Stakeholders' Perceptions of an Institutional Quality Audit: A Case Study

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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March 2012

ABSTRACT

This thesis briefly explores the quality phenomenon in higher education and more specifically in the university context. In addition, the experiences of stakeholders who participated in the first institutional quality audit at a merged university are explored and analysed. It is also argued that the world-wide quality phenomenon at universities, although sometimes politically driven and at times undertaken with hidden agendas, may eventually add value to a university' cycle of never-ending quality improvement and enhancement. University stakeholders who are either directly or indirectly involved in realising the university's vision and mission can provide invaluable feedback about their experience of a quality audit. Feedback by all stakeholders about a quality audit will assist the university to plan and prepare for the next cycle of quality audits. The research findings of this study indicated that a variety of differences exist in the perceptions of stakeholders that participated in the preparation and execution of the institutional quality audit. In some cases the differences may hold some limited risk for the university therefore some recommendations are also made in support of future audits. These and other recommendations emenating from the research findings will hopefully also contribute towards improved engagement between the stakeholders and members of the audit panel.

Keywords: quality, quality audit, quality improvement, quality enhancement, university, higher education, stakeholders.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie verhandeling ondersoek kortliks die verskynsel van gehalte in hoër onderwys, en meer spesifiek in die universiteitskonteks. Voorts word die ervarings van belanghebbendes wat deelgeneem het aan die eerste institusionele kwaliteitsoudit aan 'n saamgesmelte universiteit, ondersoek en ontleed. Daar word ook aangevoer dat die wêreldwye verskynsel van kwaliteit aan universiteite uiteindelik waarde kan toevoeg tot 'n universiteit se siklus van ewigdurende kwaliteitsversekering en –verbetering, selfs al is hierdie verskynsel soms polities gedrewe en al gaan dit by tye gepaard met verskuilde agendas. Belanghebbendes van die universiteit wat direk of indirek betrokke is by die realisering van die universiteit se visie en missie kan uiters waardevolle terugvoer bied oor hulle ervaring van 'n kwaliteitsoudit. Terugvoer deur alle belanghebbendes oor 'n kwaliteitsoudit sal die universiteit help om vir die volgende siklus kwaliteitsoudits te beplan en voor te berei. Die navorsingsbevindings van hierdie studie dui daarop dat 'n verskeidenheid verskille wel bestaan in die persepsies van belanghebbendes wat deelgeneem het aan die voorbereiding en uitvoering van die institusionele kwaliteitsoudit. In sommige gevalle hou die verskille wel 'n beperkte risiko vir die universiteit in en daarom word aanbevelings gemaak ter ondersteuning van toekomstige kwaliteitsoudits. Hierdie, sowel as ander aanbevelings sal hopelik ook bydra tot verbeterde interaksie tussen die belanghebbendes en lede van die ouditpaneel.

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I acknowledge that I have consulted and included both primary and secondary sources that were either prepared or co-prepared by myself and that were partially included as part of the NWU Institutional Quality Audit self-evaluation report[1] and/or portfolio[2] of evidence.

Most of all, I would like to thank my devoted wife, Fienie and our two joyful daughters, Dorien and Anneri, for their moral and constant support. Finally, I thank my Heavenly Father through my Saviour, JESUS CHRIST, for health, compassion, wisdom and perseverance. SOLI DEO GLORIA!

[1] The self-evaluation report excludes all supporting evidence.

[2] The self-evaluation portfolio includes the self-evaluation report as well as supporting evidence.

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CHAPTER 1
ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The government that came into power after the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 introduced many policy transformations that influenced the South African education system, and more specifically the higher education system. Transformational changes were envisaged and enforced through several new policy directives. The effect these policy transformations had on the higher education sector will possibly be felt and reported on for decades to come. One such policy directive was the establishment of a quality agency for higher education (CHE, 2000). Prior to 1994, the former technikons[3] functioned totally independently of the traditional universities[4]. With the dawn of a new era in 1994, however, technikons were transformed into universities of technology and a new phenomenon also emerged which became known as comprehensive universities. Although some traditional universities[5] did retain their former status, they also had to transform in terms several other issues, which fall beyond the scope of this study. The quality agency became known as the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and functioned as an umbrella body for its sister organisation, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). These bodies were established to oversee the quality arrangements at all higher education providers, both public and private.

Some of the transformational issues that were brought about by the establishment of the CHE and HEQC included, amongst others, academic programme accreditation and institutional quality audits. Much more work had to be done by higher education providers to comply with clearly set minimum standards, but with no additional monetary

[3] Committee for Technikon Principals.
[4] Committee for University Principals.
[5] E.g. Cape Town; Western Cape; Stellenbosch; Pretoria; Rhodes; Free State.

support[6] from the creators of these policies. All policies regulating the higher education environment had a clear influence on the future trajectory of higher education providers, and more specifically public universities.

As part of the initiative to transform and restructure a divided, fragmented and discriminatory education system into a more democratic, open and inclusive system, the Council on Higher Education – through its Higher Education Quality Committee – developed a framework and criteria for the conduct of institutional quality audits at all higher education providers[7]. However, it is not clear whether the time, resources and energy vested in this tremendous exercise are of real value to the institution and its concerned stakeholders.

An institutional audit which was accompanied by much controversy and press reports, was the HEQC institutional quality audit at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. There was considerable tension between the HEQC and the institution with regard to several issues. As a result, the HEQC eventually withdrew the institutional quality audit report for the concerned institution, after it had already been published on the internet[8].

In an attempt to identify the sources of such tension between an institution and the HEQC and hence to limit future instances of tension, this study aims to investigate one case study where the quality agency (HEQC) and its representatives used triangulation interviews to interrogate university stakeholders (see 3.5.8). The views of these university stakeholders will also be obtained (see Annexure a, question 3). In this way, the data can proactively inform the planning for the next cycle of audits and possibly limit unnecessary tension between the quality agency and the institution's management, but also between the quality agency and the array of stakeholders that are involved in an exercise of this magnitude (see Table 4.1).

[6] Earmarked funding from the DoHET is acknowledged.
[7] Public and Private providers.
[8] An official letter was sent by the HEQC to all Universities announcing the withdrawal of this specific report.

1. 2 Background and problem formulation

Another motivating factor for this study is that it is also important to determine the experience[9] of stakeholders at a higher education institution that was audited. Higher education providers can easily be overwhelmed by negative sentiments regarding the quality control mechanisms that were established by the government in South Africa (since 1994): this study offers the example of one multi-campus traditional public university that, despite various difficulties, managed to overcome this challenge and to create an environment in which the transformative quality discourse is genuinely embraced in order to ensure a sustainable trajectory in support of all its stakeholders and of the country at large.

A brief background that informed this study is provided below, in order to contextualise the concerned case.

1.2.1 Background to the study

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), a permanent subcommittee of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), was established in 2001, following the discontinuation of SERTEC[10] and the Quality Promotion Unit (QPU) (see SAUVCA, 2002). SERTEC was established as a certification body in 1988 for the then "Technikon sector" in South Africa (Jacobs, 2000:69). Universities have formally attended to quality-related issues since 1995, when the QPU was established to assist universities to conduct institutional self-evaluation at different levels. The philosophy of the QPU was one of self-regulation and quality improvement rather than quality control and evaluation (Smout & Stephenson, 2001:4) (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14).

Between 2001 and 2002, the HEQC announced interim arrangements for quality assurance in higher education in South Africa and finally implemented the new national model for quality in 2003 (also see CHE, 2000). The HEQC indicated to higher

[9] Perceptions.
[10] Also see Certification Council for Technikon Education, 1998.

education providers that they were required to establish and sustain effective institutional quality systems and accompanying processes that would yield reliable information for both internal quality, planning as well as external institutional audits. Institutional audits were to be conducted by the HEQC in six year cycles. Higher education providers therefore had to develop, document and implement their own internal quality systems, processes and procedures in support of continuous monitoring and improvement. Continuous monitoring and improvement should not be performed primarily to adhere to the requirements of any external quality body (e.g. professional accreditation bodies) but should be an attempt and dedicated effort by a higher education provider in its quest for internal quality care (see Vroeijenstijn, 1995:48) (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14).

Since 2004, the viewpoint of the HEQC regarding the responsibility for quality management has been clearly documented. It indicated, among others, that higher education providers had to establish their own quality management systems; and that these systems should be effective and able to yield information that is reliable for quality planning, external audits and public reporting. In addition, emphasis was placed on the continuous monitoring of quality arrangements for the support of teaching and learning (CHE, 2004a). The viewpoint of the HEQC is clearly supported by Graham, Lyman and Trow's (1995:13) "key points" for quality assurance in higher education, namely:

- The responsibility for quality at an institution lies with the management of an institution (see 3.5.1.2);
- and the maintenance and improvement of quality rest on internal procedures or mechanisms that identify deficiencies, implement remedial actions and take cognisance of the outcome of external evaluations or audits (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14).

It is mandatory for all registered public and private higher education institutions to engage in a quality audit. This engagement, followed by a labour-intensive preparation exercise, however, is for the account of the institution in question (see Annexure E). Many hours are spent on preparing the self-evaluation report and accompanying

portfolio of evidence. In addition, several logistical issues have to be attended to that are not regarded as part of daily university practices. Both academic and support staff members are involved in the preparation and execution of the audit. In addition, students, alumni and various other stakeholders, such as industry, research partners, community representatives, and local and provincial government, also have to participate in the audit (see Table 4.1).

More than one million rand has been spent on operational costs, excluding salaries of staff members, in preparing for the HEQC quality audit at the North-West University (NWU) (see Annexure E). It was the first audit conducted at this university since its establishment following the merger of the former Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education and the University of North West (also formerly known as the University of Bophuthatswana) and the incorporation of the Sebokeng campus of the former VISTA University in January 2004 (Jacobsz, 2007).

1.2.2 Research problem

During the preparation period for the audit, which took almost 24 months to complete, various stakeholders at the institution randomly remarked, either by e-mail or during briefing sessions, that it was a stimulating exercise and money well spent. Others, however, were of the opinion that it was a waste of time, money and energy. A wide spectrum of participants, including students, newly appointed academics, junior researchers, senior academics, rated researchers, middle and senior management, support service staff and members of the university management, were involved in the preparation and execution phase and could hence provide a wealthy source of experience (see Table 4.1).

The preparation process culminated in a panel visit by national and international representatives to all sites of delivery (i.e. campuses) where all supporting portfolio evidence documentation was studied (see Annexure C). This was followed by a week of intensive interviews with stakeholders at the institutional office of the North-West University (see Annexure A, question 3). All other remaining supporting portfolio evidence documentation was studied at the institutional office on the Saturday and

Sunday preceding the interview schedule that started on Monday. These interviews were mainly used by the panel as a source to triangulate the data (see chapter 3) and findings of the self-evaluation report, the accompanying portfolio of evidence and the observations made during the site visits (see Annexure A, question 3).

Despite careful planning and efforts to clearly communicate the purpose of the audit (see Annexure A, question 2), some negative perceptions could be observed during the preparation and execution phase. In order to assist in future planning and preparations for audits, it is essential for the university management to know how stakeholders[11] experienced the audit. As this was the first institutional quality audit undertaken at the NWU, it needs to be determined whether this first attempt can be regarded as successful and what lessons the institution has learnt from both the planning and execution of the audit[12]. The lessons that were learnt should primarily inform future planning and it should also be contextualised, in order to inform the preparation and execution of the next institutional quality audit. Various stakeholders participated in the preparation and execution of the institutional quality audit, but it is not clear whether the distinct sub-groups of stakeholders all agree with regard to the preparation and execution of the audit. In order to inform future planning, the valuable feedback[13] of all stakeholders who participated as interviewees needs to be collected, analysed and interpreted. The analysis of the feedback in the context of the case study is important to inform future planning and execution of similar audits.

1.3 Research question

The research in this study was guided by the following research question: How do stakeholders who participated as interviewees in the HEQC quality audit at North-West University, perceive the quality audit process[14]?

[11] For a list of stakeholders see Table 4.1.
[12] The Scholarly question.
[13] Perception based on experience.
[14] The focus was only aimed at the preparation and execution processes and did neither include any perceptions on the report received from the HEQC nor any perceptions on the development or implementation of the NWU Quality Audit Improvement Plan that was submitted to the HEQC by the end of 2010.

1.4 Aim of the study

The main aim of this study was to identify the possible limitations and deficiencies associated with an HEQC quality audit preparation and execution processes at one South African university. The focus was evidently on the process at one higher education institution in order to improve future institutional efficiency and effectiveness. It needs to be emphasised that this study was specifically based on the feedback that was obtained from stakeholders who participated as interviewees during the audit.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The main aim of the study was pursued through the following objectives:

1.5.1 To determine the rationale for the HEQC Quality Audit and to define the concept *quality* within the context of the case concerned.

1.5.2 To generate and analyse the perceptions of audit interviewees who participated in the HEQC quality audit at the NWU, with special reference to:

- Reading of the self-evaluation report.
- Attendance of audit briefing sessions.
- Reading of briefing documentation.
- Views on the audit itself, with reference to quality improvement (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14), information surrounding the audit, logistical arrangements, reflection on their work (see Annexure A, question 5), the chairperson's role (see Annexure A, questions 7 and 8), the interview, the panel members' engagement and the stakeholders' own participation (see Annexure A, question 6).

1.5.3 To identify deficiencies in the processes at NWU involving the preparation for and execution of the audit visit.

1.5.4 To generate guidelines to improve the processes of preparation for and execution of the next HEQC quality audit at NWU.

1.6 Rationale for the study

The process of preparation for the HEQC audit at NWU was steered by an audit project team[15] that consisted of the institutional director: Quality, the senior advisor in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, and the three campus vice-rectors responsible for quality and planning. The researcher, in his capacity as the institutional director: Quality, is responsible for, among others, the evaluation or review of processes such as the HEQC quality audit process, and to recommend changes for future audits.

In view of future planning for similar audits, such information should, among others, be based on feedback from stakeholders who were interviewed as part of the audit. It is important to establish the appropriate way to advise and direct stakeholders during the preparation for and execution of the audit. It therefore seems important that feedback was to be obtained on the self-evaluation report and the briefing sessions for interviewees; and also regarding the general views of respondents – NWU staff members as well as other stakeholders – on the purpose and execution of the audit (see Annexure A, question 2). What also seems to be relevant and important is the extent to which stakeholders had the opportunity to interact with audit panel members regarding their work, experience and/or their involvement with the NWU.

[15] Became known as the Audit Steering Team

1.7 Significance of the study

During a workshop that was held with university managers responsible for quality on 8 October 2010, senior managers of the HEQC indicated the HEQC's intention to engage in a debate with universities in order to streamline and possibly redevelop the next cycle of audits. The debate was to start officially in the course of 2011. The results from this study could possibly contribute to an information platform for future audits and although this research involves only one institutional case, it may also be beneficial to other universities and to the HEQC in view of future quality audits.

1.8 Core Overview

In this study, a positivistic paradigm[16] (see footnote on next page) was followed in order to understand the context of the audit and to collect data from the audit interviewees that is to be analysed, reported and interpreted (see Annexure A, question 3).

Some stakeholders questioned the sensibleness of the enormous task placed upon universities of preparing for institutional quality audits. Some academics who were sceptic of the process were reluctant to participate in this costly exercise and this led to instances of conflict between individuals. A number of individuals also expressed the opinion that this was a politically motivated exercise to punish the university; hence, some persons were initially reluctant to participate.

Literature on the unique South African audit experience is limited. Existing research based on previous audits in South Africa was reported by Botha, Favish and Stephenson (2008), who conducted a comparison of the experiences at the University of Stellenbosch, the University of Cape Town and Rhodes University. In their comparison they investigated the contexts in which the audits were conducted, they reported on each institution's framework and the anticipated outcomes of the audit, they reported on the preparation for the site visit and they analysed the results of the internal stakeholder

surveys. In addition, the authors also compared the recommendations that were contained in the respective HEQC audit reports, with particular reference to the goals of the HEQC's audit framework. They concluded that although each institution approached the audit in different, context-specific ways, the institutional experience of the audit process and its initial outcomes were remarkably similar. Although the HEQC has an audit framework, every audit is performed in a unique context.

The quality assurance functions of the HEQC are performed within the broad legislative and policy context that shapes and regulates the provision of higher education in South Africa, in particular the *South African Qualifications Authority Act*, the *Higher Education Act* as amended and White Paper 3, *A programme for the transformation of higher education* (DoE, 1997). The HEQC further operates within the *National Plan for Higher Education* (DoE, 2001). These documents summarise the main problems that characterised higher education in the era before 1994 as historical inequality leading to unequal standards of provision; lack of access for members of disadvantaged communities; inefficiency and ineffectiveness, high failure and drop-out rates, unacceptably long periods to complete degrees; irrelevance of the content of many programmes; and inadequate research productivity. These characteristics inherently relate to quality.

"Quality" in the context of this study, with its focus on an institutional audit, refers to the degree to which a university succeeds in continuously meeting the needs and expectations of its internal and external customers in order to inform future planning and continuous improvement (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14). (The concept "quality" will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.) *Internal customers* refer to the staff members and students of the university. *External customers* are all the external role players or stakeholders such as those from industry, employers of graduates, local and provincial government, national or statutory quality assurance bodies, parents, alumni, research partners, social development partners and the Department of Higher Education

[16] The word "positivism", or rather its French cognate, was coined by Auguste Comte in his *Course de philosophie positive* (1830–42). Comte's justification for Positivism, as he understood it, was a view of how knowledge develops, both phylogenetically in society and ontogenetically in each individual, which he expressed as his Law of Three Stages (1830–42,21).

and Training. In this study, the concept *quality assurance* will also refer to the monitoring of quality, including the mechanisms that are needed to monitor quality.

Quality mechanisms ensure ongoing improvement through processes, methods, systems and procedures (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14). The *HEQC criteria* (CHE, 2004a:9) refer to the "mechanisms which evaluate the impact", for example the offering of short courses; the quality management mechanisms that ensure that academic programmes that are offered at all campuses are of equivalent quality; mechanisms which ensure the integrity of learner records; the mechanisms for the quality assurance of the processing of certificates, and so on. The university should maintain and improve quality by means of internal procedures or quality management mechanisms that identify deficiencies, implement remedial actions and take cognisance of the outcome of external audits (Graham, Lyman & Trow, 1995:13).

In order to determine the status quo, quality audits examine whether an institution has a system of quality assurance and associated processes and procedures; and the quality audits also determine the adequacy of this system (Sanyal & Martin, 2007:5). A quality audit as an approach to quality assurance differs from an "inspection", as it focuses on processes and procedures that are in place to ensure quality, rather than on the assessment of quality itself. This is the approach taken by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) (CHE, 2004a), and by international external quality assurance bodies such as the New Zealand Universities Academic Unit (Baker, 1997:10). In this study, the term *quality audit* will refer to an improvement-oriented external evaluation of institutional arrangements for quality in teaching and learning, research and community engagement based on a self-evaluation conducted by the university (see CHE, 2004a:15) (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14). The audit is conducted by peers (national and international) against the criteria of the HEQC (see Annexure A, questions 15 - 21). For purposes of the audit, universities therefore have to develop and implement quality management systems (see Annexure A, question 2).

The implementation of quality management systems at universities can be a daunting task, among others because of the tension between the "managers" and the "managed" (Newton, 1999:18). The anxiety among staff with regard to the implementation of quality

systems and quality monitoring (internally and externally driven) is due to the perception among staff that it is essentially a managerial tool. The majority regard quality monitoring as nothing but a "punitive measurement". They are sceptic about and resistant to the implementation of quality management systems because to them the concept *quality* becomes an additional means of securing managerial control (Harvey, 1995:131).

Universities should establish a culture that is conducive to quality, and they should cultivate a feeling of ownership of quality among its customers, both internal and external. Ownership of quality starts with the development of a "culture for quality" (Cooper, 2002:144; Reichert & Tauch, 2005:30; Szanto, 2005:190). Ownership implies a participative approach towards the initiatives to enhance quality. Senior managers should therefore rely on the capabilities of both managers and staff members at all levels and all campuses of the university. That is why quality management is based on a philosophy of "success through people". Stakeholders should experience that they are empowered to act as agents of change in the continuous quest for quality (see Annexure A, questions 15 - 21).

Waterman (1994:32) explains that human beings need to feel that they have at least some control over what happens to them (see Annexure A, questions 15 - 21). All stakeholders in the university should therefore take part and accept responsibility for the promotion and enhancement of quality and should be motivated by the clear and evident commitment to quality by all managers in the university (Franke, 2002:24; Baird, 2007:105). According to Cele (2005:601), the implementation of an effective quality assurance system necessitates strategies that ensure quality decision making, quality control and organisational health which are underpinned by outstanding leadership.

In this research, a selection of stakeholders (n=468[17]) who participated as interviewees in the NWU's audit will be asked for their perceptions regarding the purpose, preparation and execution of the audit (see Annexure A, question 2). Their perceived experiences can be of value in recommending changes to future audits.

[17] Although 468 stakeholders participated in the audit, not everybody completed the questionnaire, for example the Vice-Chancellor, members of council and stakeholders who were illiterate.

1.9 Research design and methods

Mouton and Marais (1990:34) define a research design as “the arrangement of conditions for collections and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure”. Welman and Kruger (2001:46) define a research design as “a plan according to which we obtain research participants (subjects) and collect information from them”. A survey-type research design was used, involving the administering of a questionnaire (see Annexure A).

In the discussion of the research problem it was indicated that the audit preparation and execution processes were complex and labour intensive in order to ensure the participation of all stakeholders (see Annexure A, question 6). The responses of the stakeholders who all also participated as interviewees during the audit need to be analysed, among others because these responses serve as institutional intelligence for the planning, preparation and execution of the next audit. The qualitative text data obtained in the literature overview was used to inform the questions that will serve as a quantitative instrument to obtain numerical and empirical data from all interviewees. One of the purposes of the literature survey is to ensure the validity of the questions that are included in the questionnaire. Quantitative data is in the form of numbers and units (Cameron & Price, 2009:212) – this has both advantages and disadvantages, as it does not elaborate on the rationale of respondents in a study. Allen *et al.* (2008:346) also point out that quantitative data is excellent for identifying the prevalence of phenomena and for precisely measuring specific variables.

The closed-type questions will allow the researcher to ask questions that are uniform, so that data can easily be quantified and compared. The data will be collected by means of a questionnaire, after which it is to be analysed, reported and interpreted. The questionnaire consists of directed statements, to which participants must respond according to a four point Likert-type scale. One open-ended question was included at the end of the questionnaire, to obtain limited qualitative data from respondents that could be analysed, grouped and reported appropriately. The qualitative data is in the form of descriptions and opinions (Cameron & Price, 2009:212). The open-ended question allowed the researcher to collect rich and probably complex information. The

data generated from the open-ended question was categorised according to two main themes[18]. These concepts and themes will be compared, in order to identify variations and nuances in meanings. Connections between themes will then be indicated.

The research question identifies the target group for this study as all the interviewees (n=468) who participated in the audit. The size of the research population (interviewees as stakeholders) in this study was 468. The size of the population made it practical to involve all interviewees over a period of five days. The questionnaire was furnished to each interviewee immediately after the interview has been conducted. A limited number of interviewees were interviewed twice during the audit, however, and this was taken into consideration during the reporting and analysis of data as well as in the findings. Sampling was therefore not relevant with regard to the population.

The relations between various variables were determined, and a questionnaire was used as the measuring instrument for this purpose. The questionnaire had certain features to ensure that the instrument do qualify as a "research questionnaire". It was designed to collect information which can be used subsequently as data for analysis. The purpose of the questionnaire was exploratory in nature in order to discover things; it consisted of a written list of questions, all close-ended except for one open-ended question; and each person who completed the questionnaire will have read an identical set of questions to allow for consistency and precision. This also assisted with the processing of the responses after the data collection. Finally, the gathering of information through the questionnaire was relevant to the research (see Denscombe, 2003:144).

The data collection procedure was as follows:

- A literature review was conducted in order to gather relevant information on institutional audits in South Africa and in an international context (e.g. Finland; Australia).
- The literature review informed the development of a questionnaire that was completed by all stakeholders who participated as interviewees in the audit.

[18] (i) The panel and the interview and (ii) preparation, execution the audit in general and quality.

- The questionnaire was designed based on the information provided by the HEQC and the data gathered during the literature review.
- Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the particular stakeholders.
- Quantitative data collection did take place.
- The quantitative and qualitative data obtained were analysed and interpreted.
- The findings of the study did inform the formulation of recommendations for future audits.

The researcher is employed by the North-West University and therefore the Statistical Consultation Service of the North-West University were contracted to assist with the analysis of the research data. The SPSS statistical package (SPSS, 2009 data analysis software system), in use by the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus), were used for the statistical analysis. The following techniques of analysis were used:

Descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency and variability. Measures of central tendency include mean, median, and mode.

- Factor analysis will be done to determine construct validity and calculation of Cronbach's coefficient alpha to determine reliability of the measuring instrument (see Chapter 5).
- T-tests will be used in the study to measure the difference between groups (see Chapter 5).
- Descriptive statistics will include measures of central tendency and variability. Measures of central tendency include mean, median, and mode (see Chapter 5).

1.10 Framework of chapters

In chapter 1, the background to this study is explained and the research problem is described. The objectives of this study are formulated and a core overview of the study

is given in order to sketch the context in which this study was conducted. The research design is described, along with the research methods that were followed, and the reader is referred to the detailed overview in chapter 4. In chapter 2, a background and overview of institutional audits in higher education are provided by means of a literature overview. This is followed by a literature survey in chapter 3, which also offers a descriptive overview and the contextualisation of the HEQC institutional audit at a merged university. In chapter 4, the research design is explained, while chapter 5 contains both the data that was generated by means of the questionnaire and the analysis thereof. Finally, in chapter 6 the results, conclusions and recommendations are presented.

1.11 Ethical clearance/issues

Permission was obtained from the quality agency, namely the HEQC, the audit project team[19] and the university management to administer the questionnaires during the HEQC audit. All participants gave their informed consent and were informed that they would remain anonymous and that the data that is to be derived from their feedback would only be used for purposes of reporting and analysis. In addition, all ethical issues have been clarified and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Stellenbosch University and accepted by the researcher.

Chapter 2 outlines how a literature overview was conducted, which served as a review overview of institutional audits in higher education. This will be addressed next.

[19] Audit Steering Team.

CHAPTER 2
A LITERATURE OVERVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY AUDITS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 Introduction

In order to determine the rationale for the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) quality audits in the South African context (see 1.5.1) it is fundamental to look into the concept of quality and hence the rationale for audits performed in other higher education settings.

Chapter 2 reports on existing literature on the phenomenon of quality (see 2.2), quality audits in higher education, the rationale for these audits (see 2.3) and four examples of international approaches towards institutional quality audits, namely Britain (see 2.4.1), Australia (see 2.4.2), Sweden (see 2.4.3) and Finland (see 2.4.4). It will be explained why higher education in general embarked on the quality discourse[20] (see footnote on next page). The influence of the international drive towards quality and the consequent effect on the South African quality discourse will also be briefly analysed.

An exploration of the rationale for quality audits at universities will be crucial in order to contextualise this phenomenon.

2.2 Quality

Quality has always been a central concern in education (Sayed, 1993; Anderson, 2006:161). There has been agreement that quality and assurance of quality are important for the maintenance and enhancement of higher education (Kistan, 1999:126).

