. In addition, the analysis should take into account changes that have taken place in the programme in the recent past as well as ones anticipated in the future.

The Self-Evaluation Report will consist of three major sections: (1) Introduction, (2) Body of Report and (3) Conclusions. The items to be included in each section are briefly described here below:

Section 1: Introduction

This section consists of two sub-sections:

(a) Purpose of Self-Evaluation and Programme Profile

- Purpose of self-evaluation,
- Brief profile of the department/faculty/institution offering the programme
- Brief remarks on the nature of the programme.

(b) Methodology

- Composition of the Panel that carried out the self-evaluation;
- Methodology adopted in doing the self-evaluation;
- Brief description of any information that you think may be useful to the reader.

Section 2: Body of the Report

In this section categories of criteria are further divided into the following three clusters: programme input, programme processes and programme outcomes as shown here below. The key idea in this section is to report on observed performance against specific quality criteria. The match or mismatch between observed performance and the relevant criteria should be made explicit. This is an important section of the report that will inform recommendations and development of an improvement plan.

Programme Inputs

- Goals and Objectives of the Programme
- Financing of the Programme
- Physical Resources & Infrastructure
- Programme design & development
- Staffing
- Admissions
- Student Support Services

Programme Processes

- Teaching & Learning Strategy
- Internal Quality Assurance Processes
- Assessment of learner attainment

An important issue to mention in this case are the academic regulations governing the mobility of students from one level to another in the programme.

Programme Outputs/Outcomes

- Research & innovation
- Community /Industry Engagement
- Internationalization

An important issue worth mentioning in this section is the employability of graduates.

Section 3: Conclusions

Whereas the strengths and weaknesses in the body of the report were according to individual groups of criteria, in this section a consolidated summary of strengths and weaknesses of the entire programme that has been evaluated is given, including the following key components:

- Summary of strengths
- Summary of weaknesses
- Recommendations for improvement.