In order to contextualise the quality phenomenon, universities had to borrow from industry and commercial practices. These practices were not always fit for purpose in the higher education environment, mainly because the concepts they referred to were somewhat unfamiliar to the academic environment (Cooper, 2002:144). Cooper (2002:144) is furthermore of the opinion that concepts of quality and methods of measurement appropriate to commercial settings have been applied to higher education without adequate consideration of their applicability. One result has been inconsistency between the desired outcomes of quality assurance, explicit philosophical choices about the concept of quality and the choice of methods to demonstrate quality (compare Baird, 2007:104; Kettunen & Kantola, 2007:67; Brennen *et al.*, 2007:175; Kettunen, 2008:323). In the commercial context where the concept of quality assurance originated, the concept refers to various features of the product (Jawaharnesan & Price, 1997:377; Borahan & Ziarati, 2002: 914; Stensaker, 2003:154; Woodhouse, 2003:133; Carr *et al.*, 2005:196; Iwu-Egwuonwu, 2011:1), customer satisfaction (Harvey & Knight, 1996; Dale *et al.*, 1997:398; Jawaharnesan & Price, 1997:376; Prusak, 2001:1004; Kettunen, 2008:329), fitness of the product for its intended purpose, the process of production of the product, or the culture of the organisation (Cooper, 2002:145). Despite inconsistencies like these, countries embarked on the quality discourse in higher education at a tremendous pace in the past two decades. The way in which the quality discourse originated in industry and/or gained prominence in university context is well documented and includes publications from countries like Australia (Anderson, Johnson, & Milligan, 2000; Harman & Meek, 2000; Scott & Hawke, 2003; Woodhouse, 2003; Watty, 2006; Anderson, 2006; Baird, 2007; Ewan, 2009); New Zealand (Carr, Hamilton & Meade, 2005; Bean, 2005); the United Kingdom (Ellington & Ross, 1994; Brennan, Williams, Harris & Mc Namara, 1997; Coyle, 2003; Alderman & Brown, 2005; Becket & Brookes, 2006; Smith, 2006; Cheng, 2010; Cheng, 2011); the United States of America (Dedhia, 1997); Canada (Spooner & Shaw, 2005; Brock University, 2011); Norway (Stensaker, 2003; Dano & Stensaker, 2007); Sweden (Modell, 2003) and China (Dunrong & Fan, 2009; Kennedy, 2011).

[20] There is no single form of discourse analysis and the term must be understood as a multidisciplinary term constituted by various forms of critique (Fairclough *et al.*, 2004).

In its first public document, the *Founding Document* (HEQC, 2001), the Higher Education Quality Committee in South Africa (HEQC) outlined the following explanation of quality:

- quality as "fitness for purpose" in relation to a specified mission within a national framework that encompasses differentiation and diversity;
- quality as "value for money" judged in relation to the full range of higher education purposes set out in the White Paper;
- quality as "transformation" in the sense of developing the capabilities of individual learners for personal enrichment;
- and quality as "fitness of purpose", which locates the former three criteria within a framework based on national goals, priorities and targets (HEQC, 2001:14) (also see 3.4).

The above is the HEQC's interpretation of quality, but there are many other definitions of quality as well, and literature offers a vast array of meanings associated with quality. The stakeholders in higher education are many and varied; accordingly, there are many and varied concepts and meanings of "quality" (Guni, 2007:5). Definitions of quality are frequently tautological (Sanyal & Martin, 2007:3). The Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus (1997:611) describes the concept *quality* as "excellence", "degree of excellence", "merit", "value", "standard", "status", "worth", "attribute", "characteristic" and "distinction". The notion of quality as simply meeting the requirements of the customer (as a stakeholder) is expressed by Juran (1989), with the focus on quality as "fitness for purpose or use". Deming argues that quality should be aimed at the needs of the consumer; Feigenbaum sees quality as meeting the expectation of the customer and Crosby suggests that quality is "conformance to (the customer's) requirements" (Oakland, 1995:5). To define "quality" in the context of a concrete product is relatively simple, but it is a much more difficult task to define "quality" in the context of education (Vroeijenstijn, 1995:13). Nevertheless, governments all over the world have some or other perception of quality in education and their role in influencing the quality discourse should not be neglected. Governments, however, tend to address quality-related issues through external quality

monitoring activities (Green, 1994) such as accreditation, audits, assessment and external examination (Harvey, 2002) (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14). The objectives of those approaches are institutional and programme compliance with a series of regulations and standards, the achievement of stated institutional goals and conformity to given specifications. Yet, the term *quality* in higher education and these external quality approaches has not gone uncontested (Strydom, 1995; Tam, 2001:47; Cooper, 2002:145; Anderson, 2006:161, 166; Newton, 2007). The issue of who does what in higher education quality assurance – the agencies of the state, the higher education community collectively or individual institutions, their basic units and individual staff – is essentially a political one which will be resolved differently in different places (countries) according to history and current circumstance (Brennan *et al.*, 1997:185) (see Annexure A, questions 2 and 3).

Despite contestations, quality in education is perceived by governments around the world as entailing that "as many students [as] possible finishing the [academic] programme in the scheduled time with a degree of an international standard with reduced costs" (Vroeijenstijn, 1995:13). For employers, quality may mean the knowledge, skills and attitudes obtained during the student's period of study. An academic may view quality as good academic training based on good knowledge transfer, a good learning environment and a good relationship between teaching and research, according to Vroeijenstijn (1995:13). These examples illustrate that the concept "quality" in education, including higher education, has different meanings to different role players. In an article in *The Times*, Alderman (1996) as quoted by Kistan (1999:126) summarises the concept and process of quality assurance as follows: Quality in higher education cannot be defined by reference to a set of bureaucratic procedures. Rather, in the words used at Erfurt, quality is "the working philosophy which the university employs to achieve standards. Such standards are defined as the explicit levels of attainment needed to obtain particular academic qualifications and other assessed outcomes." Universities set their own goals. They can, of course, be inspected to see whether those goals are being achieved, but in a higher education system as richly diverse as in Britain, they cannot be judged against some super-benchmark – there is no "golden standard".

As explained in chapter 1, “quality” in the context of this study, with its focus on an institutional audit, will refer to the degree to which a university succeeds in continuously meeting the needs and expectations of its internal and external customers in order to inform future planning and continuous improvement (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14). *Internal customers* refer to the staff members and students of the university. *External customers* are all the external role players or stakeholders such as those from industry, employers of graduates, local and provincial government, national or statutory quality assurance bodies, parents, alumni, research partners, social development partners and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET). In this study, the concept *quality assurance* will also refer to the monitoring of quality, including the mechanisms that are needed to monitor quality. The contextualised approach to quality is supported by Woodhouse (2003:134), who argues that quality and quality auditing can be regarded as a very flexible tool precisely because it operates in terms of an organisation’s own purposes (see 2.3.1 and Annexure A, question 2).

The following section will explore what these different contributions to the quality discourse and to the quality audit discourse in higher education, and more specifically the university environment, have in common.

2.3 The rationale for university (quality) audits

2.3.1 Introduction

If some sort of explanation can be provided for the concept *quality*, it may then certainly be asked what is meant by a “quality audit”. According to Woodhouse (2003:133), the International Standards Organisation (ISO) defines quality auditing as a three-part process, which involves checking:

- the suitability of the planned procedures in relation to the stated objectives;
- the conformity of the actual activities with the plans; and
- the effectiveness of the activities in achieving the stated objectives.

In this definition, the concept *quality* is not mentioned at all, because the meaning is implicit: a quality audit is a check to see whether the organisation is structured to achieve its objectives; or whether, to the contrary, the objectives are simply theoretical or public relations statements, unrelated to the way in which the organisation goes about its business. In other words, the check is whether the organisation's structure and activities are suited to the objectives or purpose of the organisation. In brief, it is a check to see whether the organisation is "fit for its stated purposes". Thus, the meaning of quality that is embedded in the ISO concept of quality auditing is that of "fitness for purpose" (Woodhouse, 2003:133) (also see 2.2 and Annexure A, questions 1, 2 and 5).

Brennan and Shah (2000) as quoted by Botha *et al.* (2008:30) have defined the common purposes of university quality audits at the international level as being:

- to ensure accountability for the use of public funds (see 2.3.2);
- to improve the development, maintenance and enhancement of quality in education provision (see 2.4);
- to inform students, employers and the public at large about the quality of provision (see 2.3.3.1 and 2.3.2); and
- to undertake a quality check on new (and often for-profit) institutions (see 2.3.3.2 and Annexure A, questions 2 and 3).

The purposes linked to the accountability, developmental, quality enhancement, stakeholder involvement and liquidity debate are similar to those in the corporate business environment (see Annexure A, question 2). The strive towards continuous quality enhancement in order to "survive" in a competitive higher education environment clearly compares well with that of a competitive business environment (Dedhia, 1997:392; McAdam *et al.*, 2006:451; Sharma, 2008:43).

The term *audit* is also regarded a "free floating signifier" that promises much and that, through its centrality in a cluster of other keywords such as *accountability*, *performance*, *quality assurance*, *quality control*, *accreditation*, *accountability*, *transparency*, *efficiency* and *effectiveness*, has a "domaining effect", becoming divorced from its initial financial

meaning. This cluster of terms is now embedded in multiple discourses within the academia, in ways that reconstitute what it means to be an academic. On the one hand, the audit claims to be participatory in terms of letting individuals name their own targets, but, on the other hand, the boundaries and rules of the industry are predetermined (Strathern, 2000) (see Annexure A, question 9).

The roots of the quality discourse are to be found in industry and those of the auditing discourse in the financial world; in an attempt to contextualise the quality discourse and audits in higher education, therefore, it needs to be established why public universities that are all to some extent funded by external stakeholders need to be measured against criteria that apply for industry or a business enterprise environment.

2.3.2 The public university, industry, business enterprise, the dependency on the taxpayer and accountability

Lately, public enterprises such as universities have been functioning more like businesses, adopting the management techniques of the business world and, in the absence of genuine market conditions for many public services, introducing such conditions in surrogate form. The consequent transformation of patients, passengers, audiences and students into customers is also a feature of the dominant contemporary approach to public sector quality assurance, reflecting the assimilation of organisational and managerial techniques from business and the manufacturing industries into the higher education environment (Brennan *et al.*, 1997). Benneworth and Jongbloed (2010:579) are of opinion that several countries have embraced the so-called “academic capitalism” as a key rationale for their public higher education funding. Metcalfe (2010:6) adds that universities are increasingly perceived not only as sources of knowledgeable students and potentially profitable ideas for others to exploit, but as direct contributors to national and regional economic development through the formation of spin-off companies and the exploitation of technology licensing arrangements. Franke (2002:24) explains that during the period 1992-2002 a stronger emphasis has been put on the role of higher education institutions to cooperate with business and industry as well as with the public sector and working life at large.

Although various policy directives in countries all over the world can be regarded as the driving force behind quality and quality audits, higher education institutions started to optimise the original threats embedded in these policy directives and transform it into an opportunity by facilitating change in the university environment (Vidovich *et al.*, 2000:193), but also by providing stakeholders the opportunity to participate and take co-ownership of the quality assurance and quality enhancement processes (Becket & Brookes, 2006:136) (see Annexure A). Franke (2002:27) concludes that by looking at the prerequisites, process and results of education, experts get the opportunity to take an explanatory approach to both their evaluation and the report, and to make it more useful for everybody concerned (thus, for the stakeholders). Hence, in order to remain competitive, universities started to optimise the quality discourse as a tool or leverage to support their ongoing impetus and progress towards appropriate quality enhancement of teaching-learning and research, and hence knowledge generation (also see Scott & Hawke, 2003).

Various public higher education providers all over the world are in some or other way supported by the taxpayer, either directly or indirectly (Mok, 2000:169; Cooper, 2002:146; Franke, 2002: 24; Alderman& Brown, 2005: 314; Sharma, 2008:49). Metcalfe (2010:10) points out that the taxpayer's involvement accelerated from the eighteenth century onwards, to the point that higher education became a significant burden for the taxpayer in the early twentieth century, when states took increasing responsibility for the funding of research and the support of higher education.

Even these so-called tax funds are sometimes difficult to access because of strenuous and complicated systems and processes. Yet, various higher education providers are dependent on these funds to such an extent that they will do almost anything to ensure compliance. They therefore have little choice but to participate in academic programme reviews and quality audits in order to retain their accreditation, which gives them access to funding and continued government or taxpayer support (see Jacobsz, 2008).

In addition to public universities' dependency on tax funds, they also endeavour to attract the best candidates. These candidates must be capable of delivering the best outputs, whether of a monetary or non-monetary nature. Furthermore, universities

compete for resources (Shanahan & Gerber, 2004:166; Mok, 2005:277, Badat, 2005:192, Iacovidou *et al.*, 2009:154) similar to corporate enterprises or businesses, which have patients, passengers, audiences, clients, shareholders etc. For this reason much reference has been made in literature in recent years to universities' *consumers*, *clients*, *customers* and *stakeholders* (Gatfield *et al.*, 1999:240; Stensaker, 2000:208; Nicholls, 2007:541). Over the years, a clear mandate has been established for stakeholders' active participation in the governance, management and operational activities of public universities (see Annexure A, question 6).

Universities find themselves in a competitive environment with limited resources and with customers who have limited access to funds to pay for the service or product they offer. Universities compete for the best customers, who should also be able to pay for the services rendered or products delivered. Market forces will therefore determine which customers can afford which products or services, which quality and at what price.

In the competitive higher education environment where rankings (Franke, 2002;27 Woodhouse, 2003:135; Anderson, 2006:170), academic reviews (Blackmore, 2005: 128, 131; Mok, 2005:299; Botha *et al.*, 2008:39) and quality audits could largely determine the survival but also the future trajectory of an institution, participation in the quality discourse probably occurred naturally and by default (see Annexure A, question 6). Despite the array of critique and academic debate about the real purpose and value of quality in universities, universities are obliged to join the quality discourse, even so in South-Africa (see Annexure A, question 2).

Participation in the quality discourse of higher education automatically involves an array of stakeholders who either offer their opinion on the issue of quality or require feedback from the institutions that they are involved with (see Annexure A, question 6). Such opinions and feedback have been documented in literature and include academics' responses to "quality" at a number of Australian universities (Anderson, 2006); audit cultures and quality assurance mechanisms in England and a study of their perceived impact on the work of academics (Cheng, 2010); and an investigation of the influence of external quality auditing on university performance (Carr *et al.*, 2005).

However, several critics strongly oppose the transformation of universities into monetary driven, business type environments. This view is expressed by the Canadian scholars Spooner and Shaw (2005), who describe a gradual and quiet transformation that has been taking place in Canadian higher education, where universities have been increasingly modelling themselves as corporations rather than as places of higher learning. Spooner and Shaw (2005) observe that on many campuses the student has been replaced by a "client" that is purchasing a so-called "service". They argue that the grafting of a business-style, consumer-oriented relationship onto higher learning, represents a fundamental shift in the manner in which universities approach teaching and research. They stress that there are inherent dangers to viewing a university education as a simple, two-dimensional monetary transaction, because the synthesis and integration of diverse knowledge is a complex and intensive process that would leave any ordinary "customer" dissatisfied, to say the least, regardless of any tuition bill that was paid to secure the product, or degree. In addition to this, they point out that it is striking how Canadian campuses have begun to resemble commercial business parks, complete with mall-like food courts and ubiquitous corporate branding. Finally, Spooner and Shaw (2005) express discomfort with the relatively new direction in which universities are actively courting, and being courted by, corporate-sponsored research (also compare Anderson, 2006:161).

It becomes clear that the quality discourse in the public university sector is to a large extent influenced by an array of both internal and external stakeholders. One of these stakeholders is by default the taxpayer, who is (hopefully) represented by a democratically elected government. This introduces the debate of accountability.

Traditionally, quality was assured within universities through internal processes, along with the use of peer review by representatives from other institutions and external accreditation through professional bodies. During the 1990s systematic, formalised quality assurance accountability to government assumed greater prominence, especially in a country such as Australia (Anderson, 2006:162). Vidovich and Currie (1998:196) argue that the notion of quality employed in the higher education sector is "*quality as accountability to stakeholders*", in the place of "*quality as excellence, which has a more traditional presence in universities*". Moses (2007) and Salmi (2007) as quoted by

Kettunen (2008:327) emphasise that in order to ensure the autonomy of higher education institutions, a strong need exists for accountability to stakeholders.

The quality assurance system in South Africa has been described as a “mixed model” designed to meet the particular South African context and its transformation imperatives, combining a concern to promote improvement and development with an accountability check on the extent to which institutions’ quality management systems enable the institutions to meet national goals for the transformation of higher education (Luckett, 2005:30 as quoted by Botha *et al.*, 2008:31) (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14). (For more on the South African quality audit context see chapter 3.)

It can be argued that there is a strong debate that links universities with several stakeholders that regard accountability as imperative in order to ensure their continued support and involvement as stakeholders. Brief reference has already been made to internal and external stakeholders, but it is necessary to get some clarity on stakeholder involvement in the quality discourse as perceived in the higher education context, and more specifically in the university context.

2.3.3 Stakeholders

2.3.3.1 Introduction

There are many stakeholders for whom the quality of higher education is vital, such as the government, the funding bodies, students, academic staff, employers and society at large, to name just a few (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2003:127). Differentiation is even made between so-called internal and external stakeholders: current students and academic staff are generally regarded internal constituents in the quality management process whereas employers, government funding bodies, prospective students or professional bodies are external. These stakeholders are likely to have disparate definitions of quality as well as different preferences for how quality is to be assessed (Cheng & Tam, 1997).

In the customer-centred model where the so-called customer forms the centre of all concerned, the needs of customers are placed at the centre of considerations of planning and delivery at the institution. Front-line staff, such as academics and library staff members, can be viewed as of primary importance, providing learning opportunities and a wide variety of administrative and learning support services to students. The customer-centred model recognises the professional nature of the work of these staff and the degree of autonomy inherent in their work. Senior managers are seen as leading and managing front-line staff, with the purpose of enabling them to do their jobs and provide services to the customers. In this model, the executive provides the interface between the board of governors, who determine the educational character and financial plans of the university, and the senior managers, who must translate strategy and policy into measurable results (Coyle, 2003:201). It is, however, a complex task in that universities' senior managers and front-line staff are pulled in different directions by the competing desires of various key stakeholders (Coyle, 2003:204).

For reporting purposes in this research, stakeholders will be divided into two main distinct groups, namely:

(i) Quality agencies as represented by government and hence the taxpayer (see 2.3.3.2) and

(ii) other stakeholders that will be separated into two distinct sub-groups, namely internal and external stakeholders (see 2.3.3.3).

The reason for the distinct separation is that the feedback that was collected in this case study was only derived from stakeholders who participated as interviewees (see Annexure A, question 3). In this research the official quality agency, namely the HEQC, is regarded as the interviewer during the quality audit and there is therefore no reference to this quality agency's representatives or panel members[21] in the data analysis. It is of crucial importance to highlight and understand the role of the quality agency in order to

[21] They were not debriefed as part of this research project. (Also see recommendations for further research in Chapter 6).

contextualise the whole audit and specifically the feedback provided by all stakeholders who participated as interviewees.

In support of research objective 1.5.1, namely to determine the rationale for the HEQC quality audit, it is imperative to ensure a firm background and understanding of the rationale for the establishment and existence of quality agencies all over the world, including the HEQC in South Africa. The unique South African context will be discussed further in chapter 3.

2.3.3.2 Quality agencies, governments and the fisc[22]

In the last 20 years, there has been a great increase in the number of external quality agencies for higher education. Most agencies have been established by, or at the behest of, the relevant government. The reasons for this proliferation vary from country to country, but the most frequently cited reasons are the increase in public funding (thus, funding by the taxpayer), the relation of higher education to national needs, and the growth in higher education student numbers (Woodhouse, 2003:135). As recipients of public funding, universities must account for both their activities and achievements to government and wider society. Governments are challenging higher education institutions to publicly articulate what they are doing and to measure the achievement of objectives (Meade, 2003:9). Both government and the wider society might be referred to as stakeholders in the university endeavour. Failure to obtain accreditation of an academic programme, for example, may imply that the programme in question will no longer be eligible for public funding (Dano & Stensaker, 2007:84) – this makes it inevitable for institutions participate in the process (see Annexure A, question 1).

Benneworth and Jongbloed (2010:586) postulate that universities must increasingly demonstrate wider benefits arising from their publicly funded research in line with “value for money” requirements (see Annexure A, question 1). Universities, like other sectors that perform public tasks, are transforming into something similar to social enterprises,

[22] Government or public money.

linking their production of goods and services to a social mission. Conventional businesses distribute their profit among shareholders, while in social enterprises surpluses are reinvested in the organisation to promote those social aims. The ‘‘social dividend’’ therefore comes through the delivery of improved public goods to stakeholders.

Worldwide, there are several types of quality agencies with some kind of audit responsibility regarding higher education and, despite critique, it may be concluded that these agencies mainly exist for the public good, because the public is the primary monetary investor in higher education. The establishment of quality agencies around the world since the early 1990s is well captured by Newton (2000:153), who suggests that “one of the legacies of the 1990s is that quality became a central concern in higher education”. Such comments underline the point that the term *quality* is employed to invoke quite different meanings and that the ensuing confusion may heighten animosity and conflict between university management, quality agencies and academic staff (see Annexure A, questions 9 – 21).

The purposes of external quality agencies around the world can be summarised as including one or more of the following (compare Woodhouse, 2003:135-136 and see Annexure A, question 2), namely to:

- Assist the higher education institution to set up and develop its internal quality management system (institutional development or capacity building).
- Assist the higher education institution to improve its quality (quality improvement) (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14).
- Evaluate the institution’s systems for achieving its objectives (that is, purposes) (vision and mission) or standards, and the effectiveness of these systems (audit) (see Annexure A, question 2).
- Measure the quality or standards of the higher education institution according to some (internal or external) yardstick.
- Provide an explicit comparison between one or more institutions, either within the same country or internationally (benchmarking).

- Provide a ranking of the institutions according to some criteria relating to performance (ranking).
- Determine whether the higher education institution can be permitted to offer specified programmes, or qualify for some other benefit (a gatekeeper role, usually termed *accreditation*) (of academic programmes).
- Define and certify qualifications (qualifications authority) (e.g. SAQA[23]).
- Establish and maintain a framework of qualifications (framework) (e.g. NQF[24] and HEQF[25]).
- Assess and record learning, including experiential learning, to enable credit accumulation and transfer (credit accumulation and transfer).
- Steer the higher education institution in particular directions, in terms of planning, scope or methods (steering or transformation; relates to fitness of purpose).
- Provide a report on the higher education institution as a basis for (government) funding (funding) (e.g. from the DoHET[26]).
- Provide a report on the higher education institution to show how it has used the funds and other resources it has received (that is, act as a buffer body or broker: accountability).
- Monitor the financial viability of the institution (viability).
- Check the institution's compliance with legal and other requirements (compliance).
- Provide independent information about the higher education institution for various constituencies (prospective students, employers, etc.) (information provision).

[23] South African Qualifications Authority
[24] National Qualifications Framework
[25] Higher Education Qualifications Framework
[26] Department of Higher Education and Training

- Report on the quality and standing of the higher education sector as a whole (sector report). (The HEQC is regarded as a band Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA). Other ETQA's linked to Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) also oversee quality in sectors, such as the South African Board for People Practice (SABPP) and the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) etc.).
- Collate the results and outcomes of the activities of other external quality agencies (memoranda of understanding are in place between the HEQC and several other ETQAs that must fulfil more specific quality functions linked to specific areas in the higher education band).

The majority of external quality agencies around the world use some version of the same sequence of activities, namely:

- an institutional self-(evaluation) report,
- external review (evaluation or audit) team,
- team visit to institution (sites of delivery),
- team (evaluation) report,
- agency decision (commendations, recommendations). (For the sequence of activities followed in the South African context see chapter 3).

Despite the similarities, the details of the sequence vary between agencies and countries, depending on the national or regional context and culture. The consequences can also vary enormously as a result of quite small differences in the implementation of the steps in the sequence (compare Woodhouse, 2003:136). A typical example is found in the Australian context, where it is argued that Australian universities are being "disciplined" by the concerned quality agency to "behave" as commercial enterprises (Reid, 2009:575).

Several quality agencies exist all over the world and there is an international body, the International Quality Association for Higher Education, with which all quality agencies

can register and that serves as basis for collaboration, benchmarking, capacity development etc. A detailed list of member agencies is published on the association's website (http://www.inqaahe.org/members/list.php) (accessed on 9 July 2011).

2.3.3.3 Industry, corporate enterprise, employers, the community, staff members, students, alumni and community members

With higher education becoming a concern for more people, more and different stakeholders want to join the education discourse. This increased interaction and cooperation, if properly managed, will also be beneficial for the quality of higher education (Franke, 2002:28) (see Annexure A, questions 9 – 21). However, quality, while emerging as the signifier of distinction, takes on different meanings for a number of competing stakeholders (Harvey & Knight, 1996), with different expectations and rationales regarding the role of the university. Business, for example, seeks to link generic skills to industry-based competencies (Business Higher Education Roundtable, 2003 as quoted by Blackmore, 2009:860). There are a variety of stakeholders in higher education, including students (Tam, 2001:47, Kettunen, 2008:327), employers, teaching and non-teaching staff (Tam, 2001:47; Kettunen, 2008:327), government and its funding agencies (see 2.3.3.2), accreditors (see 2.3.3.2), validators, auditors, and assessors, including professional bodies (Burrows & Harvey, 1992).

External quality auditing (EQA) has been implemented, with stakeholder participation, in a wide variety of systems in many universities around the world (see Annexure A, question 6). While some countries have only recently been introduced to quality processes, in others the quality movement has been extensively developed and refined (Carr *et al.*, 2005:195). No published literature could be found which reported on institutional quality audits for universities in Africa south of the Sahara desert. Universities in Namibia[27] and Botswana, however, do participate in various South African forums where university quality-related issues are debated, discussed and

[27] The Polytechnic of Namibia

planned. A few rather well established university audit approaches in developed countries are briefly discussed.

2.4 Audit approach – international examples

2.4.1 Britain[28]

The previous audit cycle came to an end in middle of the previous decade (2005). An audit begins with a self-evaluation document prepared by the institution. This is followed by a briefing visit and then a main visit involving a week-long programme of meetings with staff and students. It concludes with a published report. Audits are managed by the United Kingdom Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and auditors are typically current or recently retired senior academics. An audit looks at the effectiveness of an institution's quality assurance structures and mechanisms, at how the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards are regularly reviewed, and at how the resulting recommendations are implemented. It is also concerned with the accuracy, completeness and reliability of the information that an institution publishes about quality and standards. In the current cycle, which has just come to an end, the audit also looked at examples of the institution's quality processes at work at the level of the course. The team's report sets out the auditors' judgements on "the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future quality management" and "the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that an institution publishes about the quality of its provision" (QAA, 2003:4 as quoted by Alderman & Brown, 2005:318). The former leads to one of three conclusions: "broad confidence", "limited confidence" or "no confidence". These judgements are accompanied by a description of what the auditors found together with any examples of good practice. Normally an institution would not receive another institutional audit for several years (three years for the initial 2002-2005 cycle, six years for the next from 2006-2012). Where a judgement

[28] The British experience has been included because the Australian system, from which South Africa adopted several quality and audit approaches, partially adopted their approaches from the British system(s).

of “limited confidence” or “no confidence” was made, an institution has to prepare an action plan to remedy the deficiencies identified and the audit is not signed off until the agency is content (Alderman & Brown, 2005: 318-319).

2.4.2 Australia[29]

During the 1990s systematic, formalised quality assurance accountability to government assumed greater prominence in Australia. Government-sponsored reports also indicate a focus on quality from the mid 1980s (Vidovich, 2001 as quoted by Anderson, 2006:162), while the first official higher education quality policy was announced by the relevant Minister in 1991 (Baldwin, 1991 as quoted by Anderson, 2006:162). Subsequently, the Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education undertook a series of quality inspections between 1993 and 1995. These quality rounds were based on a process of self-audit, which led to the development of processes and mechanisms through which universities could demonstrate self-assessment, including formal mechanisms for feedback from students and the analysis of progression rates (Pennington, 1998 as quoted by Anderson, 2006:162). From 1998 Australian universities have been required to produce quality assurance and improvement plans which address quality assurance goals and strategies and provide data on quality outcomes (DEST, 2001 as quoted by Anderson, 2006:162) (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14).

In 1999 the responsible Minister for higher education launched a new higher education quality policy and announced the establishment of the Australian Universities Quality Agency, which would undertake periodic audits of universities’ quality self-assessments. Any institution found to be deficient could ultimately become ineligible for Commonwealth (i.e. federal government) funding. There is, clearly, a significant incentive for the management of Australian universities to ensure that they are collecting documentation that demonstrate their commitment to quality assurance (Anderson, 2006:162).

Woodhouse (2003:136-137) captures the approaches and emphasises that the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) has adopted these approaches and gives advice on them in order to enhance the utility of the AUQA audits to the institutions.

- Institutions and agencies should concentrate on their own needs and should develop the quality assurance system needed for achieving their own objectives. They should not develop quality assurance systems oriented to what they believe AUQA wants.
- Develop an institutional self-review process that goes through the ADRI[30] steps, so that the AUQA audit serves as a validation rather than an investigation from scratch.
- Liaise with AUQA to tailor the audit to the institution as much as is feasible.
- For an external audit, do not write anything beyond a simple explanatory document. All other documents should be those that already exist because the auditee uses them for its own purposes.
- As part of the evidence, AUQA wishes to see output measures but does not specify these. They are to be selected by the auditee as relevant to its' own objectives.
- Co-ordinate quality assurance activities, whether related to AUQA, other external agencies, or internal purposes, so they are complementary and mutually supportive, not cumulative in load.
- Ensure that the process is useful to the academic activities (teaching, research, etc.) of the institution, and is widely recognised to be useful.

[29] Australia has been included because much capacity development workshops and training sessions were arranged during the period 2005-2008 by the Higher Education Society of South Africa (HESA) and/or the HEQC where the Australian academics and representatives from their quality agency shared their perspective on quality and quality audits with their South African counterparts.

[30] approach, deployment, results, improvement.

- Even the documentation for the organisation's own needs often seems excessive, unnecessary and onerous to already burdened staff. Therefore aim to avoid extra writing.
- As desired, the auditee can take advantage of the audit process, for example to make other changes.
- Get as much benefit from the self-review report as possible: it has a much wider value to the auditee than simply being input to AUQA.
- Some improvements will arise by acting on the recommendations in the audit report (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14).
- Another obvious benefit comes from publicising the commendations in the audit report.
- The audit report, by listing commendations as well as recommendations, generates a win-win situation: it says to the auditee, "you are good but can get better".
- Auditees also find other benefits from the audit report, such as information for visitors, induction for new staff, and a more general point of reference.

2.4.3 Sweden[31]

The external evaluations which have been implemented in Sweden are often called *audits*. This is an indirect form of evaluation where institutional activities related to teaching and learning are not directly scrutinised. Instead, it is the processes and routines assumed to improve the quality of these activities that are assessed and enhanced. In relation to the audits which were conducted during the period 1995-1998, nine specific themes were selected as key aspects (Wahlén, 1997), namely:

- Management and organisation of quality improvement work (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14);

[31] The Swedish experience has been included because much reference was made to it during the newly established North-West University's development of a quality management system in collaboration with the Finnish Quality Agency and Government.

- Institutional objectives and strategies;
- Identification of and cooperation with external stakeholders;
- Staff participation in quality assurance work (see Annexure A, question 6);
- Evaluation and follow-up systems;
- Development and recruitment of academic staff;
- Internationalisation;
- Work situation and work environment; and
- Equity.

By focusing on these themes, the overall objective was that the audits should contribute to increased self-regulation and improvement of Swedish universities and colleges (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14). As explained by the National Agency (1995:10), the audits should be conducted based on the premises and needs of the individual institution, and no national evaluation model or national standards were supposed to be developed. This line of thought can be traced back to the Liberal-Conservative Government in power in Sweden in the early 1990s, which launched a comprehensive higher education reform in 1993. This reform was intended to deregulate higher education, and it introduced results-based budgeting and focused more on institutional leadership and external monitoring of the sector through quality audits (Engwall, 1995; Niklasson, 1996; Askling, 1997). Initially, plans were also made to link results of the external quality audits to resource allocation. However, the Social-Democratic Government which came into office in 1994 modified many aspects of the 1993 reform, including the idea of linking external quality audits to resource allocation, but kept the idea of a more systematic monitoring of the higher education sector through a system of national quality audits.

2.4.4 Finland[32]

In accordance with the Bologna agreement, the system of audits was implemented in 2005 by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC). That development compelled Finnish higher education institutions to create or establish quality assurance systems. FINHEEC started the piloting of audits in 2005 and all higher education institutions will have been audited by 2011. Audits are focused on institutions of higher education. The audit system in Finland resembles an accreditation system, as the audit is a form of certification. Prior to 2010, the significance of audits has been rather weak and the consequences of rejection have not been defined. With the new University Act of 1 January 2010, universities are obliged to undergo external quality assessment audits, which reinforce the legal significance of the system (Haakakorpi, 2011:72).

Many European countries have established quality assurance agencies and developed national quality assurance systems. They use various terms to describe their auditing procedures: *institutional audit*, *quality audit*, *evaluation of quality assurance systems* or *enhancement-led institutional reviews*. The Finnish response to the aims and objectives set in the Berlin communiqué was deliberated by a committee on quality assurance (Ministry of Education, Finland, 2004 as quoted by Ketunnen, 2008:325). The committee proposed that the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) develop quality assurance systems covering all their operations and that these be regularly reviewed by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council. The quality assurance system may refer to the environments and quality assurance systems of the international and national levels and the environment and quality assurance system of an individual HEI. The quality audits should encompass how the institution takes account of these matters in its strategic planning, management process and internal processes. On the other hand, the national aim of quality audits is to support HEIs in their quality management and performance enhancement. The so-called quality map approach is used to develop the auditing targets for Finland, taking into account the auditing targets of the Finnish Higher

[32] The Finnish experience has been included because during the period 2006-2008 the Finnish government and Finnish Quality Agency sponsored a project for the establishment of quality management systems in merged and historically disadvantaged universities in South-Africa.

Education Evaluation Council. The auditing of an HEI should include the following targets:

(1) The consistency of the strategic plans with respect to global, national and regional environments.

(2) Strategic planning and objectives, overall structure and internal coherence of the strategic plans.

(3) Documentation of the management process including the definition of procedures, actors and responsibilities: strategic management and objectives; planning of operations and resources (financial and human); operations and steering; and reporting of results.

(4) Objectives, overall structure and the internal coherence of the quality assurance system: definition of the objectives, functions, actors and responsibilities of the HEI's quality assurance system as well as the respective documentation; monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement of the quality assurance system; participation of staff, students and external stakeholders in quality assurance (see Annexure A, questions 6 and 14); and relevance of and access to information generated by the quality assurance system within the HEI and from the perspective of the external stakeholders of the HEI.

(5) The comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures and structures related to the internal processes of the institution's research and development; service to the community (the interaction with and impact on society as well as regional development cooperation) and support services (such as the library and information services, career and recruitment services and international services and staff development); and education (Kettunen, 2008:325-326).

It is not an objective of this study to compare the different approaches followed in university quality audits but rather to be aware of their origin and the general practices

they apply. This background information is imperative for a better understanding of the South African experience at the university in question (see chapters 3 and 5).

2.5 Conclusions

From this literature overview it can be concluded that institutional audits mainly emanated from the quality discourse that started in and spilled over from the business and industrial worlds, which are both monetary driven, as well as the bureaucratic role vested in governments and hence also quality agencies all over the world[33]. Hence, several external quality agencies have been established and they remain mainly responsible for overseeing the quality arrangements at universities. Although there are many similarities between the systems in different countries, there are also clearly distinguished differences between them. Kettunnen (2008:322) summarises this by explaining that the quality and performance of a higher education institution are evaluated by national quality assurance agencies and many other stakeholders who all have various objectives and interests.

Although the authoritarian and even bureaucratic role of governments in this process might initially have been perceived as a threat by many, literature indicates that several universities probably unintentionally embraced the external quality agency interventions by transforming the initial, original or inherent threat into a distinct strength and opportunity for quality improvement and enhancement (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14). Shore and Roberts (1995:10) are of the opinion that quality processes in universities are best understood as so-called "*Foucauldian disciplinary technologies*", in which university staff members become more or less willing accomplices in the setting up of a wider system of imprisonment. Hodgson and Whalley (2006:510) caution that since the introduction of quality agencies by governments, much of what has been written about the procedures associated with this external monitoring has been critical. From the beginning they were seen by many academics as the collection of data largely for its own sake, involving bureaucratic procedures that took up valuable time that would

[33] As were indicated by Brennan *et al.*, 1997:174; Anderson, 2006:163; Hodgson & Whalley, 2006:510; Cheng, 2011:181.

be better spent on work with students or in doing research. But by engaging in the quality discourse and finding a way around the authorities and bureaucracies, the opportunity loomed that by so doing, they would surely add to ensuring a competitive edge in a very competitive higher education environment, nationally as well as internationally.

It could be argued that national and international higher education providers, and more specifically universities, embarked on the quality discourse as part of government interventions, possibly even by default. Hence, they embarked on the discourse because of the pressure that was experienced from an array of different stakeholders and surely also to remain competitive with other public and private providers in higher education.

In chapter 4, the first institutional quality audit that was conducted at the North-West University is to be reported. The methodology followed by the North-West University's audit steering team during the preparation and execution of the audit will be highlighted[34]. The requirements and criteria set by the HEQC and the methodology that was followed by the HEQC audit panel during the audit will also be documented. After the HEQC audit panel visited the NWU, a draft audit report was compiled to which the NWU had to respond. Among others, they had to comment on any factual errors or omissions, after which a final audit report was submitted to the NWU. It is, however, not the purpose of this study to analyse or debate the findings that emanated from the HEQC audit report but rather to determine how stakeholders who participated[35] in the preparation for and execution of the audit experienced the process, in order to inform the planning and execution of future quality audits at the NWU.

[34] Q*uality-as-measured* involves an approach to evaluation that involves a *distancing-from-experience.* This approach to quality involves "explicit comparison of the object in question with a set of standards for it" (Stake & Schwandt, 2006:404-418, as quoted by Elliott, 2007:230).

[35] *Quality-as-experienced* implies that the discernment of quality is a form of practically embodied knowledge – "at once both cognitive and emotional" – that is acquired in the course of immediate and direct experience of practical situations and events and that manifests in the actions and language of participants. According to this view, the evaluation of quality takes the form of "experience-near understandings" that involve grasping "the subjective and intersubjective meanings" that the evaluand attaches to "events, personal encounters and places" and their "sensitivities to virtue and trauma …". Under these conditions *quality* is represented through narratives of personal experience (Stake & Schwandt, 2006:404-418, as quoted by Elliott, 2007:230).

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE HEQC INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY AUDIT AT THE NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

3.1 Introduction

In chapter 3 a brief analysis of quality auditing as it is generally perceived within the South African higher education context will be explored. The audit criteria[36] and the audit methodology applied by the HEQC will be discussed. An overview will be provided of the quality approach and the audit approach followed at the North-West University during the first round of institutional quality audits in the South African higher education environment. Detail will also be given of all the stakeholders that were involved in the case in question. Certain practices followed by the HEQC in general, the composition of the panel, and the NWU's planning, preparation and execution of the audit will be analysed as part of this study. The research methodology followed in order to generate this feedback is explained in chapter 4.

3.2 Rationale for the quality audits conducted by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) in South Africa

A study that was conducted by the HEQC in 2003 (Cele, 2005:603) concluded that various quality inadequacies were prevalent in the majority of higher education institutions. The study identified insufficient infrastructural resources as well as a lack of quality assurance mechanisms at the majority of institutions of higher learning in South

[36] See last page of Annexure C.

Africa. Thus, the audits serve as an intervention by the HEQC to determine the status quo at each university.

South Africa's external quality assurance agency, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), commenced its first cycle of institutional audits in 2004. The South African *Higher Education Act* (Republic of South Africa, 1997) makes provision for the establishment of the Council on Higher Education (CHE). The Act stipulates that the CHE shall establish a standing Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), with the responsibility to promote quality assurance in higher education, to audit the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions and to accredit programmes of higher education. The HEQC was established in May 2001 (Botha *et al.*, 2008:29).

The mandate and rationale for quality audits were therefore clearly legislated, making it mandatory for all higher education institutions[37] in South-Africa to participate. Institutions are obliged to practice quality assurance and management and to accept responsibility for quality. Although a generous invitation letter to participate in an audit is sent to the institution's management by the HEQC in advance, it is generally accepted that the invitation cannot be declined, although postponements have been granted in some cases. Higher education institutions in Europe experience similar pressure, where institutions have been systematically evaluated since 1990 as a direct or indirect initiative of governing authorities (Stensaker, 2000:305)

The quality assurance functions of the HEQC are performed within the broad legislative and policy context that shapes and regulates the provision of higher education in South Africa, in particular the South African *Qualifications Authority Act*, the *Higher Education Act* as amended and White Paper 3, *A programme for the transformation of higher education* (Department of Education, 1997). The HEQC further operates within the policies and regulations of the Department of Education, including the *National Plan for Higher Education* (Department of Education, 2001). These policy documents summarise the main problems that characterised higher education under apartheid as a historical inequality leading to unequal standards of provision across the higher education system;

[37] Private and Public.

a lack of access to higher education for members of disadvantaged communities and skewed representation of the student and staff profiles in comparison with the demographics of the country; inefficiency and ineffectiveness; high failure and drop-out rates, especially for black students, and unacceptably long periods taken to complete degrees; irrelevance of the content of many programmes for the South African and broader African context; and inadequate research productivity. Based upon these reasons, the HEQC was clearly mandated to conduct quality audits at both private and public higher education providers (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14).

3.3 Defining quality within the South African context of auditing higher education providers

In order to define quality in the post-1994 South African context where quality audits are being conducted at higher education providers, these providers first had to establish what quality meant for them. Without a clear definition of quality, it is impossible to determine how quality should be measured and what claims about quality can legitimately be made on the basis of collected data (see Annexure A, question 9). If individual staff or higher education providers focus excessively on gathering data to support quality claims without an adequate definition of quality and clear assumptions about the methods and purpose(s) of higher education, it will lead to simplistic thinking about quality and quality measurement (Cooper, 2002:145) (see Annexure A, questions 2 and 9).

Quality in the context of this study, with its focus on an institutional audit, will refer to the degree to which a university succeeds in continuously meeting the needs and expectations of its internal and external customers in order to inform future planning and continuous improvement (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14). *Internal customers* refer to the staff members and students of the university. *External customers* are all the external role players or stakeholders such as those from industry, employers of graduates, local and provincial government, national or statutory quality assurance bodies, parents, alumni, research partners, social development partners and the Department of Higher Education and Training. In this study, the concept *quality*

assurance will also refer to the monitoring of quality, including the mechanisms that are needed to monitor quality.

In its first public document, the *Founding Document* (HEQC, 2001), the HEQC outlined the following understanding of quality:

- Quality as "fitness for purpose" in relation to a specified mission within a national framework that encompasses differentiation and diversity;
- Quality as "value for money" judged in relation to the full range of higher education purposes set out in the White Paper;
- Quality as "transformation" in the sense of developing the capabilities of individual learners for personal enrichment, as well as the requirements of social development and economic and employment growth;
- Quality as "fitness of purpose", which locates the above three criteria within a framework based on national goals, priorities and targets (HEQC, 2001:14).

In line with this definition of quality, the HEQC generated criteria for conducting audits that were congruent with international goals for external quality audits but also included some distinctive features (Botha *et al.*, 2008:30).

3.4 The quality audit process and methodology in South Africa

In South Africa the process involves that each institution has to conduct a comprehensive self-evaluation that responds to 19 HEQC audit criteria[38]. An audit portfolio (or self-evaluation report) is produced by the institution and extensively discussed by a panel of external peers, followed by a week-long visit to the institution[39], during which a diverse group of staff, students and representatives of stakeholders in

[38] See laste page of Annexure C.
[39] Applicable to "large" institutions such as public higher education institutions.

the wider community are interviewed by the audit panel (see Annexure A, questions 3, and 15 - 21). These interviews mainly serve the purpose of triangulation in order to validate the findings made by the institution in the self-evaluation report (see 3.5.8). A draft audit report is produced within a few months of the visit, for the audited institution to comment on factual inaccuracies. This is followed by a final audit report containing commendations and recommendations. An executive summary of each audit report is made publicly available on the HEQC's website and each institution is required to provide an improvement plan to the HEQC, responding to the recommendations in the final audit report, within five months of publication of the report (see Botha *et al.*, 2008: 31).

Audit methodologies, processes or practices vary from country to country and from quality agency to quality agency. Botha *et al.* (2008:52) question the approach followed by the Higher Education Quality Committee in South-Africa. According to them, the analysis of the recommendations raises questions about whether the audit methodology, with its focus on institutions' quality management systems, can adequately evaluate whether the core academic processes of the university (namely teaching and learning, research and community engagement) enable institutions to be responsive to the requirements of social development and economic and employment growth. Quinn and Boughey (2009:263) also conclude that the South African audit methodology per se is unlikely to bring about the necessary change, because of its tendency to focus on the mechanistic implementation of recommendations.

3.5 The case of the North-West University

3.5.1 Introduction

The North-West University (NWU) officially came into existence on 1 January 2004, as a result of the South African government's vision of a transformed national higher education landscape within which past imbalances would be addressed and resources would be used more effectively to meet the equity, quality and social imperatives of the

country[40]. The NWU was created through the merger[41] of the former Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (with a satellite campus situated at Vanderbijlpark) and the former University of North West (with its Mankwe campus), as well as the incorporation of the staff and students of the Sebokeng campus of Vista University.

The gazetted reasons for the merger were[42]:

- Overcoming the apartheid-induced divide between historically white and historically black institutions;
- promoting a more equitable staff and student body;
- enabling the development and provision of a wider and comprehensive range of vocational and, in particular, technikon-type professional and general programmes in line with regional and national needs; and
- building administrative, management, governance and academic capacity; consolidating the deployment and use of academic personnel; building research capacity and enhancing sustainability through increased size (Republic of South Africa, 2003 as quoted by Jacobsz, 2007).

The audit process rested on the firm decision of the university's management that it was to be regarded an engagement and commitment towards a journey of continuous quality improvement within all spheres of the university, both academic and non-academic (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14).

An audit project team[43] with representatives from all four business units within the university was established in 2006. The four business units were the institutional office and the three campuses, namely the Mafikeng, Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle

[40] Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa in the 21st Century. Council on Higher Education, 2000.
[41] Notice of Merger and Notice of Incorporation issued by the Minister of Education in terms of Sections 23(1) and 24 of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No 101 0f 1997), as amended.
[42] Invitation for presentations regarding the proposal to merge certain public higher education institutions ... Prof Kader Asmal, Minister of Education, 24 June 2002.
[43] Which became known as the Audit Steering Team.

campuses. The vice-chancellor took personal responsibility for the audit and appointed the executive advisor in the office of the vice-chancellor to serve as chairperson of the audit project team. This appointment also served as a direct line of report to the vice-chancellor. The steering team initially met monthly during 2006, but from 2007 this arrangement was adapted to ensure meetings on a weekly basis. A clear mandate from the university's management to plan, prepare and execute the whole audit process directed the audit project team. A project plan was developed and all the sub-processes emanating from it started to take shape with continuous reviews by the audit project team of all the different processes, their efficiency and hence also their effectiveness. Although the initial date for the planned audit by the HEQC was scheduled for August 2008 it was moved to March 2009, in response to a written request by the HEQC.

In broad terms, the audit project team was responsible for the compilation of the comprehensive self-evaluation report with inputs from all stakeholders; the gathering, documenting, indexing and filing of all evidence in support of the self-evaluation report and all planning for the different site visits to each campus and the official audit week that was scheduled for March 2009. Although this might seem simple, it was a tremendous project, as the different business units of the university were geographically far apart and many other obstacles arose as the different processes evolved during the planning and execution of the audit. It is, however, not the purpose of this study to report on this.

3.5.1.2 NWU's approach to quality management

3.5.1.2.1 Effective management and promotion of quality

In the NWU's view, the maintenance and improvement of quality is directly linked to the concept of effective and efficient management (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14). The management philosophy, as spelled out in the institutional plans for the first decade, linked effective management to elements[44] such as accountability and responsibility

[44] NWU Institutional Plan 2006-2008, NWU Institutional Plan 2007-2009, NWU Institutional Plan 2008-2010, NWU Institutional Plan 2009-2011, NWU Institutional Plan 2010- 2012, NWU Institutional Plan 2011-2013.

(specifically in terms of measurable performance agreements); an equitable and fair resource allocation; a motivating climate and an environment that allows people to flourish and realise their potential; accessibility, fairness and transparency; incentives for innovation and entrepreneurship; a strong emphasis on continuous improvement of quality (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14); and acknowledging and utilising people's diverse strengths and backgrounds (NWU, 2008). In the mission statement of the 2008-2010 institutional plan (NWU, 2007) the same principle is expressed in the following mission element: "Aspire to be recognised internationally as a well-managed and innovative University, with a *client focus embedded in quality* – this, the University seeks to achieve by creating an enabling environment that will enhance and improve its core business and remain financially viable."

The NWU's philosophy is that a prerequisite for effective quality management is that the management system should accommodate the principle of individual accountability. Accordingly, its quality policy (NWU, 2007; NWU, 2011) emphasises the role of managers "in evaluating and developing quality at all levels of the Institution". In this case, all academics are regarded as direct stakeholders in the quality discourse at the NWU.

3.5.1.2.2 Measuring of quality and quality assurance

(i) Generic principles

As pointed out above, quality assurance is an inseparable component of effective management. The NWU's quality policy (NWU, 2007; NWU, 2011) highlights the four main elements in a quality management and improvement process (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14), as reflected in Figure 3.1.

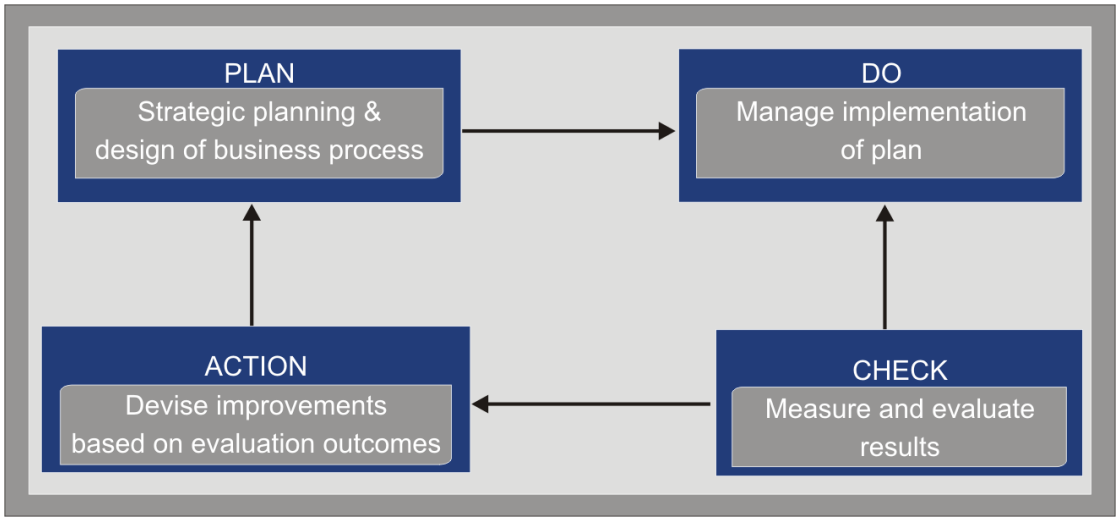

FIGURE 3.1: Quality management and improvement cycle[45]

The performance management system of the NWU was emphasised as the all-important link between the vision, mission and institutional plan on the one hand, and quality management of the core business of the university on the other hand. This system has its roots in the base elements of the university's practical approach to quality assurance, which can be explained as follows.

The implementation of any of the university's business processes requires certain inputs in order to deliver the expected outputs. For example, to be able to produce successful graduates (*real output*), the university's processes of teaching and post-graduate education amongst others require heavy investment in recruiting and developing efficient academic staff and facilities (*input*). Furthermore, for the university to be able to make any statement in terms of the quality of the processes it must have clarity on the meaning of the term *successful graduates*. The obvious way to ensure this clarity is by means of defining practical goals and targets in the university's institutional plan, associated with its vision and mission (*desired output*). In terms of this model, two

[45] The importance of this type of cycle is shown by Kemeny (1959), quoted in Quade and Miser (1985), who describes the Scientific Methodology with reference to Einstein (1879-1955): *As Einstein has repeatedly emphasized … First of all the scientist is an observer. Next he tries to describe in complete generality what he saw, and what he expects to see in the future. Next he makes predictions on the basis of his theories, which he checks against the facts again. The most characteristic feature of the method is its cyclic nature. It starts with facts, ends in facts, and the facts ending one cycle are the beginning of the next cycle. A scientist holds his theories tentatively, always prepared to abandon them if the facts do not bear out his predictions. If a series of observations, designed to verify certain predictions, force us to abandon our theory, then we look for a new and improved theory. This definitive expression of Scientific Methodology, which may also be depicted as a four stage, continuous an iterative learning cycle, thus brings some common assumptions to contemporary Action Research learning frameworks. For example Dewey (1943), Deming (1982), and Flood (1999) base their action-learning frameworks on the "cyclic" method as described by Einstein above.* (Stephens *et al.*, 2009:467.)

measurable entities as indications of quality can be identified, namely a measure of effectiveness[46] – determining how far the *desired output* deviates from the *real output* at that particular point in time; and a measure of efficiency[47] – determining the extent of *output* produced in terms of the *input* invested in the process.

In this respect, Iwu-Egwuonwu (2011:1) posits that effectiveness of governance in general and corporate governance in particular is dependent on the behavioural effectiveness of both those who govern and manage. In a study by Jacobsz (2007) a clear distinction was established between the management and governance roles that are to be performed within the university environment. Iwu-Egwuonwu (2011:1) also argues that governance often fails because more effort is devoted to creating and sustaining structures and processes, while almost no meaningful attention is given to genuine institutionalisation of behavioural and ethical accountability which are accomplished through genuine integrity. The quality of corporate performance is hinged on the quality of behavioural performance and accountability with which members of the organisation are associated. However, human nature often diminishes the moral value of organisations, and directors and managers should therefore adopt the concept of behavioural governance and behavioural accountability, to raise the quality of behaviour and accountability in organisations, as a means of genuinely raising the quality of performance in their organisation. To this effect, the NWU debated, established and accepted the following core *do*-values, namely integrity, commitment, accountability and respect (NWU 2005).

The responsibilities of management at each level of the university structure in the context of quality assurance therefore are:

- formulating, revisiting and clear cascading down of realistic goals in terms of the university's vision and mission; and
- regular measuring and evaluation of the quality of output and consequent regular review of the relevant processes and input.

[46] Doing the right things.
[47] Doing things right.

(ii) Operationalisation and contextualisation

With reference to Figure 3.1, the generic quality management principles elucidated above are operationalised in the managerial divisions at the NWU as follows:

PLAN	DO
• The division, in consultation with the next-level line manager, formulates functional goals for the division within its mission of contributing to fulfilment of the university's vision, mission and goals, which had been established by both a top-down and bottom-up process. • In the quest to achieve these goals either longer term on-going activities are formulated, or specific measurable output targets with due dates are set. • Based on the above, performance agreements are concluded between division personnel and the division manager, followed by the performance agreement between the division manager and the next-level line manager. → • This process rolls upwards through the managerial ranks to culminate in the performance agreement of the vice-chancellor with council. ↑	All the agreements are implemented in the course of the working year, at the appropriate managerial and working levels. ↓
ACTION	**CHECK**
• Intermediate process reviews and interventions are implemented where necessary and as identified during the continuous monitoring and quality evaluation. • Personal development plans and process adaptations based on the end-of-the-year evaluations are formalised for incorporation in strategy and operational planning. ←	Progress towards the agreed goals is continuously monitored by measurement and/or quality evaluation, accompanied by process reviews and interventions where necessary. As part of the performance management system, process effectiveness[48] and efficiency[49] as defined in section 3.5.1.2.2 are measured at the end of the year as a basis for personal performance evaluation and process review.

FIGURE 3.2[50] **Operational quality management principles at NWU**

[48] Doing the right things.
[49] Doing things right.
[50] Compare the footnote at Figure 3.1.

3.5.2 The invitation and preparation

The vice-chancellor of the NWU received an invitation from the HEQC, dated 11 January 2007, for the university to participate in an institutional audit (originally scheduled for August 2008) on the basis of the HEQC's set of nineteen institutional audit criteria[51], supplemented by four open-ended questions.

The invitation came three years into the university's merger process, and coincided with the institution's reflection on its success in maintaining a high degree of stability during the first phase of the merger (see Annexure A, question 5), with minimal staff and student unrest. At the same time the strategic way forward for the university was scrutinised by a senior management planning process. This planning process revealed that the University had completed a first organisational growth cycle, focusing on structural and policy elements, and that strategic interventions were necessary in preparation for the next organisational growth cycle. One such intervention was to drastically enhance the effectiveness of the university's quality management systems by putting the vision, mission and institutional plan into operation in terms of the performance management process.

At the same time, a comprehensive review of the existing quality management systems of the university would obviously be vital. Therefore the HEQC invitation to an institutional audit was embraced as an opportunity to align the NWU's self-evaluation of its quality processes with best practices in the higher education sector.

3.5.3 Preparations for the audit

Prior to the formal receipt of the HEQC invitation in 2007, the institutional management committee of the NWU had already appointed an audit project team to start with the preparations in 2006. This team was chaired by the executive director: Projects in the institutional office, and included the manager: Projects and the director: Quality in the institutional office, the vice-rectors: Quality and Planning from the Mafikeng and

[51] HEQC Criteria for institutional audits (Summary included as part of Annexure C).

Potchefstroom campuses, as well as the dean (later succeeded by the vice-rector: Academic, Quality and Planning) of the Vaal Triangle Campus.

The audit project team defined the audit project objective[52] as twofold: advise institutional management on the establishment of a continual, sustainable and comprehensive system for the quality management of the NWU business processes; and oversee the preparations for the HEQC institutional audit of the NWU. An audit project plan was devised, the implementation of which commenced in August 2006. The main components of the plan were to execute a quality and audit awareness programme; prepare the self-evaluation report portfolio; execute the management of documents relevant to the audit; manage gaps and risks identified by the self-evaluation process; set up and manage an information system infrastructure; and plan and prepare the logistics of the audit site visit to the different campuses as well as to the institutional office (see Annexure A, question 4).

The audit project team held regular meetings (on average once per week). To prevent the rest of the university from settling into a comfort zone of accepting that the preparation for the audit would (in isolation) be dealt with by the audit project (steering) team alone, an extended project team was established that included the vice-principal and a wide range of senior managers of the university. This extended team met monthly during the initial stages of the project, where feedback on the progress of the project was discussed.

At a meeting of the extended project team where the team critically assessed the university's self-evaluation process and the seventh draft of the self-evaluation portfolio, a workshop was conducted on rendering advice to the vice-chancellor, based on the self-evaluation process, regarding the HEQC's four open-ended questions. The University's response to the open-ended questions eventually formed part of its overall conclusions reflecting on the self-evaluation process.

[52] Project (Steering) Team minutes, 4 August 2006.

Throughout the project the vice-chancellor's commitment to the self-evaluation process was indispensable. He ensured that the process received the necessary priority within the university, through regular references and reminders in the vice-chancellor's newsletters; dedicating to the project a standing item on the agenda of institutional management meetings; and taking personal responsibility for the contents of the first four sections of the self-evaluation report. Thanks to this commitment, the project (steering) team had ample access to documented information and other resources.

Senior managers such as faculty deans and departmental/academic directors were the drivers of the self-evaluation process in their respective domains of responsibility. They were also the sources of information that constituted the building blocks of the report portfolio, and contributed to the development of the portfolio by acting as critical readers and by managing transfer of information and feedback on portfolio drafts to the audit project (steering) team. The institutional senate and council were regularly informed of the project progress[53].

During the preparation for the audit, both a quality and an audit awareness campaign were launched.

3.5.4 The quality and audit awareness programme

The purpose of the quality and audit awareness programme was threefold, namely to initiate awareness of and debate on the university's approach to quality and quality management; and to stimulate participation in the self-evaluation process as well as to create a broad awareness of the pending HEQC quality audit of the university (see Annexure A, questions 2 and 6).

The programme focused on regular informative and consultative meetings on all three campuses. In addition, presentations were made to various groups (also via campus radio broadcasts), while newsletters to stakeholders (including alumni), posters, articles in student publications and newspapers as well as on the staff intranet were also issued.

[53] Minutes of senate and council meetings.

A quality audit web page was launched on the student intranet to give students the opportunity to participate in the self-evaluation.

3.5.5 Self-evaluation process and the evidence documentation

The comprehensive NWU process of self-evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of quality arrangements for its core business of teaching and learning, research and implementation of expertise (commercially and in respect of community engagement), went hand in hand with the development of the self-evaluation portfolio. The framework for the evaluation process also formed the framework for the self-evaluation report.

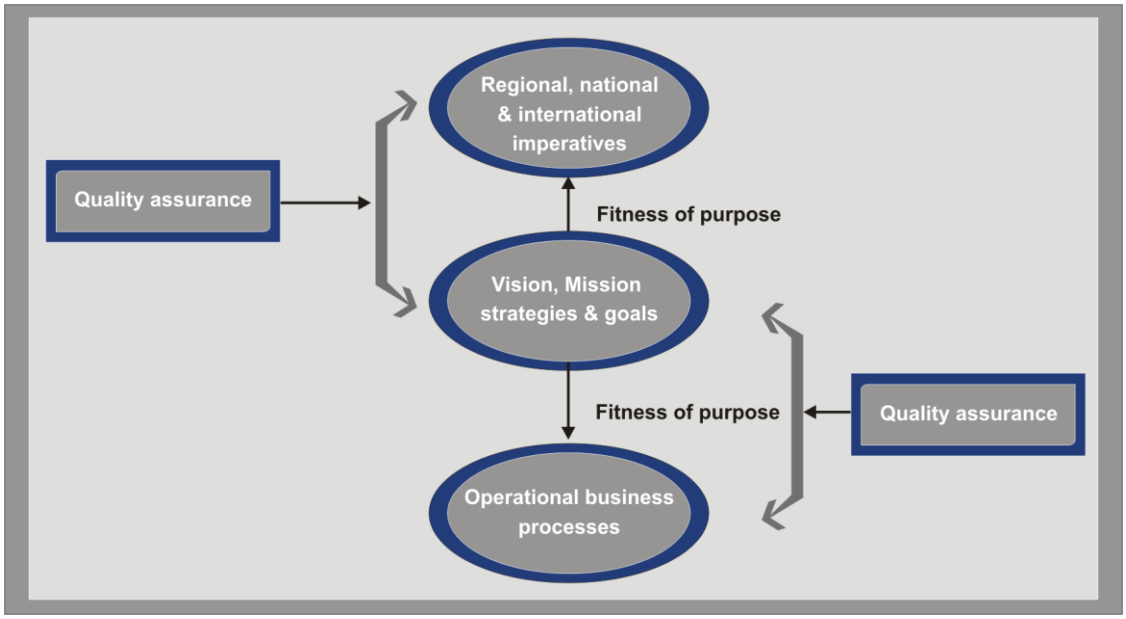

FIGURE 3.3 Framework for NWU self-evaluation process and self-evaluation report

The dual purpose of the self-evaluation report were to form the basis of a comprehensive quality manual for strategy, management and review of the university's core business processes for teaching and learning, research and post-graduate education, and implementation of expertise (including community engagement), and

also of the primary academic support services[54]; and to serve as a self-evaluation report in preparation for the HEQC institutional quality audit of the NWU within the HEQC's Framework and Criteria for Institutional Audits (see Annexure A, question 2).

As a consequence of this approach, the audit criteria set by the HEQC were addressed in the self-evaluation report as integral components of the NWU's own comprehensive quality management and review criteria. For example, in the university's comprehensive evaluation of its strategies, policies and procedures for the quality management of human resources, "Staff development policies and strategies which promote the professional competence of academic staff and give particular attention to the development needs of new personnel" (*HEQC Criterion 3(v)*) were addressed as integral components.

The first purpose of the self-evaluation report stated the necessity for a document containing enough detailed information to support stakeholders (see 3.5.4) in their quest to ensure continual quality improvement at the NWU (see Annexure A, questions 1 and 14).

A description of the various processes relevant to the university's core business was an obvious starting point. The first draft of the self-evaluation report consisted of the accumulation of information by numerous authors from all over the NWU on processes relevant to the HEQC's institutional audit criteria. This formed the foundation on which the subsequent self-evaluation drafts were built, while the information was gradually ordered and structured with a view of focusing on the quality management and review systems relevant to the business processes at the NWU. A host of critical readers from across the university were involved in the revision process of each draft, to provide an institution-wide perspective. From the fourth draft onwards, the self-evaluation report started to reflect a framework that consisted of the following: Historic perspective; Strategy; Business process; Quality assurance process; and Review and improvement plans.

[54] Primary refers to support services closest to the core business of the NWU.

The fourth and subsequent drafts of the self-evaluation report were released for critical evaluation by all managers, faculties, support divisions and student and staff representative bodies. The electronic version of the seventh draft of the self-evaluation report was placed on the university's intranet, together with the vice-chancellor's firm request for feedback from all units at the university, in view of the self-evaluation process. At the same time, hard copies were widely distributed internally, and copies were also placed in the campus libraries.

Incorporation of the university-wide feedback on the seventh draft resulted in the version tabled for approval by the university's senate and institutional forum. At this stage, three experts from other universities (two South African universities: Stellenbosch University and Tshwane University of Technology; and one international university: London South Bank University in the United Kingdom) were also contracted as critical readers of the self-evaluation report. After due consideration of the recommendations that were made, the self-evaluation report was prepared for submission to and approval by the university council. The final self-evaluation report was approved by the institutional forum on 8 October 2008, by the senate on 13 August 2008, and by the council on 21 November 2008. All necessary documentation, including the self-evaluation report, was printed and taken to the HEQC office' in Pretoria for discussion with and distribution to all the panel members who were to participate in the audit.

3.5.6 Stakeholder involvement during the NWU audit

Together with national stakeholders, notably government, business, labour and the rest of the post-school education sector, universities are helping to achieve the overall goal of ASGISA[55], namely a growth rate of more than 6% per annum in order to create jobs, drive development and alleviate poverty. Universities do this principally through

[55] Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA).

delivering highly skilled graduates, conducting relevant research and implementing their expertise among communities and in industry.

An array of direct and indirect stakeholders can be identified that are associated with the university. For the purpose of the quality audit, strict guidelines were made available as to which primary stakeholders should form part of the audit process (see Annexure A, question 2). They then also had to be informed about the audit and be provided the opportunity to make a contribution (see Annexure A, questions A, B, C and 6). A selection of stakeholders (see Table 4.1) was also interviewed by the audit panel in order to get clarity on and to triangulate (see 3.5.8) the findings and claims made in the self-evaluation report and support documentation (see Annexure A, questions 3 and 9).

Academic staff, support staff and students were representative of all campuses of the university[56]. *Internal* stakeholders include, among others, both academic and support staff at all levels; as well as all current students. *External* stakeholders refer to, among others, alumni, employers of graduates, research fellows, external examiners, external moderators, other universities, municipal, provincial and national governments and various community-based organisations that benefit from the university's social engagement programmes. Although internal and external parties are distinguished as stakeholders (NWU, 2007-2009), it is not the purpose of this study to analyse in detail each stakeholder's specific role in the university context but rather to explore these stakeholders' feedback based on their participation and engagement in an institutional quality audit (see Annexure A, question 6).

3.5.7 The site visit

The site visit comprised various phases, starting with a visit to the three respective campuses by a selection of audit panel[57] members. Reference was made to the campus

[56] During the compilation and finalisation of the interview schedule, the HEQC staff insisted on interviewing the academics for teaching-learning and research on each campus separately. The feedback from these respective groups is also reported in chapter 5 of this thesis.
[57] Not all audit panel members visited each of the three campuses.

visits[58] in the information letter that was sent to all interviewees but it was also announced to all staff and students through an electronic communiqué.

The official audit visit was conducted at the institutional office of the NWU during 15-20 March 2009. Some panel members requested access to documentation on the Saturday prior to the commencement of the audit. The audit steering team was available to provide assistance. From the Sunday, however, the whole panel actively engaged in reading additional documentation in the document room. The official interviews commenced on the Monday. (For a summary[59] of the interview schedule, see Annexure B and compare Table 4.1.)

All logistical arrangements[60] associated with this quality audit were overseen and managed by the audit steering team (see Annexure A, question 4). The audit preparation and execution was approached on sound project management[61] principles. To this end, a closure report[62] (see Annexure E) was compiled by fellow audit steering team members Ria Nel and Cobus Steenkamp. Actions that were to be taken by the HEQC panel after the audit visit was regarded as a separate project with separate project specifications and time lines. Brief reference is made to this in 3.5.10 and 3.5.11.

It is imperative to understand the purpose of the audit visit in order to triangulate and hence validate the findings that were made by the NWU in the self-evaluation report (see Annexure A, questions 2 and 9).

3.5.8 Triangulation during the site visit

As mentioned above, in preparation for the HEQC institutional quality audit, the NWU had to (a) develop a comprehensive self-evaluation report[63] that was to be supported by (b) evidence documentation[64] (based on the claims made in the self-evaluation report);

[58] For each campus visit by audit panel members, a campus-specific programme was drafted and all those who were involved were well informed of what to expect.
[59] The names of interviewees do not appear in this list, as their anonymity was guaranteed.
[60] Land and air travel, accommodation, food, beverages, documentation, ushering, briefing, debriefing, payments and much more.
[61] Including the costs associated with this project.
[62] The costs associated with this project is also indicated but excludes the salaries of NWU staff members.
[63] The self-evaluation report was made available to the HEQC 4 months before the site visit was conducted.
[64] A distinct volume of evidence documentation, e.g. university policies, procedures etc. accompanied the self-evaluation report that was submitted to the HEQC 4 months prior to the audit.

and finally the self-evaluation report and the evidence documentation[65] were to be used as a frame of reference in order to triangulate what had been read and the kind and type of tendencies that had been observed by the panel members. This triangulation exercise was conducted by means of interviews (see Annexure A, questions 3 and 9). A distinct list of prescribed stakeholders that the HEQC audit panel wished to interview was made available to the NWU. The HEQC, at various occasions in the 8 weeks prior to the site visit, requested changes to the site-visit programme – as a result, the list of interviewees was also amended. Although this entailed a very cumbersome exercise at times, the NWU audit steering team fully complied with the requests.

Stakeholders were then grouped into a variety of constituencies and they were interviewed in order to triangulate all observations made by panel members up to that point. Provision was also made for a call-back session[66] if panel members were still not clear about certain issues. This provided an opportunity for clarification.

The use of triangulation is well supported and described in literature. Triangulation is a credible and useful method of conducting research which can result in an increase in both the quality and the quantity of data that was gathered (Begley, 1996:688). Denzm (1989) identified four types of triangulation, namely data, investigator, theoretical and methodological triangulation; while Kimchi and colleagues (1991) added a fifth category, namely analysis triangulation. These five types of triangulation have been discussed in more detail in journal articles (Begley, 1996, Redfern & Norman, 1994) and books (Bums & Grove, 1993; Fielding & Fielding, 1986).

The practice of triangulation followed by the HEQC audit panel is therefore generally regarded as an acceptable approach in support of quality. Although it is not the purpose of this research to analyse the triangulation practices followed by the HEQC panel, some questions about triangulation were asked to all stakeholders who were interviewed by the audit panel. These questions directly relate to the interview and the conduct of panel members (see Annexure A, question 3).

[65] A document room was made available, where all other evidence documentation referred to in the self-evaluation report was kept and where panel members had the opportunity to access this evidence documentation two days prior to the commencement of interviews. This documentation served to validate the claims made by the NWU in the self-evaluation report.

3.5.9 The debriefing sessions

Stakeholders that arrived to be interviewed were briefed before they were interviewed (see Annexure D)[67]. Immediately after stakeholders were interviewed by panel members, they were ushered to an appropriate venue to complete the questionnaire (see Annexure A). The quantitative data obtained by the questionnaires was immediately captured. This process is described in chapters 4 and 5. The completion of the questionnaire was followed by an open discussion during which notes were made by the researcher and those who assisted him[68] in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the interviewees' experiences. These findings are, however, not analysed or interpreted as part of this research thesis[69].

3.5.10 Oral feedback by the audit panel chairperson and the draft report

On the last day of the audit the audit panel chairperson provided oral feedback to the NWU on their general observations and findings. No provision was made for debate or clarification based on the oral feedback. The first opportunity the NWU had to respond to factual errors or omissions was after they had received the draft audit feedback report. The draft report was received in the first quarter of 2010, after which the NWU responded to certain factual errors and omissions. Amongst others, the draft report included certain commendations but also recommendations that the NWU had to address.

[66] The only person who was called back by the panel, was the researcher and author of this report (see Annexure B).
[67] Not the same as the initial briefing sessions in preparation for the audit (as referred to in Annexure A, Statement B).
[68] Especially in the case of larger groups, e.g. 16 and more.
[69] The depth and scope of this research thesis limits the researcher to also report on the oral feedback that was received from stakeholders that participated as interviewees in the NWU Institutional Quality audit.

3.5.11 The final HEQC evaluation report, the NWU improvement plan and the follow-up visit by the HEQC

Once the final HEQC evaluation report was received by the NWU, an improvement plan was developed based on the recommendations, but also by capitalising on the commendations in the report. The latter could be regarded as current strengths of the NWU. This improvement plan was approved by the institutional management, the senate and the council and was submitted to the HEQC by the end of November 2010. On 2 August 2011, a follow-up visit was conducted by the HEQC, during which feedback was provided by the NWU's vice-chancellor on the extent to which the improvement plan has already been conceptualised and embedded in the university planning and budgeting cycle. Reference was also made to the progress that had been made in terms of eliminating the deficiencies that were identified during the self-evaluation, but also those that were identified or highlighted by the HEQC audit panel. The representatives of the HEQC identified a number of issues that were absent from the improvement plan and on which they would like to have feedback in the progress reports that were to be submitted to the HEQC by the NWU.

3.6 Conclusions

The South-African government that was elected into power after the 1994 elections promulgated several acts and established several statutory bodies to oversee the transformation of the country. The HEQC is one such body, and has to oversee transformation in the higher education sector, amongst others. The phenomenon of quality was debated by several stakeholders and documented by researchers, but also by the HEQC and the CHE itself. South African stakeholders also learnt from the quality audit experiences of countries such as Australia and Finland.

The NWU came into existence on 1 January 2004 as a result of the South African government's vision of merging certain higher education institutions in support of a transformed national higher education landscape. The North-West University is one of several higher education providers in the South-African context that are proactively

engaged in the quality audit conducted by the HEQC[70]. Although a newly merged university, the NWU clearly documented its approach to quality management by making clear reference to, amongst others, the relation between effective management and the promotion of quality. The use of the so-called quality cycle, as originally embedded in action research, informs the cycle of continuous quality improvement (see Annexure A, question 1). These foundational principles, amongst others, allowed the NWU to actively engage in the preparation for the HEQC quality audit. This preparation was overseen by an audit steering team that conducted all the planning, the generation of the self-evaluation report and all evidence documentation, the quality and audit awareness programmes, stakeholder participation (see Annexure A, question 6), all logistical arrangements (see Annexure A, question 4) and the visits to the respective campuses and to the institutional office. During the latter visit, interviews were conducted with stakeholders in order to validate the findings that were made in the self-evaluation report (see Annexure A, question 9). Debriefing sessions were conducted with stakeholders who participated as interviewees and during these sessions a questionnaire (Annexure A) was completed by interviewees. The information obtained in this manner informed some of the findings[71] that are reported in chapters 5 and 6.

The NWU has received the final audit report[72] from the HEQC, which was followed by an improvement plan that was developed by the NWU. In addition, the HEQC conducted a follow-up visit to get clarity on some issues obviously absent from the improvement plan. According to an agreement between the HEQC and the NWU, the NWU must report on these issues as well as the progress made with implementing the improvement plan.

In the next chapter, namely chapter 4, the research design followed in this thesis is to be reported.

[70] It is acknowledged that the majority of private higher education providers in South Africa have not yet participated in a quality audit.
[71] Limited in scope.
[72] The executive summury is also available on the website of the Council on Higher Education.

CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

In chapter 4, the research design for this study will be discussed. The research problem is described (4.2) and the purpose of this study is explained in relation to the objectives of this study (4.3). This is followed by a discussion of the data collection methods (4.4), for which a questionnaire was used as a measuring instrument. The advantages and disadvantages of the structured, mainly closed-ended questionnaire as well as the structure of the questionnaire (4.5) are discussed. This is followed by an explanation of the pilot study (4.6), the administrative procedures that were used (4.7), record keeping of data (4.8), the editing and coding of data (4.9) and data processing (4.10). The population and sampling are outlined (4.11) and an explanation is given of the principles of validity, reliability (4.12) and generaliseability (4.13). Factor analysis is explained (4.14) and the chapter is ended with a conclusion (4.15).

4.2 The research problem

A research problem can be defined as some difficulty the researcher experiences in the context of either a theoretical or practical situation and to which the researcher wants to find a solution (Welman & Kruger, 2001:12). The core problem that was defined in chapter 1 of this study is to arrive at some understanding of h*ow stakeholders, who participated as interviewees in the HEQC Quality Audit at North-West University, perceived the quality audit process*.

With this problem as a focus for the study, it is necessary to describe the purpose of the research.

4.3 The aim and objectives of the empirical investigation

The aim of this study was to identify the possible limitations and deficiencies associated with the HEQC quality audit preparation and execution processes at one higher education institution in order to improve future efficiency and effectiveness of the next round of audit processes.

The aim of the study was pursued through the following objectives:

- To determine the rationale for the HEQC Quality Audit (chapter 2) and to define the concept of quality within the context of the case concerned (chapter 3).
- To analyse the perceptions of audit interviewees who participated in the HEQC Quality Audit at the NWU (chapter 5), with special reference to:
    - Reading of the self-evaluation report
    - Attendance of audit briefing sessions
    - Reading of briefing documentation

Views on the audit itself, with reference to quality improvement (see Annexure A, question 1), information surrounding the audit, logistical arrangements (see Annexure A, question 4), reflection on their work (see Annexure A, question 5), the chairperson's role, the interview, the panel members' engagement and the stakeholders' own participation (see Annexure A, question 6)

- To identify deficiencies in the processes involving the preparation for and execution of the audit visit (chapter 6).
- To generate guidelines to improve the processes of preparation for and execution of the next HEQC Quality Audit (chapter 6).

The purpose of this empirical investigation was to collect data from a targeted population, namely university stakeholders who participated as interviewees during the

quality audit at the North-West University. The study population in this target population consisted of the following stakeholders[73], amongst others: academics who were involved in teaching-learning and research, current students, alumni, campus management, institutional management, persons who were overall responsible for quality, industry, employers, and community stakeholders.

Trends were identified among the study population, resulting in derivations and recommendations which might serve as directives for the preparation and execution of the next quality audit at the North-West University. Different data collection methods were explored, which will be explained next.

4.4 Data collection methods

4.4.1 The questionnaire as a measuring instrument

The survey is the most widely used instrument to generate data in many fields of study, even to the point that it is sometimes described as being almost too popular (Neuman, 1994:221). The research questionnaire can be regarded an instrument that includes either open, closed or both type questions or statements to which a respondent can react. This is regarded as the most widely used technique for obtaining information from subjects or respondents (White, 2003:66). The questionnaire is an instrument that can be optimised for collecting survey information, making available structured and numerical data. If planned well, it can also be administered without the presence of a researcher, it is comparatively straightforward to analyse and hence to interpret (see Cohen *et al.*, 2003:245). Questionnaires can therefore be used in research in order to gather written information which is not normally visible and it may be used to collect information that reflects behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, characteristics, expectations, classification and knowledge (Neuman, 1994:222).

[73] For a detailed list see Table 4.1.

The survey questionnaire has several functions or objectives. The first section, for example, introduces the survey to the respondents; the internal section contains the items and scales to measure the survey topics; and the final section presents the questions to measure the respondents' characteristics in order to group and compare the individual cases (Alreck & Settle, 2004:146).

White (2003:66) recommends several guidelines in order to formulate and compile effective questions or statements that can be included in the questionnaire: Formulate items clearly; avoid double-barrelled questions; ensure that the respondents are capable and competent to answer; ensure that the questions or statements are relevant; ensure simplicity of the items included in the questionnaire; totally avoid items that are formulated in the negative; and avoid biased items.

4.4.2 The advantages and disadvantages of the structured (closed-ended) questionnaire as a data instrument

Cohen *et al.* (2003:247) distinguish one important rule for questionnaires: the larger the size of a sample, the more structured, closed and numerical the questionnaire has to be; and the smaller the sample size, the less structured, and more open and word-based the questionnaire should be. The closed-ended questionnaire only permits certain responses and the quantification and analysis of results may be carried out easily and very effectively. It should be used where the answer categories are discrete, distinct, and relatively few in number (White, 2003:67). The issue, however, is not which form is the best, but rather under what conditions a form is most appropriate (Neuman, 1994:232).

A researcher's choice between open and closed-ended questions depends on the purpose of the research. Large-scale surveys typically make use of closed-ended questions, since they are much quicker and probably easier to process – this applies to both researcher and respondents. Open-ended questions may be used to learn how respondents think or what is really important to them, or to get answers to a question with many possible answers. It is also recommended that the questionnaire contain a

mixture of both open and closed-ended questions, to offer a change in pace and to help the interviewer to establish rapport (Neuman, 1994:234).

White (2003:68) observes that the majority of questionnaires contain both open and closed-ended questions but supports the optimal use of closed-ended questions during research. It is, however, recommended that although the questionnaire mainly consists of closed-ended questions that would support statistical analysis, a section should also be included for an open-ended question(s) that has/have to be processed manually. The inclusion of open-ended questions invites honest, personal comments from respondents and also catches the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour which are the hallmark of qualitative data (Cohen *et al.*, 2003:255).

A number of advantages and disadvantages of the closed-ended questionnaire as a research method have been documented by White (2003:67) and Neuman (1994:233). Advantages include the following, among others: It is easier and quicker for respondents to answer; the answers of different respondents are easier to compare; answers are easier to code and to analyse statistically; the response choices can clarify the meaning of questions for respondents; respondents are more likely to answer about sensitive topics; there are fewer irrelevant or confused answers to questions; less articulate or less literate respondents are not at a disadvantage; and replication is easier.

The disadvantages of the structured (closed-ended) questionnaire as a research method include the following, among others: Ideas can be included that the respondent would not otherwise have known about; respondents with no opinion or no knowledge about an issue can answer in any way; respondents can become frustrated if their desired answer is not offered as a choice; it becomes confusing if many (e.g. more than 5) response choices are offered; the misinterpretation of a question or statement can go unnoticed; clerical mistakes or marking the wrong response is possible; respondents are sometimes expected to give simplistic responses to complex issues; and respondents may feel that they are forced to make choices they would not make in the real world.

Given the advantages and disadvantages of a closed-ended questionnaire, it is imperative to understand the motivation and rationale for using this instrument for this survey.

4.4.3 Motivation for using a structured (closed-ended) questionnaire for this research

Cohen *et al.* (2003:255) identify the following reasons why a structured (closed-ended) questionnaire may be used, and when it should be used: It offers relative ease of accessibility to the study population groups in question; the study is of large proportion and the consideration to include individual interviews was excluded since it would be more time and cost consuming; objectivity of the test results would be ensured through the use of closed-ended questions; it is relatively less expensive than interviews; respondents are able to complete the questionnaires in their own time; it is easier to process closed-ended questionnaires than open-ended questionnaires; the anonymity of the respondents is ensured; and sensitive and confidential questions are more easily answered.

Next, the various steps in conducting the survey are highlighted.

4.4.4 Steps in conducting an survey

According to Neuman (1994:225), the researcher follows a deductive approach and begins with a theoretical or applied research problem, ending with empirical measurement and data analysis. Neuman (1994:225) proposes the following steps in survey research:

4.4.4.1 The design and planning phase

Decide on the type of survey, for example mail, telephone, interview; and on the type of respondent. Develop the survey instrument: carefully construct question items to measure variables; decide on response categories; organise question sequence; design question layout; plan a system for recording answers; pilot test the instrument (and train interviewers if necessary); define the population; draw the sample; decide on the type of sample; develop a sampling frame; decide on the sample size; and select the sample (Neuman, 1994:225). The process followed in this research is described in more detail in paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7.

4.4.4.2 The data collection phase

In this study data was collected by means of the following steps: All respondents were located and contacted in advance; introductory statements and clear instructions were provided before the questionnaire was administered; responses were recorded; all respondents were thanked; and all data that was collected was organised and filed.

Bornman (2001) proposes the following steps in survey research: Survey research begins with a theoretical or applied research problem; a questionnaire is developed; pre-testing or pilot testing of questionnaire takes place; a sample is done of people or other units of analysis (e.g. organisations); data gathering or administering of questionnaires; capturing of data; data analysis; and report writing.

Above, the type of questionnaire that was used and the motivations for using it were explained. The structure of the questionnaire will be described in the next section.

4.5 The structure of the questionnaire

The covering letter and layout of the questionnaire will be described in the following section.

4.5.1 The covering letter (compare Annexure C)

White (2003:73) argues that the success of the initial mailing depends on the effectiveness of the cover letter that accompanies the questionnaire. If it explains the purpose and importance of the survey, the respondent is likely to become interested in the problem and will be inclined to cooperate. In the case of this research, the letter was e-mailed to all participants in advance. In the first section of the questionnaire, in question C, respondents had to indicate whether they had read the briefing document which included, among others, reference to the debriefing session and hence the completion of the questionnaire. The questionnaire had to be completed immediately after they had been interviewed by the audit panel members (see Annexure A, questions 15 - 21). The questionnaire was therefore administered on the same day the respondents participated as interviewees in the quality audit. Different respondents

completed the questionnaire (Annexure A) over a period of 4 days. The fifth day of the audit programme was used for, among others, verbal feedback to the institution (see Annexure B).

According to Cohen *et al.* (2003:259), the questionnaire is normally accompanied by a covering letter with the purpose to indicate the aim of the research, to convey its importance to the respondents, to assure respondents of the confidentiality of the information and to encourage their replies. Cohen *et al.* (2003:260) suggest that it is useful to personalise the letter where possible, avoiding formal expressions such as “Dear Sir”. and replacing it with personal names. In the case of this study, these suggestions were incorporated.

4.5.2 The layout of the questionnaire (compare Annexure A)

4.5.2.1 Introduction

According to Alreck and Settle (2004:24), a typical questionnaire involves mainly three parts, namely the introduction, the body and the conclusion. The first part initiates the task for the respondent and suggests what kinds of questions will follow. This part should not be used to ask delicate questions or seek sensitive information. The second or middle part of the questionnaire involves the body. It contains the questions or items that deal with the substance and detail of the survey topic and is much longer than the introduction or the conclusion. The final part is reserved for two kinds of questions, namely those that deal with the most sensitive or delicate issues and those that measure the characteristics of the respondents.

According to Ary *et al.* (1996:429), the structure of the questionnaire should comply with at least the following requirements: It should not be too long; it should provide sufficient information; it must be interesting; it must be constructed in such a way that it could be easily completed; the items must be numerically listed; and instructions should be clear and understandable.

In this study, a structured closed-ended questionnaire was compiled from, among others, the literature survey in chapters 2 and 3.

No biographical information was requested and the only demographical information was recorded by the researcher at the bottom of the questionnaire. The demographical information differed according to the group of respondents who attended the debriefing session and the place where the questionnaire was administered. Earlier during the day, respondents were also requested to display a colour sticker on their left shoulder to indicate the session they had to attend and the group which they represented (e.g. employers, rated researchers, alumni, undergraduate lecturers, etc.) (see Annexure D). A corresponding colour sticker was affixed on the questionnaire of each respondent, to ensure that the correct group of respondents completed the questionnaire and that the correct session number could be recorded at the bottom of the questionnaire. This was done by the researcher, who also conducted the debriefing after each interview session between stakeholders (the interviewees) and the audit panel (on behalf of the quality agency).

4.5.2.2 First section of the questionnaire

In the first section, respondents were requested to respond clearly to the following statements by answering either “yes” or “no”:

A.	I have read the NWU Self-Evaluation Report
B.	I have attended a briefing session in preparation for the audit panel interview
C	I have read a written briefing document in preparation for the audit panel interview

Respondents were requested to respond to the rest of the questions according to a 4 point Likert scale (Huysamen, 1976:17; Steyn, 2005:3), where 1 = *not at all*, indicating a high level of disagreement; 2 = *small extent*, indicating a medium level of disagreement;

3 = *reasonable extent*, indicating a medium level of agreement; and 4 = *large extent*, indicating a high level of agreement.

4.5.2.3 Second section of the questionnaire

The second section of the questionnaire included a set of 8 questions which requested participants to express their view on each of the following:

1. The HEQC audit will contribute to the improvement of quality at NWU.
2. I was informed about the purpose of the audit.
3. I was informed about what to expect during this interview.
4. Logistical arrangements for this interview were sufficient (invitations, venue, etc.).
5. The audit encouraged me to reflect on how I do my work.
6. I was given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for the audit.
7. The panel chairperson stated the purpose of the interview.
8. The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially.

4.5.2.4 Third section of the questionnaire

In the third section of questions, respondents were requested to express their view on the questions that were posed to them by members of the audit panel. The 4 point Likert scale referred to in 4.5.2.2 was used. Participants were asked to respond to the following statements (9 to 14) about the questions that were asked during the interview:

The questions asked during the interview:

9. served to validate the statements/claims made in the NWU self-evaluation report;

10. were clear/understandable;

11. were to the point;

12. were appropriate for this group of interviewees;

13. were occasionally thought provoking;

14. provided insight into how the NWU can improve its quality.

4.5.2.5 Fourth section of the questionnaire

In this section, statements were presented regarding the conduct of panel members who interviewed the respective stakeholders as interviewees. Participants had to respond to the following statements:

Panel members:

15. listened with an open mind to the responses of interviewees;

16. were well prepared;

17. allowed interviewees to respond to/elaborate on responses made by fellow interviewees;

18. conduct was professional.

4.5.2.6 Fifth section of the questionnaire

In the last section of questions, respondents were requested to express their views on the extent to which they had the opportunity to respond to questions posed to them, whether they had the opportunity to articulate their responses and whether it was possible to relate to their work. The 4 point Likert scale referred to in 4.2.2.1 were used and the following statements (19 to 21) were presented:

During this interview I had the opportunity:

19. to respond to questions asked by panel members;

20. to fully articulate my response(s);

21. to relate to my work.

4.6 The pilot study

The wording of a questionnaire is of paramount importance and pre-testing is crucial to ensure its success. One of the most important functions of a pilot study is to increase reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire (Cohen *et al.*, 2003:260).

The pilot study therefore served to check the clarity of the questionnaire items, instructions and layout; to gain feedback on the validity of questionnaire items, application of the constructs and purposes of the research; to eliminate ambiguities or difficulties in the wording; to gain feedback on the type of question and its format; to gain feedback on response categories for closed-ended questions and for appropriateness of specific questions; to gain feedback on the attractiveness and appearance of the questionnaire; to gain feedback on the layout sectionalising, numbering and itemisation of the questionnaire; to check the time taken to complete the questionnaire; to check whether the questionnaire is too long, short, easy too difficult, too un-engaging, too threatening, too instructive and too offensive; to identify questions which consistently gain a total *yes* or *no* response – thus questions which do not discriminate in any way (see the first section of the questionnaire); to identify misunderstood or non-completed items; and to try out the coding /classification systems for data analysis.

Cohen *et al.* (2003:261) recommend that everything should be piloted and nothing should be excluded, not even the typeface or quality of paper. Consequently, the pilot in this study was done to test the questions and to eliminate possible problems. It involved all 8 members of the audit steering team. After the pilot study, the draft questionnaire was received back from all 8 members and the necessary adjustments were made, after which the final questionnaire was compiled and printed.

The feedback of targeted respondents was recorded on the questionnaire in question.

4.6.1 Feedback on the pilot study and questionnaire

The targeted respondents provided the following feedback, which was incorporated in the questionnaire:

- Language editing of certain points was recommended;
- questions 9 to 21 were rephrased in order to be more concise;
- the open-ended question which concluded the questionnaire was reformulated in order to allow respondents to respond to anything that related to the audit process; and
- the time that the candidates needed to complete the pilot study was consistent with the time that was available during the debriefing session to complete the questionnaire.

The administrative and distribution procedures are discussed next.

4.7 Administrative and distribution procedures

The various stakeholders that had to participate in the quality audit have been selected by the audit steering team in close collaboration with the extended audit team that represented a broader constituency of the university. All stakeholders that were not employed by the university were first contacted telephonically and informed about the audit and the debriefing session, after which a questionnaire had to be completed, among others. In addition, respondents also received an invitation to attend a briefing session[74] that would take place well before the site visit was to be conducted by the audit panel members. During the briefing session the whole audit process would be explained to them. Several of the stakeholders that were not employed by the university on a fulltime basis expressed their willingness to participate, but declined the invitation to attend a briefing session. Because they were unable to travel to the university to attend

[74] Not similar to the briefing session on the day of the interview (see Annexure D).

a briefing session, the detailed briefing document was sent to them by e-mail (see Annexure C).

All stakeholders who participated as interviewees were provided the opportunity to participate in the audit preparation; read and comment on the audit self-evaluation report; attend a briefing session before the audit; study a detailed briefing document that was made available by e-mail/ intranet; attend and participate in the interview with the audit panel members; attend a debriefing session conducted by the researcher and complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered during the debriefing session that followed immediately after stakeholders had been interviewed by the audit panel members. An explanatory letter, which also guaranteed the anonymity of the information, was e-mailed to all target populations for the purpose of this research.

When respondents who participated as interviewees entered the debriefing venue, they immediately received the questionnaire, the invitation to participate was repeated and they were again assured of anonymity. As soon as respondents completed the questionnaire, all questionnaires were collected and the appropriate session number was inserted at the bottom by the researcher. An open discussion then followed between the researcher and stakeholders who participated as interviewees in the audit. The feedback generated in these discussions was documented, but not reported as part of this research thesis, because it is beyond the scope of this research.

A consultant, Dr Suria Ellis from the Statistical Consultation Services at the North-West University's Potchefstroom campus, assisted the researcher to immediately capture all quantitative feedback in an electronic database. The questionnaires were then all grouped according to the sessions and placed in a file. These files will be kept by the researcher for a period of five years, after which it will be archived at the North-West University's Archive.

After the pilot investigation, the briefing document that included reference to the debriefing session (compare Annexure C) was distributed mostly by e-mail. The request to collaborate in the debriefing session during which the questionnaire was administered, was emphasised; as was the undertaking that all participation would be anonymous (see Annexure A). No questionnaires were distributed by mail (post) as all

respondents were attending the audit interviews at the institutional office of the university and they were therefore available to complete the questionnaire after the interview session.

The questionnaire was presented in English[75] only, based on a decision by the audit steering team. After the completion of the questionnaire by the respondents it was administered by the researcher, assisted by a statistical consultant.

Record keeping of research material and results (data) is essential, and the method of record keeping for this study is explained below.

4.8 Record keeping

All records of questionnaires of respondents (including statistical data), whether complete or incomplete, correspondence with respondents, dates of administration of questionnaires and discussions with respondents have been stored. The researcher reviewed the individual responses to the questionnaires of all completed questionnaires with the intention to transfer information from questionnaires to a format for statistical analysis.

The next step in the research process was the editing and coding of data, which will be briefly described below.

4.9 Editing and coding of data

The first step in data analysis is to edit raw data. Editing detects errors and omissions, and corrects them when it is possible and certifies that the minimum data quality standards have been achieved (Cooper & Schindler, 2001:423). The researcher has attempted at all times to guarantee that the data is accurate, consistent with the intent of

[75] The self-evaluation report was originally compiled in English but also translated into Afrikaans. This version was made available on the intranet as well as in compact disc (CD) format to all stakeholders who preferred to read the self-evaluation report in Afrikaans.

the questions and other information in the survey, and that it is uniformly entered, complete and arranged to simplify coding and tabulation.

After the collection of the data, data was organised and coded in order to be analysed. Coding implies the identification of the variable in order to be statistically analysed. A decision is also made on the various code values which such a variable represents (Welman & Kruger, 1999:208). Through coding of raw data, data is transformed into symbols that may be tabulated and counted (Churchill, 1991:687). The researcher did not complete any incomplete answers, thereby avoiding the creation of misrepresentation or bias in the study. This will become evident in the analysis of the data in the next chapter.

After the editing and coding of the data, the data was processed.

4.10 Data processing

The questionnaires were coded by the researcher prior to data capturing, in collaboration with the Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) for statistical analysis. Responses were captured directly from the questionnaires by the Statistical Services of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus). Data was then processed with the aid of SPSS Inc. (2009).

A correlation matrix of all questions together indicated a p-value of .002 for Bartlett's test of sphericity and a Keiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy indicated a value of .845. Both these values indicated that correlations between questions were suitable for a factor analysis. The reliability was confirmed by means of Cronbach alpha estimations.

For the purpose of this study, descriptive statistics, t-tests and analysis of variance were also used to indicate the statistically meaningful differences between the respective campuses and between different population groups (researchers, lecturers, and others). The d-values of Cohen (Steyn, 2005:3) were calculated to indicate the practically meaningful differences between study populations and target populations.

In the next section, the population and sampling in this research will be briefly described.

4.11 Population and sampling

4.11.1 The target populations

The research population should be well defined by the researcher (Visser, 2002:100). In the case of this research, the target population refers to all stakeholders who participated as interviewees in the first quality audit of the North-West University.

4.11.2 The study population[76]

The study populations in this study were selected from among the target populations (stakeholders) (see Table 4.1 for detailed list) and included the following:

- **office bearers and senior managers of the university** (the vice-chancellor, the chairperson of council, chairs of all council committees (including the finance committee), the executive management team of the university, Institutional Forum, executive managers responsible for finances and resource allocation, executive managers responsible for human resources, management responsible for macro quality management; respective campus managements[77]);
- **academics** (recently appointed fulltime academics, female academics, senior academics, part-time academics, academic support staff in faculties[78], school directors, members of senate[79], deans);
- **current students** (institutional student representative council[80], undergraduate students (including students with disabilities and international students), distance education students, residential students, students who attended supplemental instruction, post-graduate students (honours, master's and

[76] One study population with different groups.
[77] Three campuses, each with its own distinct management team.
[78] There are 15 faculties spread over 3 campuses.
[79] Institutional Senate.
[80] Representative of all three campuses.

doctoral level students, course work master's students, research-based master's and doctoral students));

- **former students** (alumni and the convocation);
- **lecturing staff** (senior lecturers responsible for teaching-learning, junior lecturers responsible for teaching-learning, recipients of the Institutional Teaching-Learning Excellence Award[81], chairs of teaching and academic programme committees, research directors, the executive director[82] and vice-rectors[83] responsible for teaching-learning);
- **staff responsible for research, innovation and supervision** (the executive director of research and innovation[84] and all vice-rectors[85] responsible for research and innovation, managers responsible for research innovation, managers responsible for community engagement, members of the research ethics committee, experienced post-graduate supervisors, newly appointed post-graduate supervisors, rated researchers, research fellows, female researchers, emerging researchers);
- **examiners** (undergraduate external examiners from outside the university, postgraduate external examiners from outside the university);
- **support staff** (academic development and support staff; managers responsible for student academic administration, library staff, information and communication technology[86] staff (including managers), staff responsible for distance education support and infrastructure (including managers), academic development practitioners, student counselling practitioners, career counselling practitioners, student health practitioners, student sport coordinators, staff members responsible for art and culture and staff members managing student residential affairs);

[81] Generally known as the ITEA-award.
[82] This title has since the audit changed to Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching-Learning.
[83] From each campus.
[84] Since the quality audit this title has been changed to Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation, in order to be more in line with other universities in South-Africa.
[85] From each campus.
[86] Generally known as ICT (Information and Communication Technology).

- **staff unions**; and
- **external stakeholders** (employers, community partners, business and industry partners, representatives of provincial and municipal governments, research partners).

TABLE 4.1 STAKEHOLDERS AND INTERVIEW SESSIONS

SESSION	STAKEHOLDER GROUP
1	Vice-chancellor[87]
2	Executive management team (strategic/academic group)
3	Council[88]
4.1	Recently appointed fulltime academic staff (spread across campuses and faculties)
4.2	Women academic staff (spread across campuses and faculties)
4.3	Senior academic staff (spread across campuses and faculties)
4.4	Part-time academic staff (spread across campuses and faculties)
4.5	Academic support staff in faculties(spread across campuses and faculties)
4.6	Academics(spread across campuses and faculties)
4.7	School directors (spread across campuses and faculties)
4.8	School directors (spread across campuses and faculties)
4.9	School directors (spread across campuses and faculties)
4.10	School directors (spread across campuses and faculties)
5	Senate (spread across campuses and faculties)
6	Deans (spread across campuses and faculties)
7	Institutional student representative council (ISRC)
8	Institutional Forum
9.1	Executive management team (admin/support group) (focus: financial resource allocation)
9.2	Executive management team (admin/support group) (focus: human resources)
10	Staff unions (spread across campuses)
11	Staff responsible for macro quality management
12.1	Employers
12.2	Employers
12.3	Community partners (spread across campuses)

[87] Did not complete the questionnaire – anonymity could not be guaranteed as there was only one interviewee in this group.
[88] Did not complete the questionnaire as the council's briefing and preparation for the audit were conducted differently than those of other stakeholders.

SESSION	STAKEHOLDER GROUP
12.4	Business & industry partners(spread across campuses)
12.5	Provincial, municipal & local government
12.6	Research partners (spread across campuses)
12.7	Alumni & convocation (spread across campuses)
13.1	Senior lecturers (different staff from session 4) (spread across campuses)
13.2	Senior lecturers (different staff from session 4) (spread across campuses)
13.3	Junior lecturers and lecturers (different staff from session 4) (spread across campuses)
13.4	Academic development and support staff (spread across campuses)
13.5	ITEA[89] recipients (spread across campuses)
13.6	School directors (spread across campuses)
13.7	School directors (spread across campuses)
13.8	School directors (spread across campuses)
13.9	School directors (spread across campuses)
13.10	School directors (spread across campuses)
14	Mafikeng Campus (deans; school directors; chairs of committees) (focus: teaching-learning)
15	Mafikeng Campus (deans; school directors; research innovation) (focus: community engagement)
16	Potchefstroom Campus (deans; school directors; chairs of committees) (focus: teaching-learning)
17	Potchefstroom Campus (deans; research entity directors; research innovation) (focus: community engagement)
18.1	Undergraduate students (spread across campuses)
18.2	International students (spread across campuses)
18.3	Disabled students (spread across campuses)
18.4	Residential students (spread across campuses)
18.5	SI students (spread across campuses)
18.6	Distance students (spread across campuses)
18.7	Honours students (spread across campuses)
18.8	Research master's students (spread across campuses)
18.9	Course work master's students (spread across campuses)
18.10	Doctoral students (spread across campuses)
19	Vaal Triangle Campus (deans; school directors; chairs of committees) (focus: teaching-learning)
20	Vaal Triangle Campus (deans; coordinators of research entities; research innovation) (focus: community engagement)

[89] Institutional Teaching Excellence Award.

SESSION	STAKEHOLDER GROUP
21	Executive director for teaching and learning, campus rectors and campus vice-rectors: academic
22	Executive director for research and innovation, campus rectors and campus vice-rectors: academic
23.1	External examiners (undergraduate) (outside the NWU) (spread across campuses)
23.2	External examiners (post-graduate) (outside the NWU) (spread across campuses)
24.1	Staff members involved in research innovation (spread across campuses)
24.2	Staff members involved in community engagement (spread across campuses)
25	Research Ethics Committee
26.1	Experienced postgraduate supervisors(spread across campuses)
26.2	Newly appointed supervisors (spread across campuses)
27.1	Rated researchers (spread across campuses)
27.2	Research fellows (spread across campuses)
27.3	Women researchers (spread across campuses)
27.4	Emerging researchers (spread across campuses)
28	Staff Members from Student Administration, including Admissions, Examinations, Loans and Bursaries (spread across campuses)
29	Library staff (including directors) (spread across campuses)
30	ICT[90] staff members (including directors) (spread across campuses)
31	Staff members involved in distance education support and infrastructure
32.1	Academic development practitioners (spread across campuses)
32.2	Staff members involved with: student counselling; career counselling; student health; sports; arts and culture (spread across campuses)
33	Staff members involved in residence affairs (spread across campuses)
34	Any member of the institution (including alumni and partners) may approach the panel to address them on quality issues.[91]
35	Vice-chancellor[92]
36	The panel may ask to clarify issues with any former interviewee[93]

[90] Information and Communication Technology.
[91] No requests were received by the audit steering group from any person to address the panel.
[92] Did not complete the questionnaire – Anonymity could not be guaranteed as it was only one interviewee.
[93] The author/researcher of this report was called back. Did not complete the questionnaire – Anonymity could not be guaranteed as it was only one interviewee.

4.11.3 Sample size and method

4.11.3.1 Sample size

Visser (2002:174) explains that sample size refers to the number (n) of items to be selected from the universe of the population to make up a specific sample.

4.11.3.2 Sample method

An availability sampling method (White, 2003:64) was used. All stakeholders who participated as interviewees were regarded as the whole population. According to White (2003:64), for availability sampling the respondents are selected because they are the nearest and most easily available. A number of university stakeholders, however, were not selected to participate in the quality audit as interviewees, because the number of interviewees was strictly prescribed by the HEQC and the venues where the interviews were conducted also had room only for a limited number of interviewees.

There are some limitations to availability sampling, for example that there is no precise way of generalising from the sample to any type of population. Generaliseability is limited to the characteristics of the subjects – this does not mean they are not useful; it only means that caution is needed in generalising.

4.11.3.3 Response

Questionnaires were used as a research instrument. These were delivered and collected by hand by the researcher. Questionnaires were distributed to 308 respondents who participated as interviewees. Of the total of 308 interviewees, 304 stakeholders who participated as interviewees completed the questionnaires for processing by the researcher.

Deductions can be made about and can only be generalised to the first quality audit that was conducted at the North-West University. Only tendencies which are of significant practical value are reported. The intention of this research is to use the outcomes of this

study to provide directives for the preparation and execution of the next quality audit at the North-West University. The results are reported in chapter 5.

4.11.3.4 Principles regarding sampling

Alreck and Settle (2004:60) advise that smaller samples are more likely to be different from the population than larger ones: the smaller the sample, the larger the error and hence the lower the reliability. With a larger sample, the sampling error is smaller and reliability increases. Therefore, larger samples enable researchers to draw more accurate conclusions and make more accurate predictions (Alreck & Settle, 2004:60). An attempt was made in this study to obtain feedback from all stakeholders who participated as interviewees in the first quality audit at the North-West University.

Results obtained need to be analysed in terms of their validity, reliability and generaliseability.

4.12 Validity and reliability in quantitative research

4.12.1 Validity in quantitative research

Validity of a test concerns what the test measures and how well it does so (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997:113). White (2005:193) also refers to validity as that which may either be true or correct or that corresponds to the actual state of reality. White (2005:193) differentiates between two types of validity in quantitative research, namely *internal validity*, which refers to the degree to which the design of an experiment controls extraneous (external) variables, and *external validity,* which is concerned with whether the results of the research can be generalised to another situation, populations, different subjects, settings, times and/or occasions. Validity in quantitative research concerns conclusions about causal connections, for example when a connection between variables yields a statistically significant correlation (White, 2005:201)

Furthermore, the term *validity* refers to the scientific use of a measuring instrument, that is, amongst others, how well it measures what it is supposed to measure. Different

aspects of validity are distinguished, such as *construct validity*, measuring psychological attributes, *predictive validity*, establishing a relationship with a particular criterion, and *content validity*, which is sampling from a poll of required content (Nunnally, 1978:83). In this research, *construct validity* will be tested (White, 2005:197).

Validities can also be categorised into *face validity*, which refers to what a test should appear to measure and not to what it actually measures; *criterion validity,* where a valid test should relate closely to other measures of the same theoretical construct; *construct validity*, which refers to the degree to which it measures the intended construct rather than relevant constructs (also see the paragraph above); and *content validity*, which samples the range of behaviours that is represented by the theoretical concept being measured (also see the paragraph above) (White, 2005:196; Anastasi & Urbina, 1997:117).

Construct validation is an analysis of the meaning of test scores in terms of concepts or constructs (Cronbach, 1970:142). Cronbach (1970:143) also refers to three components of construct validation, namely (a) deriving constructs that could account for test performance, (b) deriving hypothesis from the theory involving the construct and (c) testing the hypothesis empirically. In construct validation, both the measure and the theory relating the construct to other constructs are evaluated.

4.12.2 Reliability in quantitative research

Anastasi and Urbina (1997:84) describe reliability as the consistency of scores obtained by the same persons when they were re-examined with the same test on different occasions. Mitchell and Jolley (2001:115) explain that reliability is the extent to which a quantitative measure produces stable and consistent scores: **a measure can be reliable but not valid, but if a measure is not reliable it cannot be valid**. Reliability is a prerequisite for validity and is easier to achieve than validity. White (2005:197) defines reliability “as the accuracy or precision of an instrument; as the degree of consistency or agreement between two independently derived sets of scores; and as the extent to which independent administrations of the same instrument yield the same or similar results under comparable conditions”.

Reliability is primarily concerned not with what is being measured but with how well it is being measured and can also be seen as an integral part of validity (White, 2005:197). According to White (2005:197), several procedures exist to measure reliability, including the test-retest and alternate forms, and methods such as split half techniques.

White (2005:198) differentiates between three types of reliability, namely determining stability (determined by the test-retest method); alternate forms (where two tests were given to sample the same material); and split half techniques (which is used to determine internal consistency). It is important to note that quantitative reliability is associated with accuracy stability, consistency and repeatability of the research (White, 2005:200).

According to Nunnally (1978:212), reliability also considers the measurement of error. The reliability coefficient is used to estimate the ratio of variance in true scores to the variance in observed scores. All types of reliability were concerned with the degree of consistency and can all be expressed in terms of a correlation coefficient. A correlation coefficient expresses the degree of correspondence or relationship between two sets of scores (see Anastasi & Urbina, 1997:85).

Cronbach's alpha is the mean reliability coefficient calculated from all possible split-half partitions of a measurement scale (Dillon *et al.*, 1993:823; also see Cronbach, 1970:144). It is possible to determine the proportion of true score variance by computing the sum of item variances with the variance of the sum scale by using the following formula:

$$\alpha = (k/(k-1)* [1-\Sigma (s^2_i)/s^2_{sum}]$$

This formula is used for the most common index or reliability and is known as Cronbach's coefficient alpha (α). The coefficient alpha will be zero if there is no true score but only an error in the items; then the variance of the sum will be the same as the sum of variances of the individual items. If all items were perfectly reliable and measure the same thing (true score), the coefficient alpha is equal to 1 (StatSoft, 2004).

The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient testing was performed on all constructs in this research survey and the results are recorded in chapter 5.

4.13 Generaliseability

Generaliseability occurs when a single observation is used as if it represented the universe. If the observed scores from a procedure agree closely with the universe score, it can be derived that such a score is accurate, reliable and therefore generaliseable (Cronbach, 1970:154). The generaliseability coefficient in turn describes, for instance, how well the mean judgements from one or more samples correlate with the mean judgement from a population or universe of potential judges (Nunnally, 1978:279). The coefficient of generaliseability is also known as the reliability coefficient, which in turn refers to a ratio of two variances (Cronbach, 1970:156).

The findings of this research will only indicate certain tendencies to be practically significant (StatSoft, 2004) and meaningful but will not be generaliseable to audits that were conducted by the HEQC at other institutions.

4.14 Factor analysis

4.14.1 The object of factor

According to Anastasi and Urbina (1997:303), the object of factor analysis is to simplify the description of the data by reducing the number of variables. Nunnally (1978:447) describes factor analysis as a broad category of approaches to determine the structure of relations among measures. Factor analysis may be used to determine groupings of variables, which variables belong to which group, how many dimensions were needed to explain the relations among variables, a frame of reference to describe the relations among the variables and scores of individuals on such groupings. Factor analysis normally begins with a complete table of inter-correlations among a set of tests. Such a table is known as a *correlation matrix* (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997:303).

According to Cronbach (1970:309), factor analysis is a systematic method for the examination of the meaning of a test by studying its correlation with other variables and the basic idea is that of simple correlation itself. A factor analyst introduces *composite variables*, which are defined as combinations of entities also known as *factors*. Factors can be interpreted and can describe the questionnaire in terms of its relation to key variables (Cronbach, 1970:312).

4.14.2 Factor loadings

Factor loadings refer to correlations between the variable and the factor (StatSoft, 2004). According to Dillon *et al.* (1993:573), many procedures can be used to rotate the matrix of factor loadings in order to achieve a simple structure.

4.15 Conclusion

In this chapter the research design and methodology with regard to data collection and the target population involved were discussed. The research problem, measuring instruments used in the empirical research, the pilot study, data editing, coding and processing, population sampling, validity, reliability, generaliseability and factor analysis were outlined.

The size of the study population was deemed acceptable and specific tendencies could be observed from data collected from questionnaires, considering the fact that it was an availability sampling method of study in which all stakeholders who participated as interviewees in the quality audit had the opportunity to complete the questionnaire.

Finally, through the distribution and collection of questionnaires, data was collected from the target and study populations in question, to enable the researcher to observe certain tendencies in the planning and execution of the quality audit at the North-West University.

In chapter 5, the analysis and interpretation of data and results are discussed.

CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In chapter 4, the various instruments and procedures applicable to the empirical part of this study were discussed. The aim of the empirical study was to determine the extent to which university stakeholders who participated as interviewees in the first quality audit at the North-West University viewed the audit process, their participation and the conduct of the audit panel members, by applying a structured survey questionnaire (see Annexure A). This enabled the researcher to arrive at implications and recommendations for the planning and execution of future quality audits at the North-West University (see 1.5.2; 1.5.3 and 1.5.4). The recommendations could possibly also be of value to the HEQC and other higher education institutions. It needs to be stated that much more data was generated and recorded in this thesis than could be interpreted within the limited scope of this thesis. At the end of the study, it is recommended that the data be further analysed and interpreted, in support of the next audit cycle.

In this chapter, the results that were generated by the survey questionnaire will be reported in order to:

- Determine the feedback from stakeholders who participated as interviewees with regard to the panel members and the questions they posed during the interview; the preparation for the audit; the interview opportunity; the audit and quality; the level of engagement and the chairperson's conduct;
- An exploratory factor analysis was performed to determine latent variables underlying the questions in the questionnaire (see Table 5.1);
- Cronbach alpha values were calculated in order to determine reliability (see Table 5.2);

- p-values were calculated by means of a t-test and ANOVA in order to determine statistically significant differences between group means, and d-values of Cohen were calculated to indicate the practically significant differences between group means (Steyn, 2005:3).

5.2 Exploratory factor analysis

A Principal Axis Factoring Extraction method with Oblimin rotation was applied in order to indicate the patterns in which stakeholders who participated as interviewees responded to the questions in the questionnaire. According to Kaiser's criteria, 5 factors were extracted which explained the total variance. The communalities indicated that sufficient variance of each item was explained by the extracted factors. The data is tabled in Table 5.1 and then analysed.

TABLE 5.1 PATTERN MATRIX (IN RANK ORDER)

QUESTION[94]	CONSTRUCT/FACTOR				
	1[95]	2[96]	3[97]	4[98]	5[99]
16	.784				
17	.688				
15	.551				
18	.500				
12	.294				
2		.717			
3		.585			
4		.494			
6		.489			
7		.219			

[94] See Annexure A.
[95] Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview.
[96] Preparation for the audit.
[97] Interview opportunity.
[98] The audit and quality.
[99] Level of engagement.

QUESTION[100]	CONSTRUCT/FACTOR				
	1[101]	2[102]	3[103]	4[104]	5[105]
20			.891		
19			.777		
21			.511		
14				.587	
1				.571	
5				.551	
13				.343	
11					.640
10					.545
9					.399
8[106]					.255

From Table 5.1 the following can be derived:

- A factor analysis has indicated that several questions can be grouped together and can hence be reported as a group or construct of questions rather as 22 individual questions. In addition, the Cronbach alpha test indicated that these constructs are reliable (see Table 5.2).
- These questions therefore do not have to be reported or analysed separately, as they correlate to such an extent that they can be reported by an average count for the construct. The validity of the constructs is also confirmed by theoretical interpretability.

[100] See Annexure A.
[101] Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview.
[102] Preparation for the audit.
[103] Interview opportunity.
[104] The audit and quality.
[105] Level of engagement.
[106] Question 8 was later removed.

- Questions 12, 15, 16, 17 and 18 can be grouped together (construct 1) and will be called “Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview”.
- Questions 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 can be grouped together (construct 2) and will be called “Preparation for the audit”.
- Questions 19, 20 and 21 can be grouped together (construct 3) and will be called “Interview opportunity”.
- Questions 1,5, 13 and 14 can be grouped together (construct 4) and will be called “The audit and quality”.
- Questions 8[107], 9, 10 and 11 can be grouped together (construct 5) and will be called “Level of engagement[108]”.
- The 22 different questions in the questionnaire will therefore be reported as 5 different clusters of constructs. Question 8 has been removed from construct 8 in order to improve the reliability of the construct “Level of engagement” and will be reported separately (see Table 5.2).
- From these distinct clusters of constructs it can be determined how the different stakeholder groupings reacted to the questions by comparing the different groups with each other.

[107] Question 8 was later removed in order to determine the Cronbach alpha value. Feedback on question 8 was then reported separately (see footnote in Table 5.2).
[108] By the panel members.

TABLE 5.2: Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient on constructs and clustering of questions (items) into constructs

	CONSTRUCT	QUESTIONS (ITEMS)	VALUE Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient
1.	Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview	12,15,16,17,18	.770
2.	Preparation for the audit	2,3,4,6,7	.627[109]
3.	Interview opportunity	19,20,21	.783
4.	The audit and quality	1,5,13,14	.620
5(i).	Level of engagement	8[110],9,10,11	.531
5(ii)	Level of engagement	9,10,11	.678

Factor scores were calculated as the mean of the items contributing to a construct for each respondent. As a result of the Likert scale used, i.e. *1: Not at all; 2: small extent; 3: reasonable extent; 4: large extent*, the mean of the factor scores results in a number between 1 and 4. This implies that if the mean of a construct was close to 1, then for that cluster the indication is that the respondents' overall response is close to agreeing "not at all". On the other hand, if the mean is close to 4, it implies that for that construct the respondents' overall response is close to agreeing "to a large extent".

From Table 5.2 the following can be derived:

- The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient measures higher than 0.620 for all constructs and it may therefore be deduced that these constructs are reliable in the context where they are used. According to Field (2005:668), values lower than .7 can be regarded as realistic for psychological constructs, because of the diversity of the constructs being measured.

[109] According to Field (2005:668) values lower than .7 can be regarded as realistic for psychological constructs, because of the diversity of the constructs being measured.

[110] In order to ensure reliability, question 8 has been removed from the construct (see 5(ii) in Table 5.2) and will be reported separately.

TABLE 5.3: Mean and standard deviation of the five identified constructs

CONSTRUCT	N[111]	MEAN[112]	SD[113]
1. Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview	468	3.76	0.32
2. Preparation for the audit	468	3.50	0.45
3. Interview opportunity	468	3.69	0.47
4. The audit and quality	468	3.27	0.54
5. Level of engagement	468	3.58	0.46

Factor scores were calculated as the mean of the items contributing to a construct for each respondent. As a result of the Likert scale used, i.e. *1: Not at all; 2: small extent; 3: reasonable extent; 4: large extent*, the mean of the factor scores results in a number between 1 and 4. This implies that if the mean of a construct was close to 1, then for that cluster the indication is that the respondents' overall response is close to agreeing "not at all". On the other hand, if the mean is close to 4, it implies that for that construct the respondent's overall response is close to agreeing "to a large extent".

From Table 5.3 the following derivations can be made:

- Panel members' conduct and the questions they posed during the audit interview received the highest average, namely 3.76.
- All respondents where strongly of the opinion (with a mean of 3.69) that they had the opportunity to respond to questions posed by the panel members, that they had the opportunity to articulate their responses and finally that they were able to relate the questions that were asked during the interview.
- The audit and quality construct received the lowest mean, namely 3.27. Although this may still be regarded as a high mean, it can possibly be attributed

[111] N = The number of respondents.
[112] In all other tables the Mean is referred to as M.

to the fact that not all stakeholders actively participated in the preparation and self-evaluation process and hence did not have sufficient information about how the quality audit can contribute to the improvement of quality at the NWU. Due to a lack of active participation, limited opportunity was provided to respondents to reflect on how they do their work. It also seems as if the questions posed during the interview were not always thought provoking and hence respondents had difficulty to gain insight into how the NWU can improve its quality.

- Means for sessions.
- The means for individual sessions cannot be derived from Table 5.3; therefore these means are reported in Table 5.4.

TABLE 5.4 GROUP (SESSION) MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION LINKED TO EACH CONSTRUCT/ FACTOR AND QUESTION 8

Session	N	CONSTRUCT (C) / QUESTION (Q)											
		C1 Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview.		C2 Preparation for the audit		C3 Interview opportunity		C4 The audit and quality		C5 Level of engagement		Q 8. The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
2	8	**3.88**	**.14**	3.74	.17	3.88	.25	3.56	.44	3.46	.50	2.25	1.03
4.1	6	**3.73**	**.48**	3.49	.51	3.88	.27	3.24	.65	3.83	.18	1.17	.40
4.2	6	**3.77**	**.15**	3.10	.43	3.55	.50	3.0	.50	3.55	.50	1.67	.81
4.3	6	**3.57**	**.54**	3.23	.55	3.55	.45	2.79	.55	3.22	.54	1.83	1.17
4.4	6	**3.93**	**.10**	3.60	.33	4.00	0	3.46	.29	3.94	.13	2.83	1.32
4.5	7	**3.89**	**.16**	3.61	.34	3.71	.36	3.42	.42	3.71	.36	3.86	.38
4.6	6	**3.83**	**.20**	3.50	.28	3.83	.28	3.63	.31	3.50	.46	4.00	0
4.7	6	**3.80**	**.31**	3.70	.28	3.72	.44	3.33	.47	3.89	.17	3.50	.55

[113] SD = Standard Deviation. The SD shows how responses vary around the average or mean.

4.8	**6**	**3.57**	**.34**	3.32	.22	3.83	.28	3.22	.34	3.61	.39	1.80	1.30
4.9	**6**	**3.80**	**.18**	3.50	.17	3.61	.49	3.17	.49	3.72	.44	2.17	1.17
4.10	**5**	**3.44**	**.38**	3.24	.59	3.80	.45	2.98	.59	3.33	.40	3.80	.44
5	**11**	**3.80**	**.24**	3.51	.37	3.33	.42	3.45	.52	3.36	.67	2.00	1.41
6	**8**	**3.79**	**.25**	3.78	.30	3.83	.25	3.47	.54	3.46	.47	2.14	1.35
7	**8**	**3.92**	**.15**	3.40	.37	3.79	.35	3.00	.40	3.58	.68	2.13	1.13
8	**8**	**3.64**	**.42**	3.45	.28	3.79	.47	2.88	.79	3.50	.44	1.38	.74
9.1	**7**	**3.86**	**.19**	3.91	.16	3.42	.74	3.29	.60	3.67	.47	4.00	0
9.2	**8**	**3.47**	**.57**	3.33	.40	3.42	.66	3.25	.57	3.50	.47	3.75	.46
10	**8**	**3.60**	**.45**	3.40	.45	3.38	1.06	3.25	.67	3.46	.40	3.88	.35
12.2	**6**	**3.64**	**.28**	3.53	.40	4.00	0	3.72	.39	3.61	.44	3.50	.84
12.3[114]	**6**	**-**	**-**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12.4	**5**	**3.64**	**.41**	3.60	.28	3.27	.43	3.40	.43	3.40	.43	3.60	.55
12.5	**5**	**3.60**	**.51**	3.60	.43	3.20	.84	3.40	.43	3.73	.43	4.00	0
12.6	**6**	**3.50**	**.60**	3.61	.49	3.61	.49	3.11	.40	3.39	.49	3.83	.41
12.7	**6**	**3.77**	**.27**	3.61	.25	3.89	.27	3.50	.55	3.67	.37	2.60	1.52
13.1	**6**	**3.97**	**.82**	3.47	.76	3.78	.40	3.25	.52	3.72	.39	4.00	0
13.2	**6**	**4**	**0**	3.70	.20	3.94	.13	3.04	.73	3.94	.13	3.50	.83
13.3	**6**	**3.93**	**.10**	3.40	.31	4.00	0	3.36	.58	3.83	.18	4	0
13.4	**6**	**3.40**	**.54**	3.20	.40	3.39	.71	2.81	.81	3.17	.62	4	0
13.5	**6**	**3.90**	**.17**	3.31	.35	3.89	.27	3.58	.20	3.72	.33	4	0
13.6	**6**	**3.53**	**.43**	3.28	.24	3.39	.44	3.38	.68	3.28	.44	2.40	.55
13.7	**6**	**3.53**	**.37**	3.63	.45	3.50	.46	3.08	.52	3.67	.52	4	0
13.8	**5**	**3.91**	**.12**	3.56	.26	3.87	.18	3.55	.21	3.60	.37	4	0
13.9	**6**	**3.67**	**.33**	3.67	.33	3.72	.39	3.38	.41	3.39	.39	4	0
13.10	**6**	**3.47**	**.53**	3.40	.22	3.33	.92	2.79	.77	3.22	.78	1.33	.81
14	**8**	**3.46**	**.36**	3.35	.62	3.00	.87	3.43	.51	3.25	.61	3.88	.35
15	**8**	**3.89**	**.11**	3.35	1.02	3.75	.46	3.54	.65	3.38	.74	3.75	.71

[114] These respondents were all illiterate and could therefore not complete the questionnaire. However, a debriefing session was conducted with them and verbal feedback was received. The verbal feedback however where not analysed as part of this research thesis.

16	**7**	**3.80**	**.23**	3.94	.15	3.86	.27	3.43	.37	3.33	.27	3.86	.38
17	**8**	**3.85**	**.28**	3.78	.33	3.92	.24	3.38	.50	3.63	.52	4	0
18.1	**6**	**4**	**0**	3.37	.32	3.67	.30	3.46	.49	3.78	.40	4	0
18.2	**5**	**3.40**	**.62**	3.12	.78	3.27	.43	2.67	.87	3.27	.72	4	0
18.3[115]	**5**	**3.84**	**.22**	3.52	.48	3.87	.30	3.35	.58	3.33	.53	3.80	.75
18.4	**7**	**3.86**	**.15**	3.06	.51	3.81	.33	3.18	.45	3.24	.32	1.33	.82
18.5	**7**	**3.76**	**.33**	3.49	.36	3.81	.38	3.11	.43	3.71	.36	4	0
18.6	**5**	**3.92**	**.11**	3.20	.57	3.60	.43	3.45	.57	3.73	.43	4	0
18.7	**7**	**3.63**	**.45**	3.34	.36	3.81	.50	3.21	.57	3.71	.41	3.71	.49
18.8	**5**	**3.60**	**.37**	3.20	.24	3.27	.55	2.95	.41	3.40	.43	4	0
18.9	**6**	**3.77**	**.23**	2.93	.58	3.67	.42	3.08	.38	3.50	.46	4	0
18.10	**6**	**3.70**	**.33**	3.37	.32	3.78	.27	3.08	.57	3.78	.40	3.83	.41
19	**6**	**3.53**	**.47**	3.73	.24	3.39	.53	3.46	.51	3.50	.46	3.80	.45
20	**6**	**3.83**	**.27**	3.80	.18	3.89	.27	3.50	.35	3.72	.44	3.80	.45
21	**6**	**3.87**	**.33**	4	0	3.94	.14	3.71	.46	3.78	.34	3.50	1.23
22	**2**	**3.50**	**.71**	3.80	.28	3.83	.24	3.50	.35	3.50	.71	3.50	.71
23.1	**7**	**3.86**	**.22**	3.31	.50	3.90	.16	3.11	.45	3.76	.32	3.86	.38
23.2	**9**	**3.76**	**.40**	3.32	.54	3.70	.51	3.08	.54	3.67	.33	4.00	0
24.1	**6**	**3.77**	**.23**	3.07	.81	3.50	.59	2.88	.74	3.44	.46	4.00	0
24.2	**6**	**3.80**	**.31**	3.03	.46	3.83	.41	3.29	.49	3.61	.39	4.00	0
25	**8**	**3.80**	**.35**	3.70	.19	3.71	.45	3.59	.50	3.73	.36	3.75	.71
26.1	**8**	**3.80**	**.21**	3.38	.46	3.71	.33	2.94	.53	3.73	.25	3.63	1.06
26.2	**6**	**3.57**	**.43**	3.50	.45	3.61	.44	3.22	.30	3.50	.41	4.00	0
27.1	**7**	**3.74**	**.32**	3.46	.36	3.57	.32	2.93	.37	3.57	.37	3.71	.76
27.2	**6**	**3.80**	**.40**	3.24	.93	3.72	.39	3.11	.48	3.56	.58	3.5	.84
27.3	**6**	**3.83**	**.32**	3.70	.32	4.0	0	3.11	.86	3.28	.44	4	0
27.4	**6**	**3.83**	**.15**	3.63	.34	3.94	.13	3.46	.53	3.66	.42	3.83	.408
28	**8**	**3.93**	**.21**	3.80	.21	3.66	.53	3.56	.50	3.88	.25	4	0

[115] Respondents who had a visual impairment did complete the questionnaire but were assisted by members of the NWU steering team.

29	**8**	**3.95**	**.14**	3.68	.14	3.83	.25	3.34	.56	3.73	.25	4	0
30	**8**	**3.93**	**.15**	3.85	.17	4	0	3.21	.25	3.70	.33	3.88	.35
31	**8**	**3.85**	**.17**	3.60	.55	3.58	.73	3.31	.53	3.58	.73	4	0
32.1	**8**	**4**	**0**	3.60	.45	3.62	.52	3.34	.42	3.92	.15	3.88	.35
32.2	**9**	**3.91**	**.14**	3.80	.17	3.81	.34	3.53	.46	3.78	.44	4	0
33	**7**	**3.86**	**.19**	3.63	.48	3.76	.42	3.29	.62	3.71	.36	4	0

From Table 5.4 the following conclusions can be made:

- Sessions 1.3 and 12.3 did not complete the questionnaire. Session one only had one interviewee and the anonymity of the interviewee could not be guaranteed, especially because the interviewee is well known in the university environment. Interviewees for session three (members of council) did not participate in the same way as the rest of the stakeholders, as the council's governance role is quite different from the roles of the rest of the university's stakeholders. The participants in session 12.3 were illiterate. They could therefore not complete the questionnaire.
- For construct 1, namely "Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview", three stakeholder groupings (namely in sessions 13.2: Senior Lecturers[116]; 18.1: Undergraduate students[117]; and 32.1: Academic Development Practitioners[118]) indicated an average mean of 4, which implied that they were all to a large extent of the opinion that the questions posed during the interview were appropriate for the group of interviewees; that panel members listened with an open mind to the responses of interviewees; that the panel members were well prepared; that panel members allowed interviewees to respond to, or elaborate on responses made by fellow interviewees; and that the conduct of panel members was professional.

[116] Different staff members attended than those who attended session 4 and they were spread across campuses.
[117] Spread across campuses.
[118] Spread across campuses.

- For construct 1, namely “Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview”, the lowest mean (3.40) was reported by session 18.2 (International students)[119].
- For construct 2, namely “Preparations for the audit”, the highest mean (4) was reported during session 21 (executive director for teaching and learning; campus rectors and campus vice-rectors: academic) followed by session 16 with a mean of 3.94, which represented the Potchefstroom campus deans; school directors and chairs of committees[120]. These two groups of interviewees were to a large extent of the opinion that they were informed about the purpose of the audit; that they were informed about what to expect during the interview; that the logistical arrangements for the interview were sufficient; that they were provided the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for the audit and that the panel chairperson explained the purpose of the interview.
- For construct 2, namely “Preparations for the audit”, the lowest mean (2.93) was reported during session 18.9, during which course work master’s students who were spread across campuses were interviewed. This group of interviewees were to a small or reasonable extent of the opinion that they were informed about the purpose of the audit; that they were informed about what to expect during the interview; that the logistical arrangements for the interview were sufficient; that they were provided the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for the audit; and that the panel chairperson explained the purpose of the interview.
- Construct 3 (“The interview opportunity”) comprised 4 sessions during which respondents indicated an average mean of 4 to all questions that form part of this construct. These interviewees included sessions 4.4 (part-time academic staff who were spread across campuses and faculties); 12.2 (employers); 13.3 (junior lecturers and lecturers[121], spread across campuses) and 30 ICT[122] staff members (including directors, spread across campuses).

[119] Spread across campuses.
[120] The focus of the interview was on teaching-learning.
[121] Different staff from session 4.

- The lowest mean (2.67) for construct 4 (the audit and quality) was reported by international students, who were spread across campuses. This group was interviewed during session 18.2. International students are to a small or reasonable extent of the opinion that the HEQC audit will contribute to the improvement of quality at the NWU; that the audit encouraged them to reflect on their work; that the questions posed during the interview were occasionally thought provoking; and that the questions asked during the interview provided insight into how the NWU can improve its quality.
- The highest mean for construct 4 was reported by employers who were interviewed during session 12.2.
- The highest mean (3.94) linked to construct 5 (level of engagement) was recorded by part-time academic staff, spread across campuses and faculties, during session 4.4; and senior lecturers[123], spread across campuses during session 13.2. These two groups of stakeholders were to a reasonable or a large extent of the opinion that the questions asked during the interview served to validate the statements/claims made in the NWU self-evaluation report; and that the questions were clear and understandable and to the point.
- The lowest mean (3.17) linked to construct 5 concerned the level of engagement that was reported by academic development and support staff that were spread across campuses (session 13.3).
- With regard to question 8 (whether the chairperson explained that all responses during the interview would be treated confidentially), several stakeholders recorded an average mean of lower than 1.5. These included the following: a mean of 1.17 reported by recently appointed fulltime academic staff that were spread across campuses and faculties during session 4.1; the institutional forum with a mean of 1.38 during session 8; school directors spread across campuses with a mean of 1.33 during session 13.10; and finally, residential students spread across campuses with a mean of 1.33 in session 18.4.

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[122] Information and Communication Technology.
[123] Different staff from session 4.

- Several stakeholders indicated that they were to a large extent of the opinion that the chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially. An average mean of 4 was recorded by the following stakeholders, with the relevant session indicated in brackets. All stakeholders were spread across campuses, unless otherwise specified: academics, and faculties (session 4.6); executive management team (administrative/support group; focus: financial resource allocation) (session 9.1); employers (session 12.1); provincial, municipal and local government representatives (session 12.5); senior lecturers (session 13.1); junior lecturers (session 13.3); academic development and support staff (session 13.4); ITEA[124] recipients (session 13.5); school directors (sessions 13.7; 13.8 and 13.9); Potchefstroom campus (deans; research entity directors; research innovation; focus: community engagement) (session 17); undergraduate students, (session 18.1); international students (session 18.2); supplemental instruction students (session 18.5); distance students (session 18.6); research master's students (session 18.8); course work masters students (session 18.9); external examiners, post-graduate level and from outside the NWU (Session 23.2); staff members involved in research innovation (session 24.1); staff members involved in community engagement (session 24.2); newly appointed supervisors (session 26.2); women researchers (session 27.3); staff members from student administration, including admissions, examinations, loans and bursaries (session 28); library staff, including directors (session 29); staff members involved in distance education support and infrastructure (session 31); staff members involved with student counselling; career counselling; student health; sports; arts and culture (session 32.2); and staff members involved in residence affairs (session 33).

[124] Institutional Teaching Excellence Award.

First section of questionnaire

TABLE 5.5: RESPONSES (YES OR NO) FOR FIRST SECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

STATEMENT	No Response	%	Yes	%	No	%
A. I have read the NWU Self Evaluation Report	41	8.8	376	80.3	51	10.9
B. I have attended a briefing session in preparation for the audit panel interview	38	8.1	394	84.2	36	7.7
C. I have read a written briefing document in preparation for the audit panel interview	17	3.6	378	80.8	73	15.6

In the first section of the questionnaire, respondents had to indicate whether they had read the self-evaluation report (which was made available in both English and Afrikaans).

The data recorded in table 5.5 revealed the following:

- 41 (8.8%) of respondents did not include any indication whether they had read the NWU self-evaluation report.
- 51 Respondents (10.9%) indicated that they had not read the NWU self-evaluation report.
- Of the total of 468[125] questionnaires, 376 (80.3%) indicated that they had read the NWU self-evaluation report.

[125] Although 468 questionnaires were received only 408 stakeholders participated – some were interviewed twice as they are responsible for various different portfolio's at the NWU.

- 38 respondents (8.1%) who completed the questionnaire did not indicate whether they attended a briefing session in preparation for the audit panel interview.
- 394 of all respondents (84.2%) indicated that they did attend a briefing session in preparation for the audit panel interview.
- 36 Respondents (representing 7.7% of the total respondents) indicated that they did not attend a briefing session in preparation for the audit panel interview.
- 17 respondents (3.6%) provided no indication whether they had read the briefing document in preparation for the audit panel interview.
- 378 respondents (80.8%) indicated that they had read the written briefing document in preparation for the audit panel interview.
- 73 respondents (15.6%) indicated that they had not read the written briefing document in preparation for the audit panel interview.

Differences between respondents[126]

Respondents had to indicate either *yes* or *no* to each of the three statements in the first section of the questionnaire. These statements were:

- I have read the NWU Self-Evaluation report.
- I have attended a briefing session in preparation for the audit panel interview.
- I have read a written briefing document in preparation for the audit panel interview.

The p-values were determined by means of t-tests and ANOVAs and all p-values smaller than 0.05 were regarded to be statistically significant. In addition to the p-values determined in tables 5.6; 5.7; 5.8; 5.9; 5.10 and 5.13[127], Cohen's d-values were also determined in order to further determine whether any practically significant differences

[126] Respondents of different sessions or groupings of sessions.
[127] Tables 5.11 and 5.12 reflected qualitative feedback by respondents.

existed between those respondents who did read the NWU self-evaluation report and those who did not. The effect sizes[128] were interpreted according to the following guidelines (Ellis & Steyn, 2003):

Small effect size: d = 0.2

Medium effect size: d = 0.5

Large effect size: d = 0.8

According to Ellis and Steyn (2003:4), data with d≥0.8 should be considered as practically significant, since it is the result of a difference with a large effect. Field (2005:32) defines an effect size as "an objective and standardised measure of the magnitude of the observed effect". The value of using effect sizes is that effect sizes can be measured across a number of research studies although different measurements may be used.

The differences will be discussed as follows:

[128] Effect sizes are useful since they provide an objective measure of the importance of an effect. Ellis and Steyn (2003) indicate that effect size is independent of sample size and is a measure of practical significance. When analysing random samples, a p-value of less than 0,05 is taken as statistically significant. Such statistical significance, however, does not imply that the result is important in practise as these tests tend to provide small p-values (indicating significance) as the sizes of the data sets increase. Effect size is also used in this study since the sample is a convenience sample (all stakeholders who participated as interviewees in the institutional quality audit)(not a random sample). Effect size is useful since it provides information over and above the descriptive statistics obtained from the convenience sample.

TABLE 5.6 THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF THOSE WHO INDICATED THAT THEY HAD READ THE NWU SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (YES) AND THOSE WHO INDICATED THAT THEY DID NOT READ THE NWU SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (NO) FOR ALL 5 CONSTRUCTS AND QUESTION 8.

CONSTRUCT	N	GROUP	MEAN	SD	D-VALUE	P VALUE
1. Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview.	376[129]	(Yes) Did read	3.77	0.33	0.06	0.620
	51[130]	(No) Did not read	3.79	0.40		
2. Preparation for the audit	376	(Yes) Did read	3.53	0.43	0.46	0.002
	51	(No) Did not read	3.27	0.58		
3. Interview opportunity	376	(Yes) Did read	3.71	0.46	0.14	0.360
	51	(No) Did not read	3.64	0.47		
4. The audit and quality	376	(Yes) Did read	3.29	0.54	0.34	0.024
	51	(No) Did not read	3.11	0.53		
5. Level of engagement	376	(Yes) Did read	3.60	0.45	0.18	0.211
	51	(No) Did not read	3.50	0.55		
Question 8. The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially[131]	368	(Yes) Did read	3.42	1.06	0.09	0.510
	49	(No) Did not read	3.51	0.94		

From Table 5.6 the following can be derived:

- With regard to construct 1 ("Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview": A small effect size (d=0.06), with no statistical significant difference, is reported between the stakeholders who participated as respondents and who responded *yes*, indicating that they had read the NWU self-evaluation report and those who responded *no*, indicating that they had not read the NWU self-evaluation report. This means that those who did read the NWU self-evaluation report and those who did not read it do not disagree regarding the panel members and the questions they posed during the interview.

[129] It was not determined during which sessions they were interviewed.
[130] It was not determined during which sessions they were interviewed.
[131] Question 8 is reported separately as derived form Table 5.2.

- With regard to construct 2 (“Preparation for the audit”), the d-value of 0.46 indicates that a medium effect size exists, hence there is a medium observed difference between those stakeholders who did read the NWU self-evaluation report and those who did not, regarding the construct “Preparation for the audit”. The p-value of 0.002 indicates that a statistically significant difference[132] exists between the two groups. The stakeholders who did read the NWU self-evaluation report were, to a larger extent than those who did not read it, convinced that they were informed about the purpose of the audit; that they were informed about what to expect during the interview; that the logistical arrangements were sufficient for the interview; that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for the audit; and that the chairperson explained the purpose of the interview.

- With regard to construct 3 (“Interview opportunity”), a small effect size with a d-value of 0.14 has been observed, hence there were no important differences between the two respective groups. The p-value of 0.360 indicates that no statistically significant difference exists between the two groups.

- With regard to construct 4 (“The audit and quality”), a d-value of 0.34 and a small to medium effect size between the two groups can be reported. A p-value of 0.024 indicates a statistically significant difference for the construct “The audit and quality” between those stakeholders who participated as interviewees and who indicated that they had read the NWU self-evaluation report than those who indicated that they did not read it. Stakeholders who participated as interviewees were to a larger extent convinced that the HEQC audit would contribute to the improvement of quality at the NWU; that the audit encouraged them to reflect on their work; that the questions asked during the interview were occasionally thought provoking and that questions asked during the interview provided insight into how the NWU can improve its quality.

[132] Smaller than 0.50.

- With regard to construct 5 ("Level of engagement"), a small effect size (d-value = 0.18) has been recorded. A p-value of 0.211 furthermore indicates that no statistically meaningful difference exists between those who did read the NWU self-evaluation report and those who did not read it, for construct 5 ("Level of engagement").

- With regard to question 8 (*The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially*), the d-value of 0.09 indicates a small effect size or difference between the two groups. The p-value of 0.510 is much larger than 0.05 and therefore confirms that no significant difference exists between those who read the NWU self-evaluation report and those who did not read it.

TABLE 5.7 THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF THOSE WHO RESPONDED *YES*, INDICATING THAT THEY HAD ATTENDED A BRIEFING SESSION IN PREPARATION FOR THE AUDIT PANEL INTERVIEW AND THOSE WHO RESPONDED *NO*, INDICATING THAT THEY DID NOT ATTEND THE BRIEFING SESSION IN PREPARATION FOR THE AUDIT PANEL INTERVIEW, FOR ALL 5 CONSTRUCTS AND QUESTION 8.

CONSTRUCT	N	GROUP	MEAN	SD	D-VALUE	P VALUE
1. Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview.	394[133]	(Yes) Did attend	3.77	0.33	0.10	0.454
	36[134]	(No) Did not attend	3.80	0.25		
2. Preparation for the audit	394	(Yes) Did attend	3.55	0.41	0.91	0.001
	36	(No) Did not attend	3.10	0.49		
3. Interview opportunity	394	(Yes) Did attend	3.71	0.46	0.06	0.700
	36	(No) Did not attend	3.68	0.44		
4. The audit and quality	394	(Yes) Did attend	3.28	0.55	0.24	0.122
	36	(No) Did not attend	3.15	0.48		

[133] It was not determined during which sessions they were interviewed.
[134] It was not determined during which sessions they were interviewed.

CONSTRUCT	N	GROUP	MEAN	SD	D-VALUE	P VALUE
5. Level of engagement	394	(Yes) Did attend	3.59	0.46	0.05	0.758
	36	(No) Did not attend	3.56	0.43		
Question 8. The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially	385	(Yes) Did attend	3.45	1.03	0.11	0.525
	35	(No) Did not attend	3.31	1.18		

From Table 5.7 the following can be derived:

- For construct 1 ("Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview"), no difference can be reported between those respondents who indicated that they had attended a briefing session and those who indicated that they did not. The p-value of 0.454 confirms that no practically significant difference exists between these two respective groups.
- For construct 2, a large effect size (d=0.91) was recorded between the two groups, namely those who indicated that they had attended a briefing session and those who indicated that they did not. The low p-value (p=0.001) in turn indicates that a statistically meaningful difference exists between those respondents who indicated that they did attend a briefing session and those who indicated that they did not attend a briefing session. Interviewees who indicated on the questionnaire that they had attended a briefing session were to a larger extent of the opinion that they were informed about the purpose of the audit; that they were informed about what to expect during the interview; that logistical arrangements were sufficient for the interview; that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of the audit; and that the panel chairperson explained the purpose of the interview.
- For construct 3, a low d-value of 0.06 indicates a small effect size. The p-value of 0.700 furthermore confirms that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between those respondents who indicated that they had attended a briefing session and those who indicated that they did not attend a briefing

session, for questions related to construct 3, namely the panel interview. Those respondents who indicated that they attended a briefing session and those who indicated that they did not attend a briefing session therefore do not differ in terms of the extent to which they were able to respond to questions asked by panel members; the extent to which they were able to fully articulate their responses; and the extent to which they were able to relate to their work.

- For construct 4, a d-value of 0.24 indicates that a small effect size exists between the two groups. The p-value of 0.122 also indicates that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between those respondents who indicated that they attended a briefing session and those who indicated that they did not attend a briefing session, for questions related to construct 4 (“the audit and quality”).

- For construct 5, a d-value of 0.05 indicates that a small effect size is reported. The p-value of 0.758 supports this notion and confirms that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between those respondents who indicated that they attended a briefing session and those who indicated that they did not attend a briefing session, for questions related to construct 5 (“the level of engagement”). Those who attended the briefing session and those who did not, did not differ significantly in terms of their opinion on the questions that were asked during the interview, hence the level of engagement.

- For question 8, a small effect size of 0.11 was recorded. The p-value of 0.525 also serves as indication that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between those respondents who indicated that they attended a briefing session and those who indicated that they did not attend a briefing session, for question 8 (“The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially”).

TABLE 5.8 THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF THOSE WHO RESPONDED YES, INDICATING THAT THEY HAD READ A WRITTEN BRIEFING DOCUMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE AUDIT PANEL INTERVIEW AND THOSE WHO RESPONDED NO, INDICATING THAT THEY HAD NOT READ A WRITTEN BRIEFING DOCUMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE AUDIT PANEL INTERVIEW, FOR ALL 5 CONSTRUCTS AND QUESTION 8.

CONSTRUCT	N	GROUP	MEAN	SD	D-VALUE	P VALUE
1. Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview.	378[135]	(Yes) Did read	3.77	0.31	0.12	0.348
	73[136]	(No) Did not read	3.72	0.39		
2. Preparation for the audit	378	(Yes) Did read	3.55	0.42	0.49	0.001
	73	(No) Did not read	3.28	0.54		
3. Interview opportunity	378	(Yes) Did attend	3.71	0.47	0.09	0.419
	73	(No) Did not attend	3.66	0.41		
4. The audit and quality	378	(Yes) Did attend	3.29	0.54	0.14	0.264
	73	(No) Did not attend	3.21	0.50		
5. Level of engagement	378	(Yes) Did attend	3.57	0.46	0.09	0.481
	73	(No) Did not attend	3.61	0.44		
Question 8. The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially	369	(Yes) Did attend	3.42	1.04	0.04	0.740
	71	(No) Did not attend	3.46	1.04		

From Table 5.8 the following can be derived:

- For construct 1, a small effect size (d-value) of 0.12 was recorded. The p-value of 0.348 indicates that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between those respondents who indicated that they have read the briefing document in preparation for the audit and those who indicated that they did not

[135] It was not determined during which sessions they were interviewed.
[136] It was not determined during which sessions they were interviewed.

read it, for questions related to construct 1 (“Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview”).

- For construct 2, a medium effect size has been recorded with a d-value of 0.49. The p-value of 0.001 indicates that a statistically significant difference could be recorded between those respondents who indicated that they had read the briefing document in preparation for the audit and those who indicated that they did not read it, for questions related to construct 2. Those respondents who indicated that they did read the briefing document in preparation for the audit, to a larger extent than those who did not, were of opinion that they were informed about the audit and what to expect during the interview; that the logistical arrangements for the interview were sufficient; that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for the audit; and that the chairperson explained the purpose of the interview.

- For construct 3, a small effect size (d-value) of 0.09 was recorded. The p-value of 0.419 indicates that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between those respondents who indicated that they had read the briefing document in preparation for the audit and those who indicated that they did not read it, for questions related to construct 3 (“interview opportunity”).

- For construct 4, a small effect size (d-value) of 0.14 was recorded. The p-value of 0.264 indicates that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between those respondents who indicated that they had read the briefing document in preparation for the audit and those who indicated that they did not read it, for questions related to construct 4 (“audit and quality”).

- For construct 5, a small effect size (d-value) of 0.09 was recorded. The p-value of 0.481 indicates that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between those respondents who indicated that they had read the briefing document in preparation for the audit and those who indicated that they did not read it, for questions related to construct 5 (“Level of engagement”).

- For question 8, a small effect size (d-value) of 0.04 was recorded. The p-value of 0.740 indicates that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between those respondents who indicated that they had read the briefing document in preparation for the audit and those who indicated that they did not read it, for questions related to question 8 ("The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially").

TABLE 5.9 THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF ACADEMICS (AS A GROUP) AND DEANS AND EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT (AS A GROUP) FOR ALL 5 CONSTRUCTS AND QUESTION 8

CONSTRUCT	N	GROUP	MEAN($\bar{X}$)	SD	D-VALUE	P VALUE
1. Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview.	60	Academics	3.74	0.33	0.28	0.178
	16	Deans/ Exec Man	3.83	0.20		
2. Preparation for the audit	60	Academics	3.44	0.40	0.81	0.001
	16	Deans/ Exec Man	3.76	0.24		
3. Interview opportunity	60	Academics	3.75	0.38	0.28	0.138
	16	Deans/ Exec Man	3.85	0.24		
4. The audit and quality	60	Academics	3.23	0.50	0.57	0.046
	16	Deans/ Exec Man	3.52	0.48		
5. Level of engagement	60	Academics	3.64	0.42	0.38	0.176
	16	Deans/ Exec Man	3.46	0.47		
Question 8.The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially	59	Academics	2.68	1.29	0.37	0.173
	15	Deans/ Exec Man	2.20	1.14		

From Table 5.9, the following can be derived:

- For construct 1, a small effect size (d-value) of 0.28 was recorded. The p-value of 0.178 indicates that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between those respondents who were interviewed as academics (as a group) and those who were interviewed as deans and executive management (as a group), for questions related to construct 1 namely "Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview".

- For construct 2: A large effect size (d=0.81) was recorded between the two groups namely academics and deans/executive management. The low p-value (p=0.001) in turn confirms that a practically meaningful difference exists between the two groups. Deans and the executive management are, to a larger extent than academics, of the opinion that they were informed about the purpose of the audit; that they were informed about what to expect during the interview; that logistical arrangements were sufficient for the interview; that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of the audit; and that the panel chairperson explained the purpose of the interview.

- For construct 3, a small effect size (d-value) of 0.28 was recorded. The p-value of 0.138 indicates that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between academics (as a group) and deans and executive management (as a group), for questions related to construct 3 (“interview opportunity”).

- For construct 4, a medium effect size (d-value) of 0.57 was recorded. The p-value of 0.046 indicates that a statistically significant difference was recorded between academics (3.23) and deans/executive management (3.52), for questions related to construct 4 (“audit and quality”). The deans and executive management are therefore to a larger extent than academics of the opinion that the HEQC audit will contribute to the improvement of quality at the NWU; that the audit encouraged them to reflect on how they do their work; that the questions during the interview were occasionally thought provoking; and that the questions asked during the interview provided insight into how the NWU can improve its quality.

- For construct 5, a small to medium effect size (d-value) of 0.38 was recorded. The p-value of 0.176 indicates that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between those respondents who were interviewed as academics (as a group) and those who were interviewed as deans and executive management (as a group), for questions related to construct 5 (“Level of engagement”).

- For question 8, a small to medium effect size (d-value) of 0.37 was recorded. The p-value of 0.173 indicates that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between academics (as a group) and deans and executive management, for question 8 ("The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially").

TABLE 5.10 THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF ACADEMICS (AS A GROUP) AND STUDENTS (AS A GROUP) FOR ALL 5 CONSTRUCTS AND QUESTION 8

CONSTRUCT	N	GROUP[137]	MEAN ($\bar{X}$)	STANDARD DEVIATION (SD)	D-VALUE	P VALUE
1. Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview.	60	Academics	3.74	0.33	0.03	0.859
	59	Students	3.75	0.33		
2. Preparation for the audit	60	Academics	3.44	0.41	0.37	0.031
	59	Students	3.26	0.47		
3.Interview opportunity	60	Academics	3.75	0.38	0.19	0.289
	59	Students	3.67	0.42		
4.The audit and quality	60	Academics	3.23	0.50	0.13	0.447
	59	Students	3.16	0.54		
5.Level of engagement	60	Academics	3.64	0.42	0.18	0.293
	59	Students	3.55	0.46		
Question 8. The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially	59	Academics	2.68	1.29	0.76	0.001
	58	Students	3.66	0.87		

[137] The group of academics represented several sub-groups (session 13) from all campuses and were interviewed during 10 concurrent sessions, each session with its own chairperson.
The group of students (session 18) represented several sub-groups from all campuses and were interviewed during 10 concurrent sessions, each session with its own chairperson.

TABLE 5.11 FEEDBACK ON THE OPEN QUESTION BY ACADEMICS AND ONE GROUP OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT STAFF[138] (SESSIONS 13.1 - 13.10[139]) COMBINED.

RESPONSES[140] Theme: Panel and Interview[141]
• **I think the wrong questions were asked to the wrong group of people (4).**
• ***Was nie baie gerig spesifiek op ons afdeling se werk nie* – The interview was not specifically aimed at the work we do in our unit (4).**
• **Yes it wasn't as bad as I imagined it! (4)**
• **Questions by panel member were not focused on my aspect of my job at all (4). Much attention was [rather] given to Mafikeng [campus] (4).**
• **I just did not like that my colleagues were allowed to speak in Afrikaans without translation because I don't know what they said and therefore could not contribute or respond to what they said. In total I think the interviews went well. The mood was positive but for some members it was not as appropriate and relevant (4).**
• **I experienced the interview as constructive and useful in that it made me aware of specific shortcomings that might need to be addressed institutionally such as cross-subject monitoring of at-risk students, and practical implementation problems related to the language policy (5).**
• **I was surprised there was only one panel member interviewing us. We all had an opportunity to give our opinions (5).**
• **The interview was far less intimidating than I thought it would be.(5)**
• **It was fair and relevant (7).**
• **Forced intro-spection beneficial to [the] NWU and myself as lecturer/researcher (7).**
• ***Gemaklik, ondersoekend.* – Relaxed, investigative (6)**
• **Clear and concise. Applicable to [my] work (8).**
• **Positive experiencing in participating (8).**
• **Constructive (8).**
• **Easy going! (8)**
• **Felt comfortable in answering. I felt that the panel member did not probe the answers as much as he could have though (9).**

[138] These interviewees/ respondents were different from those in session 4.
[139] These 10 sessions were all concurrent.
[140] The number in brackets at the end of the qualitative feedback (e.g. 4 or 5) indicates the sub-session the respondent attended as interviewee (see Annexure B and Table 4.1).
[141] The verbal feedback are clustered into two separate groupings namely "Panel and Interview" and "Preparation and execution of the audit, the audit in general and quality" for ease of interpretation.

RESPONSES Theme: Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality
• Good organised. I will only relax when the final report is available (1).
• The pre-audit period was stressful – expectations [were] created [and] tended to build to notion in oneself. The audit itself was calming and relaxed (1)
• Yes [the process met my expectations], [a] very specific exercise (1)
• Yes [the process met my expectations], preparing documents required for evaluation indicated that it is intended to development the institution.(1)
• The process met my expectations and made me aware of what the others were experiencing in their campuses (2).
• It was more relaxed than I thought (2).
• *Dit was so opgeblaas dat mens onnodig gestres het*. It was blown up and I stressed unnecessary (2).
• This was a positive experience and I learned a lot about the policy and procedure (2).
• It was less painful than expected (2).
• Yes [the process met my expectation] – maybe [it was too short(3).
• Very good – run smoothly. Yes it wasn't that bad(3).
• Very necessary for improving the Quality of the NWU (3) is doing. Yes.
• It was traumatising because I was not sure of what to expect from the panel (3).
• Yes [the process met my expectations] (3).
• Because I was NOT sure of the specific part I would play (i.e. questions to be asked), I am NOT certain if the process met my expectations (3).
• Goed georganiseerd – nie so erg nie (3) Well organised – it was not so bad.
• [The] process was well co-ordinated (5).
• My personel experience was positive towards this process, it made me aware about how the institution are handled (5).
• Very positive process (5)
• The process - Extremely positive! (5)
• Very good - contributed to expectations (6).
• Experience of process was positive and feedback is awaited [in order] to improve where possible (6)
• Professionally done (6)
• Well worth it (6) – Yes [the process met my expectations].
• Yes [the process met my expectations] (7).
• Excellent! (7)
• Yes, indeed the process met my expectations (9).
• Met more than expected (9).
• Yes it will contribute to Quality improvement (9).
• Very positive (9).

RESPONSES Theme: Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality
• Well organised and professional (9). • [This was] useful and relevant to my work to a large extent (10). • Time consuming. Most of the things are already done by my school for a long time (10). • Positive experience (10). • Quite interesting. Allowed me to [give] my view and to protect what is happening (10). • Not really meet [my] expectations. (10). • Question concerning the fact whether Afrikaans study guides [ended up] at Mafikeng was "*unevented*" [142](10).

TABLE 5.12 FEEDBACK ON THE OPEN QUESTION BY STUDENTS (SESSIONS 18.1 - 18.10[143]) COMBINED.

RESPONSES[144] Theme: Panel and Interview
• The interview has included most of the Imperative Issues that concerns the students and the campus (1). • It made me think of things/aspects I never thought of – such as how I can make a difference and what can be made better (1). • The interview itself was formal, but the atmosphere was comfortable (1). • It was a good interview, thought provoking. Consumed a lot of time though (1). • Apart from the interviews which were conducted professionally all the participants should have been given a forum/opportunity to openly make suggestions in front of everybody. This would allow for transparency and thus giving an insight to matters on other campuses (2). • *Dit was professioneel en [die voorsitter] het belanggestel*. It was very professional and [the chairperson] was really interested [in our responses](3). • It was very insightful and interesting to hear what happens in other campuses. I personally felt honoured to be selected for the interview. The interviewer was very professional and friendly (4). • It was well planned and the questions were relevant. The questions did give us a chance to express what we felt about NWU (4). • Was overall effective, but not all questions were relevant to the session I attended. The process is going to improve our campus a whole lot! (4) • At first I thought it's serious and challenging but after the interview it was as easy as possible. And the chairperson was friendly (5).

[142] This was a once-off logistical error that occurred during the distribution of study guides from a central point in Potchefstroom.
[143] These 10 sessions were all concurrent.
[144] The number in brackets at the end of the qualitative feedback (x) indicates the sub-session the respondent attended as interviewee (see Annexure B).

RESPONSES[145] Theme: Panel and Interview
• It was very much positive, and it was very interesting. And the questions were straight forward (5).
• It was very interesting and enjoyable (5).
• It was very nice! Much better than I expected (5).
• I was expecting a difficult session but the panel interviewer was kind and straight to the point (5).
• The HEQC Audit was excellent and questions were clear and allow [each] interviewee to give their own experience in their current situation/programmes. Hope that this will insist the institution to improve (6).
• Constructive interactive interview. Confidentiality was assured. Panel chair person was very professional (6).
• I found it very interactive and I learnt a lot of things that I did not know (7)
• I thought it would be questions regarding my honours and it was (7).
• I have entered this process with an open mind and therefore did not have expectations. The auditor was very professional and the interaction was very comfortable (8).
• Professionally handled, give honest opinion on how processes are handled within the university (8).
• Stressful; it wasn't so bad (8).
• Well conducted. Relaxed. We had the opportunity to mention aspects that we think can help to improve post graduate studies. Nice to have the opportunity to mention things that bother us (8).
• The interviewer was professional and established good rapport with us. I expected more questions with regard to lecturer competence (9).
• The panel interview was so kindness to motivate me to answer or comment in the interview session. For what was not sounding good, she was so emphatic (9).
• Questions I expected were asked for positive experience (10).

RESPONSES Theme: Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality
• Yes it did meet my expectations. It has shown a great sense of autonomy from the institution with a common view to accelerate improvements (1).
• It was very well organised (1).
• Yes very productive and professionally conducted. Necessary issues were raised (1).
• Yes, everything well organised and we were welcomed (1).
• The experience was excellent and really met my expectations (2).
• I think the process was well justified but I was rather forced by my department leaders to participate when I didn't have time. Time is the most important thing. Let us know far in advance next time (2).

[145] The number in brackets at the end of the qualitative feedback (e.g. 1 or 2) indicates the sub-session the respondent attended as interviewee (see Annexure B and Table 4.1).

RESPONSES Theme: Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality
• Met my expectations – hope info brought into practically help NWU improve (3).
• The process did meet my expectations. The process will definitely be helpful to all disabled students. The process was well organised and thoughtful (3).
• Yes it did. I was impressed by the professionalism but I will still need to be convinced it this Audit is going to affect positive changes as I'm under the impression that the final decision still lies with NWU. But I'm glad there is something like the HEQC audit (3).
• Yes the Audit was very good (3).
• It was good. I can say that I believe they will help to improve our campus and it was good to talk and share experiences with other students from Vaal and Potchefstroom campus (4).
• Yes the process did meet my expectations and exceed. Eye opener as to what goes on other campuses. Gives a calming feeling that the NWU is improving by evaluations etc (4).
• Yes to greater extent my expectations were met, especially to give more insight to the events as it happen on campus (4).
• I think it is a very good initiative. Well organised and prepared and the way it was handled gives me the impression that there is going to be worked with our thoughts and ideas (4).
• Yes, because the institution will look forward to improve the activities and correct some shortfalls and loopholes (5).
• Very well put together (5).
• I think the HEQC audit process was an excellent idea to get feedback from students that do have problems in the programmes and in the way the NWU operates. The whole process was beyond my expectations - it was a very good experience (6).
• The process was good in that it gave me a rare opportunity to critique the institution. It was professionally done. Thanks (6).
• The HEQC Audit did meet my expectations because it gave me more insight on what the institution is about (7).
• It definitely met my expectations. I felt like I could add value to the university, simply by being here. It was also a very good opportunity to get to know my fellow students from other campuses and to hear how they experience varsity life (7).
• It was excellent (7).
• It is good for quality purpose of the NWU in order to improve the teaching and learning. It encourages and enhance quality learning (7).
• *Ja baie goed gereël dankie.* It was well organized, thank you (7).
• It was good insight into the working and life of the campus. The why everything is being run / campus life (7).
• It was less stressful than I thought. It was all done very professionally and smooth (7)
• Nothing to complain about (8).
• It was well organised (9).
• Yes, the process has met my expectations (9).
• Yes the process did meet my expectations in terms of bringing about change (9).

RESPONSES Theme: Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality
• **It was an important step and process. It met my expectations when I realised what I was here for. I am however weary of good attempts whose resolutions are rarely implemented as integrity demands (9).**
• **Yes it did meet my expectations though initially I did not know what to expect (10).**
• **The process was very concise and to the point. It was not unpleasant in any way. Hopefully a good contribution will be made towards quality of the NWU (10).**
• **The process was very well organised. Briefing sessions before [the audit] were excellent and very helpful. Panel interview was fine. Yes, I know that I was going to be interviewed about my capacity as PhD student (10).**
• **It was fine (10).**
• **Process was conducted in an extremely professional manner (10).**

From Tables 5.10, 5.11 and 5.12, the following can be derived:

- For constructs 1, 3, 4 and 5, small effect sizes (d-value smaller than 0.20) were recorded. The p-value(s) of all constructs were well above 0.05. This serves as an indication that no statistically significant difference could be recorded between academics and students for constructs 1, 3, 4 and 5.
- It is, however, interesting to note the comments made by interviewees in the open question. It is obvious that those respondents (academics) who attended session 13.4[146] were quite upset, as can be concluded from the following responses: *wrong questions asked to the wrong people; not aimed at the work that we do; questions were not focussed; colleagues were allowed to speak Afrikaans, did not know what they were saying*. Stakeholders who participated as interviewees in other concurrent sessions where academics were interviewed, responded more positively: *Interview was constructive; far less intimidating than I thought it would be; fair and relevant; relaxed investigative; clear and concise; positive experience; constructive and easy going*. Only one respondent (from concurrent session 9) responded differently: *the panel member who posed the questions did not probe the questions as he could have.*

[146] The researcher is of the opinion that the interviewer was not aware of the work context of these interviewees.

- Students who were interviewed in the concurrent sessions responded positively to the panel, the chairperson and the questions in general, with remarks such as: *The interview included most of the imperative issues on the campus; [the interview] made me think; … the atmosphere was comfortable; … thought provoking; … conducted professionally; chairperson was interested in our responses; insightful and interesting to hear what happens on other campuses; questions were relevant; chairperson was friendly; questions were straight forward; interviewer very professional; enjoyable; much better than I expected; interviewer was kind and to the point; questions were clear; constructive; relaxed; interviewer recorded good rapport with us; interviewer [very] kind; questions I expected were asked.* Limited responses by students also reflected the contrary, with remarks such as: *Consumed a lot of time*[147]*; participants [interviewees] should have been given the opportunity to openly make suggestions.*

- As part of construct 4 ("audit and quality") in general and the preparation towards the audit and quality at the university in general, the following enriching data was derived from the qualitative feedback made by academics: *Well organised; pre-audit period was stressful; [audit] is intended to built the institution; it was blown up and I stressed unnecessary; I learned a lot about policy and procedure[s]; less painful than expected; run smoothly; very necessary for improving the quality at NWU; traumatising – I did not know what to expect from the panel; process – well coordinated; … it made me aware about the institution [is] handled; the process – extremely positive!; contributed to expectations; professionally done; well worth it; met more than expected; it will contribute to quality improvement; well organised and professional; useful and relevant to my work to a large extent; interesting.* One negative reaction was recorded by an academic who was interviewed in concurrent session 10 who remarked that: *not really met my expectations.* The responses by academics clearly indicate that the audit itself, the preparation and execution thereof and

[147] Possibly the preparation time, e.g. by attending the briefing session and not the interview itself.

the anticipated quality improvements for the whole university were experienced very positively.

- Students' qualitative feedback confirmed the above finding: It met my expectations[148]; well organised[149]; productive and professional; hope it [helps] NWU to improve; … will help disabled students; impressed by the professionalism; It will help to improve our campus; exceeded my expectations … eye opener as to what goes on, on other campuses; [gained] more insight on what is happening on campus … gives a calming feeling that the NWU is improving; good initiative and well organised; will [now] look forward to improve shortfalls; well put together; it gave me the rare opportunity to critique the institution; good purpose of NWU to improve teaching. Negative comments by students were limited to responses such as: I was forced … to participate when I do not have the time … let us know far in advance the next time; I still need to be convinced that the audit is going to affect positive changes.
- For construct 2, a small to medium effect size has been recorded with a d-value of 0.37. The p-value of 0.031 indicates that a statistically significant difference could be recorded between students (3.26) and academics (3.44). Academics are therefore to a larger extent convinced that they were informed about the purpose of the audit; that they were informed about what to expect during the interview; that the logistical arrangements for the interview were sufficient; that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of the audit and that the chairperson explained the purpose of the interview.
- For question 8, a large effect size (d=0.76) was recorded between the two groups (students and academics). The low p-value (p=0.001) in turn confirms that a statistically meaningful difference exist between students (3.66) and academics (2.68). Students who participated as interviewees are to a larger extent than academics (as a group) of the opinion that the panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially. From the open

[148] Several similar comments were made (see table 5.12).
[149] Several similar comments were recorded (see table 5.12).

question posed at the end of the questionnaire it was evident that some academics experienced limited discomfort during the interview. From the quantitative results it can be concluded that the different chairs (in concurrent sessions) assumed that academics were already informed about the confidentiality of the interview. On the contrary, it seems that students, rather than academics, were made to feel at ease and the confidentially issue was clearly emphasised to them.

TABLE 5.13 THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF THE SENATE (AS A GROUP) AND DEANS AND EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT (AS A GROUP) FOR ALL 5 CONSTRUCTS AND QUESTION 8.

CONSTRUCT	N	GROUP[150]	MEAN ($\overline{X}$)	SD	D-VALUE	P VALUE
1. Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview	19	Senate	3.73	0.33	0.30	0.294
	16	Deans/ Exec Man	3.83	0.21		
2. Preparation for the audit	19	Senate	3.48	0.33	0.85	0.007
	16	Deans/ Exec Man	3.76	0.24		
3. Interview opportunity	19	Senate	3.53	0.49	0.67	0.016
	16	Deans/ Exec Man	3.85	0.24		
4. The audit and quality	19	Senate	3.21	0.69	0.44	0.139
	16	Deans/ Exec Man	3.52	0.48		
5. Level of engagement	19	Senate	3.42	0.58	0.06	0.834
	16	Deans/ Exec Man	3.46	0.47		
Question 8. The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially	18	Senate	1.72	1.18	0.41	0.248
	15	Deans/ Exec Man	2.20	1.15		

[150] Deans were excluded from the group that represented the senate during session 5. Deans were interviewed during session 6 and the executive management was interviewed during session 2. There were no concurrent sessions and they all had the same chairperson during the interview. For purposes of reporting, the feedback from sessions 2 and 6 were combined as this group represents the senior management of the NWU.

TABLE 5.14 FEEDBACK BY THE SENATE TO THE OPEN QUESTION (SESSION 5).

THEME	RESPONSES
Panel and Interview	• **Some questions were evasively asked to preclude an indepth analysis and response to the situation at NWU. For example, the role of research into the language policy of the NWU and how it has influenced development** • **Met [my] expectations – the discussions were to the point – well thought of** • **Issues [focussed on]: Role of senate, equity, transformation/redress, language, tension [between] managerial & collegiality, unified culture** • **The panel has certain preconceived ideas regarding the functioning of senate which are largely based on the Anglo-Saxon model of collegially-founded universities. They [the panel] appear[s] to have difficulty in understanding [and] accepting the NWU Senate model** • **The questions were well distributed among the interviewees. I also got insight from some of the answers given**
Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality	• **Yes it was also interesting and useful;** • **Very positive. Process met my expectations;** • **Useful experience. My expectations were met;** • **Congratulations with organisation, preparation and execution of this audit** • **[A] Good process**

TABLE 5.15 FEEDBACK BY DEANS (SESSION 6) AND EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT (SESSION 2) COMBINED TO THE OPEN QUESTION.

RESPONSES Theme: Panel and Interview
• **It was informative** • **Very good session, thanks** • **[A] well prepared panel who were serious in finding real answers** • **Surprised that the questions were not more penetrating.** • **It was relaxed thought [thought] provoking questions.**

RESPONSES Theme: Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality
• **Well-prepared, constructive and conducive to development** • **The process has met my expectations and I experienced this as an informative and useful exercise. I am positive that it will contribute positively to the improvement of the core business of the NWU.** • **The exercise is very good for the university to self reflect and ensure universal application of quality and standards in all operational areas.** • **The audit process was well organized, and met my expectations.** • **A very well planned and professionally executed audit process. The process exceeded my expectations.** • **Positive!** • **Very enriching. An opportunity to reflect on my position as dean, manager, my understanding of processes, [and] challenges facing the NWU.** • **It help[ed] me to reflect on my work and how the Institution functions** • **It was an excellent quality assurance experience**

From Tables 5.13, 5.14 and 5.15, the following can be derived[151]:

For constructs 1, 4 and 5 and question 8, medium effects sizes (d-value) were recorded for constructs 1 (0.30); construct 4 (0.44) and question 8 (0.41). No statistically significant difference exists between these two distinct groups.

For construct 2, a large effect size of 0.85 was recorded and a p-value of 0.007. This confirms that a practically meaningful difference exists between the two groups, namely respondents who represented the senate[152] (3.48) and deans and the executive management (as a group) (3.76). The latter, namely deans and executive management (as a group) are to a larger extent of the opinion that they were informed about the purpose of the audit; that they were informed about what to expect during the interview; that the logistical arrangements for the interview were sufficient; that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for the audit; and that the panel chairperson explained the purpose of the interview. For construct 3, a medium effect size of 0.67 was recorded, and a p-value of 0.016. This confirms that a statistically meaningful

[151] The qualitative findings linked to the audit, the preparation and quality in general are not interpreted but are included for record purposes.
[152] Excluding the deans.

difference exists between the two groups, namely respondents who represented the senate (3.53) and deans and the executive management (as a group) (3.85). The latter, namely deans and executive management (as a group) are to a larger extent of the opinion that during the interview they had the opportunity to respond to questions asked by panel members; to fully articulate their responses; and to relate to their work.

Some of the qualitative feedback from senate members confirmed the quantitative findings linked to constructs 2 and 3: *questions were evasively asked to preclude and in depth analysis to the situation at NWU; the panel has preconceived ideas regarding the functioning of senate which are largely based on the Anglo-Saxon model of collegially-founded universities; the panel has difficulty in understanding the NWU Senate model.* On the other hand, deans[153] and executive managers were of the opinion that the panel were well prepared and serious in finding real answers. One respondent indicated that thought-provoking questions were asked and another stated that he/she was surprised that the questions were not more penetrating.

Groups representing each campus, namely the Mafikeng (M); Potchefstroom (P) and Vaal Triangle campus (V) were interviewed on issues related to teaching-learning (TL) and research & innovation[154] (R). These groups' responses were all compared in order to determine the differences between the respective groups (see Table 5.16).

[153] Not interviewed as part of the senate group.
[154] Including Community Engagement. (Whole portfolio reports to one manager at Institional level).

TABLE 5.16 MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF THE FIVE IDENTIFIED CONSTRUCTS AND QUESTION 8

CONSTRUCTS 1-5 and Question 8	Group	MEAN ($\bar{X}$)	SD[155]	P Value (Anova)[156]
(1) Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview	(M) TL	3.48	0.36	0.030
	(M) R	3.89	0.11	
	(P) TL	3.80	0.23	
	(P) R	3.85	0.28	
	(V) TL	3.53	0.47	
	(V) R	3.83	0.27	
(2) Preparation for the audit	(M) TL	3.35	0.62	0.207
	(M) R	3.35	1.02	
	(P) TL	3.94	0.15	
	(P) R	3.78	0.33	
	(V) TL	3.73	0.24	
	(V) R	3.80	0.18	
(3) Interview opportunity	(M) TL	3.00	0.87	0.006
	(M) R	3.75	0.46	
	(P) TL	3.86	0.26	
	(P) R	3.92	0.24	
	(V) TL	3.39	0.53	
	(V) R	3.89	0.27	
(4) The audit and quality	(M) TL	3.43	0.51	0.990
	(M) R	3.54	0.65	
	(P) TL	3.43	0.37	
	(P) R	3.38	0.50	
	(V) TL	3.46	0.51	
	(V) R	3.50	0.34	
(5) Level of engagement	(M) TL	3.25	0.61	0.561
	(M) R	3.38	0.74	
	(P) TL	3.33	0.27	
	(P) R	3.63	0.52	
	(V) TL	3.50	0.46	
	(V) R	3.72	0.44	
(q8) Chairperson and confidentiality	(M) TL	3.88	0.35	0.991
	(M) R	3.75	0.71	
	(P) TL	3.86	0.38	
	(P) R	4.00	0.00	
	(V) TL	3.80	0.45	
	(V) R	3.80	0.45	

[155] Indicates how responses vary around the average or mean.
[156] The p-values were determined by means of t-tests and ANOVAs and all p-values smaller than 0,05 were regarded to be statistically significant.

From Table 5.16, the following can be derived:

- Statistically significant differences with p values lower than 0.05 were recorded for construct 1 ("Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview") with p=0.030 and construct 3 ("Interview opportunity") with p=0.006.
- In order to determine where the real differences appear between the respective groups and constructs, a post hoc test is to be conducted and effect sizes calculated to determine where the differences between groups are.

TABLE 5.17: POST HOC TEST (D-VALUES[157]) TO DETERMINE THE DIFFERENCES[158] BETWEEN CAMPUS GROUPS REPRESENTING TEACHING-LEARNING AND RESEARCH (SEPARATELY) FOR CONSTRUCTS 1 - 5 AND QUESTION 8

		1.M(TL)	2.M(R)	3.P(TL)	4.P(R)	5.V(TL)	6.V(R)
Construct 1 Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview	1.M(TL)		1.21***	0.95***	1.09***	0.16	1.04***
	2.M(R)			0.41*	0.16	0.77**	0.23*
	3.P(TL)				0.18	0.57**	0.13
	4.P(R)					0.68**	0.06
	5.V(TL)						0.64**
		1.M(TL)	2.M(R)	3.P(TL)	4.P(R)	5.V(TL)	6.V(R)
Construct 2 Preparation for the audit	1.M(TL)		0.00	0.95***	0.68**	0.62**	0.72**
	2.M(R)			0.58**	0.42*	0.37*	0.44*
	3.P(TL)				0.51**	0.87***	0.80***
	4.P(R)					0.13	0.08
	5.V(TL)						0.28*

[157] d-value of Cohen: Small effect size: d=0,2*; Medium effect size: d=0,5**; Large effect size: d=0,8***
[158] Only large effect sizes are interpreted.

Construct 3 Interview opportunity		1.M(TL)	2.M(R)	3.P(TL)	4.P(R)	5.V(TL)	6.V(R)
	1.M(TL)		0.86***	0.98***	1.05***	0.45*	1.02***
	2.M(R)			0.23*	0.36*	0.68**	0.30*
	3.P(TL)				0.23*	0.88***	0.12
	4.P(R)					0.99***	0.10
	5.V(TL)						0.94***
Construct 4 The audit and quality		1.M(TL)	2.M(R)	3.P(TL)	4.P(R)	5.V(TL)	6.V(R)
	1.M(TL)		0.18	0.00	0.10	0.06	0.14
	2.M(R)			0.17	0.26*	0.13	0.06
	3.P(TL)				0.11	0.06	0.19
	4.P(R)					0.16	0.25*
	5.V(TL)						0.08
Construct 5 Level of engagement		1.M(TL)	2.M(R)	3.P(TL)	4.P(R)	5.V(TL)	6.V(R)
	1.M(TL)		0.17	0.14	0.61**	0.41*	0.77**
	2.M(R)			0.06	0.34*	0.17	0.47*
	3.P(TL)				0.56**	0.36*	0.88***
	4.P(R)					0.24*	0.19
	5.V(TL)						0.48*
Question 8 Chairperson and confidentiality		1.M(TL)	2.M(R)	3.P(TL)	4.P(R)	5.V(TL)	6.V(R)
	1.M(TL)		0.18	0.05	0.35*	0.17	0.17
	2.M(R)			0.15	0.35*	0.07	0.07
	3.P(TL)				0.38*	0.13	0.13
	4.P(R)					0.45*	0.45*
	5.V(TL)						0.00

TABLE 5.18 FEEDBACK ON THE OPEN QUESTION BY RESPONDENTS FROM THE POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS ON TEACHING-LEARNING (SESSION 16)

THEME	RESPONSES
Panel and Interview	• Thought provoking providing insight in the management of the organisation, see report as an excellent source of reference and something to build upon • Yes it did. Sometimes questions directed at a person – but did not have the context • The questions asked reflected that the panel [did] read the self-evaluation report and based their questions on it. • Satisfactory
Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality	• *Baie positief, hoewel "tydsintensief".* (Very positive, although time consuming) • Very positive! • Yes it did meet my expectations • It is difficult to give the full reality with regard to the current situation

TABLE 5.19 FEEDBACK ON THE OPEN QUESTION BY RESPONDENTS FROM THE MAFIKENG CAMPUS ON TEACHING-LEARNING (SESSION 14)

THEME	RESPONSES
Panel and Interview	• Excellent although I did not have [the] opportunit[y]ies where one [I] could ask questions. • Informative and very valuable. Even though there were some challenging questions which seemed to be difficult for some of the panel members, on the whole we did well. • Tough one this time. [I] Got 3 questions aimed at me personally and think I goofed on the EPE [External Programme Evaluation] question response. [I] Expected [them] to [focus on] ... the Teaching & Learning framework [and] backwards. • In my view this particular session didn't go well. Often I perceived them to be not satisfied with our responses. • The interview panel was too much a crowd and this can be intimidating.
Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality	• Well organised but would have been better if there was a ... review (thorough) for me to be able to be more active. • It was good. Could help improve a few quality issues.

TABLE 5.20 FEEDBACK ON THE OPEN QUESTION BY RESPONDENTS FROM THE VAAL TRIANGLE CAMPUS ON TEACHING-LEARNING (SESSION 14)

RESPONSES Theme: Panel and Interview
• Responses required very in depth answers.
RESPONSE **Theme: Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality**
• Professionally done

TABLE 5.21 FEEDBACK ON THE OPEN QUESTION BY RESPONDENTS FROM THE POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS ON RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (SESSION 17)

RESPONSES Theme: Panel and Interview
• We have a very good panel! • Experienced it [interview] as positive • Yes the questions were focused, some difficult but fair • Satisfactory. • Very good • Positive
RESPONSES: **Theme: Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality**
• Yes - It is my opinion that this was worth the effort both for the university as [a] whole and individuals • Yes the process met my expectations • A useful process but perhaps too time-consuming • [This] assisted in emphasising the gaps in [our] own situation

TABLE 5.22 FEEDBACK ON THE OPEN QUESTION BY RESPONDENTS FROM THE MAFIKENG CAMPUS ON RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (SESSION 15)

RESPONSES Theme: Panel and Interview
• Questions were clear and straight forward. Some questions made me to reflect on what I am doing.
• Very thought provoking questions, and very insightful.
• The experience was that of reflective and though provoking. The panel composition was however too large which could be intimidating.
• Very enlightening, a wonderful opportunity to reflect.
RESPONSES **Theme: Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality**
• Wonderful experience, my expectations were well met.
• Yes it met my expectations
• The process has been of great assistance. It made it possible to deeply reflect on the role of Mafikeng campus with respect for Masters & Doctorate Supervision and Research. We even had an opportunity to boost a bit about some of our initiatives.

TABLE 5.23 FEEDBACK ON THE OPEN QUESTION BY RESPONDENTS FROM THE VAAL TRIANGLE CAMPUS ON RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (SESSION 20)

THEME	RESPONSES
Panel and Interview	• Very positive • Positive • Very positive. • It wasted less of my time than expected, and was generally more constructive than I anticipated • [It was] focused on research
Preparation, execution, the audit in general and Quality	• [The] Process met [my] expectations

From Tables 5.17 - 5.23 the following can be derived:

- With regard to construct 1 ("Panel members and the questions they posed during the interview"), large effect sizes (larger than 0.80) were recorded between the following groups[159], namely:
    - Mafikeng (teaching-learning) and Mafikeng (research), with an effect size of 1.21. The higher mean (3.89) for the Mafikeng group that represented research indicates that they are to a larger extent than the Mafikeng group (teaching-learning; with a lower mean of 3.48) of the opinion that the questions asked during the interview were appropriate; that the panel members listened with an open mind to the responses of interviewees; that panel members were well prepared; that interviewees were allowed to respond or elaborate on responses made by fellow interviewees; and that panel members' conduct was professional.
    - Mafikeng (teaching-learning) and Potchefstroom (teaching-earning), with a d-value or effect size of 0.95. The higher mean (3.80) recorded by the Potchefstroom group that represented teaching-learning indicates that they regarded the panel members and the questions they posed during the interview more favourably than the Mafikeng group who represented teaching-learning, with a mean of 3.48. From the qualitative feedback at the end of the questionnaire this finding is supported with remarks from the Mafikeng (teaching-learning) group such as: *Challenging questions; tough one this time; I think I goofed; this session didn't go well … I perceived them not to be satisfied with our responses; the interview panel was too much of a crowd and this can be intimidating.* In contrast, the responses recorded by the Potchefstroom group (teaching-learning) support the quantitative findings with remarks such as: *Thought provoking … providing*

[159] The campus group is indicated as well as the focus it represented, e.g. research or teaching-learning.

insight; questions asked reflected that the panel [did] read the self-evaluation report.

- Mafikeng (teaching-learning) and Vaal (research) also showed a practically meaningful difference, with an effect size of 1.04. Respondents who represented Vaal (research) regarded questions linked to construct 1 more favourably than the group who represented Mafikeng (teaching-learning). The feedback made by the Vaal Triangle (research) group on the open question confirms this finding with remarks such as: *Positive*[160]*; wasted less of my time than expected … more constructive than anticipated; focussed on my research.*

- Potchefstroom (research) recorded an effect size of 1.09 compared to Mafikeng (teaching-learning). There exists a practically significant difference between the Potchefstroom (research) group's responses (3.85) and those of Mafikeng (teaching-learning) with regard to the panel members and the questions they posed during the interview, with a mean of 3.48. The qualitative feedback made by the Potchefstroom (research) group supports this quantitative finding, with remarks such as: *we have a very good panel; the questions were focussed, difficult but fair; experienced the interview as very positive*[161] *and satisfactory.*

- With regard to construct 2 ("Preparation for the audit"), large effect sizes (larger than 0.80) were recorded between the following groups[162], namely:

  - Mafikeng (teaching-learning) and Potchefstroom (teaching-learning) have an effect size of 0.95. There exists a practically significant difference between the responses of the two groups. The

[160] Mentioned three times.
[161] Mentioned twice.

[162] The campus group is indicated as well as the focus it represented, e.g. research or teaching-learning

Potchefstroom group that represented teaching-learning were to a larger extent than the Mafikeng (teaching-learning) group of the opinion that they were informed about the purpose of the audit and about what to expect during the interview; that the logistical arrangements for the interview were sufficient; that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for the audit and finally that the chairperson explained the purpose of the interview.

- Vaal Triangle (teaching-learning) and Potchefstroom (teaching-learning) recorded an effect size of 0.87. There exists a practically significant difference between the responses of these two campus groups. The Potchefstroom group that represented teaching-learning were to a larger extent (3.94) than the Vaal Triangle (teaching-learning) group (3.73) of the opinion that they were informed about the purpose of the audit and about what to expect during the interview; that the logistical arrangements for the interview were sufficient; that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for the audit; and finally that the chairperson explained the purpose of the interview.

- Another practical significance (0.80) was recorded for the comparison between the Vaal Triangle (research) group, with 3.80, and the Potchefstroom (teaching-learning) group with a mean of 3.94.

- With regard to construct 3 (“Interview Opportunity”), large effect sizes (larger than 0.80) were recorded between the following groups[163], namely:

  - A practically meaningful difference with a large effect size was recorded for Mafikeng (teaching-learning) (3.00) compared to each of the following groups, namely Mafikeng (research) (3,75; d-value of 0.86), Potchefstroom (teaching-learning) (3.86; effect size of 0,98),

[163] The campus group is indicated as well as the focus it represented, e.g. research or teaching-learning.

Potchefstroom (research) (3.92; 1.05) and Vaal Triangle (research) (3.89; effect size of 1.02).

- The group that represented Mafikeng (teaching-learning) was significantly less of the opinion than Mafikeng (research) or Potchefstroom (teaching-learning) or Potchefstroom (research) or Vaal Triangle (research) that they had the opportunity to respond to questions asked by panel members, to fully articulate their responses, or to relate to their work during the interview.
- Potchefstroom (teaching-learning), compared to Vaal Triangle (teaching-learning) recorded an effect size of 0.88. There exists a practically significant difference between the Potchefstroom (teaching-learning) group's responses (3.86) to the interview opportunity and Vaal Triangle (teaching-learning), with a mean of 3.39. The Potchefstroom group, more than the Vaal Triangle group, is of the opinion that they had the opportunity to respond to questions asked by panel members; to fully articulate their responses; and to relate to their work during the interview.
- Another comparison that recorded a practically significant difference (0.99) was that between Potchefstroom (research) with a mean of 3.92 and Vaal Triangle (teaching-learning) with a mean of 3.39.
- Finally, a practically significant difference (0.94) was recorded between Vaal Triangle (research) with 3.89 and Vaal (teaching-learning) with 3.39. The Vaal Triangle (research) group can therefore be regarded as having had a more favourable interview opportunity, where they could respond to the questions asked by the panel, fully articulate their responses and relate to their work.

- With regard to construct 4 ("audit and quality"), no practically meaningful difference with an effect size larger than 0.8 was recorded. This means that all groups were equally of the opinion that the HEQC audit will contribute to the

improvement of quality at the NWU; that the audit encouraged them to reflect on their work; that the questions asked during the interview were occasionally thought provoking; and that the interview provided insight into how the NWU can improve its quality.

- With regard to construct 5 ("Level of engagement") only one practically meaningful difference was recorded, namely:
    - Potchefstroom (teaching-learning) with 3.33 and Vaal Triangle (research) with 3.72 recorded a large effect size of 0.88. This implies that the Vaal Triangle (research) group was to a larger extent of the opinion (compared to Potchefstroom – teaching-learning) that the questions posed during the interview served to validate the statement/claims made in the NWU self-evaluation report; were clear and understandable; and were to the point.
- With regard to question 8, namely whether the chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially, no practically significant differences larger than 0.8 were recorded. All groups were therefore in agreement about the extent to which the chairperson explained that the answers during the interview would be treated confidentially.

CONCLUSION

In chapter 5 the results generated by means of the survey questionnaire were recorded. Stakeholders who participated as interviewees responded to the questions in the questionnaire. A principal axis factoring extraction with Oblimin rotation was applied in order to indicate the patterns in which stakeholders who participated as interviewees responded to the questions in the questionnaire. An exploratory factor analysis was performed to determine latent variables underlying the questions in the questionnaire. A factor analysis indicated and supported the notion that several questions can be grouped together and were hence reported as a group or construct of questions rather as 22 individual questions. Cronbach alpha tests reported that these constructs were

reliable. From the distinct clusters of constructs it was determined how different stakeholder groupings reacted to the questions. Some groups were also compared with each other in order to get a better understanding of how different sub-groups of stakeholders experienced the audit. The findings were enriched by remarks written by respondents at the end of the questionnaire. This provided insightful and enhanced meaning to some of the quantitative findings. In chapter 6, the results, conclusions and recommendations are documented.

CHAPTER 6
RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 described the research findings. The main aim of this study was to identify the possible limitations and deficiencies associated with an HEQC quality audit preparation and execution processes at one South African university. The focus was evidently on perceptions of the process at one higher education institution in order to improve future institutional efficiency and effectiveness. It needs to be clearly emphasised that this study was specifically based on the feedback that was obtained from stakeholders that participated as interviewees during the audit. The results and conclusions obtained from the questionnaire will be discussed briefly as they relate to the aim and objectives set for this study (see 1.4 and 1.5).

The responses from stakeholders who participated as interviewees will be evaluated based on the mean that was found for each identified construct, as they are covered in the questionnaire. This will be done to determine how stakeholders as interviewees experienced the process of audit preparation and the execution of the audit. Reference were made to effect sizes in order to determine the significance of the different constructs that were identified and compared between some of the sub-groupings[164] of the population of stakeholders who participated as interviewees in the audit. Based on the findings, recommendations are made.

The chapter is concluded with a discussion of the limitations of the study and an identification of possible areas for future research.

[164] It was impossible to compare all the sub-groupings as this would have generated too much data for the scope of this thesis.

6.2 Findings, conclusions and recommendations

The main aim of the study was pursued through the following:

To determine the rationale for the HEQC quality audit and to define the concept *quality* within the context of the case concerned (objective 1.5.1.).

The literature review in chapter 2 indicated that the phenomenon of quality (see 2.2) in higher education is rather well documented, although much was borrowed from other disciplines, such as engineering, the manufacturing industry and research[165] in general, but more particularly from action research. A clear mandate for institutional quality audits was legislated by several governments across the world in order to conduct quality audits in the higher education sector. Although literature indicates the distrust and discomfort that some stakeholders have within the university quality discourse, a rather clear rationale could be formulated for these audits (see 2.3). Four examples of international approaches towards institutional quality audits, namely Britain (see 2.4.1), Australia (see 2.4.2), Sweden (see 2.4.3) and Finland (see 2.4.4), were briefly documented in order to get a better understanding of the unique South African higher education context. It was also explained why higher education in general, and South African universities in particular, embarked on the quality discourse[166]. The clear influence of the international drive towards the quality discourse and the consequent effect on the South African higher education were briefly analysed. In terms of defining "quality" it was argued that in the context of a concrete product, quality is relatively simple, but that it is a much more difficult task to define "quality" in the context of education (Vroeijenstijn, 1995:13). It became clear that governments all over the world have some or other perception of quality in education and their role in influencing the quality discourse should not be neglected. It was very clear that governments, however, tend to address quality-related issues through external quality-monitoring activities (Green, 1994) such as accreditation, audits, assessment and external examination.

[165] Action Research.
[166] There is no single form of discourse analysis and the term must be understood as a multidisciplinary term constituted by various forms of critique (Fairclough *et al.*, 2004).

Another objective (see 1.5.2) was to generate and analyse the perceptions of audit interviewees who participated in the HEQC quality audit at the NWU, with special reference to specific actions as reported below and to identify deficiencies in the processes at NWU involving the preparation for and execution of the audit visit (see 1.5.3) and to generate guidelines[167] to improve the processes of preparation for and execution of the next HEQC quality audit at NWU (see 1.5.4)

- **Reading of the self-evaluation report**

The findings revealed that 8.8% of stakeholders who participated in the completion of the questionnaire did not indicate whether they had read the NWU self-evaluation report. It can be argued that they possibly did not read it, or alternatively that they only read parts of it, as no other options were made available for this question. A total number of 10.9% clearly indicated that they had not read the NWU self-evaluation report. A positive point is that 80.3% of respondents who participated as stakeholders indicated that they had read the NWU self-evaluation report. Taken the time, labour and money spent on this process[168] it could be argued that more stakeholders could have read the NWU self-evaluation report. *It is therefore recommended that the audit project time-lines should be carefully planned[169] in order to ensure that all stakeholders who participate as interviewees have sufficient time to read the self-evaluation report in preparation for the interviews with panel members. It is already known that the next cycle of audits will have a much narrower, explicit focus on teaching-learning and will hence result in a slightly different type of self-evaluation report than the first cycle of audits. The involvement of academics and those support service units that act as enablers needs to be carefully incorporated into the next institutional quality audit cycle.*

- **Attendance of audit briefing sessions**

From all respondents, a total of 84.2% indicated that they had attended a briefing session. Given that the university has 3 distinct campuses that are geographically far

[167] Recommendations.
[168] See Annexure E.
[169] Efficiency.

apart and that the final list of interviewees was only finalised a few days before the audit was conducted, it is commendable that such a high number of respondents managed to attend a briefing session. Many changes to the list of interviewees were also made for a number of reasons and in response to requests by both the HEQC and the respective campus managements. In addition, not all stakeholders who participated as interviewees in the audit were employed at one of the university's business units[170], and some had to travel from destinations such as Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Polokwane, Johannesburg and other centra. Special arrangements were made for the briefing of stakeholders who were not employed at one of the university's business units but in some cases, potential participants had to be replaced due to changes in their work schedule and other obligations with their respective employers. *It is therefore recommended that if technology allows it, a briefing session should be recorded in future and placed on an accessible database (with hyperlink) where external stakeholders will be able to view a comprehensive briefing session at their own leisure. Provision should be made to allow these stakeholders to forward or submit any questions or concerns, and these should be responded to timeously. With the anticipated narrower focus on teaching-learning in the next cycle of audits, inter-campus colloquiums (for the appropriate stakeholders) with a primary focus on teaching-learning quality could contribute to a better understanding and improved awareness of how the audit will be approached. Efficiency during the preparation process can be improved, as well as the effectiveness of the whole audit outcome.*

- **Reading of briefing documentation**

A total of 80.8% of respondents indicated that they had read the briefing document (see Annexure C). In total only 17 respondents (3.6%) provided no indication as to whether they had read the briefing document. In total 15.6% clearly indicated that they had not read the briefing document. It can be assumed that those who provided no indication whether they had read the briefing document possibly did not read it, or only read it partially, or that they did not receive or access the briefing document. All stakeholders

[170] One of the three campuses or the institutional office

with access to the university e-mail system and intranet received an e-mail with the hyperlink where the briefing document could be accessed on the university intranet. It was determined that an insignificant number of stakeholders from inside the university did not open these e-mails and therefore did not read the briefing document. Stakeholders from outside the university received the briefing document by e-mail but were also phoned to confirm that they had received it and that they were able to open and read the document. *It is therefore recommended that research be conducted in order to determine whether incentives will motivate or convince stakeholders to actually access and read briefing documentation. Other alternatives could also be considered in order to increase the number of stakeholders that are to be interviewed to read the briefing documentation. This might contribute to the overall effectiveness of the audit.*

A further objective linked to objective 1.5.2 was to determine the respondents'

Views on the audit itself, with reference to quality improvement, information surrounding the audit and logistical arrangements.

The findings generated through the data linked to constructs 2 ("preparation for the audit") and 4 ("the audit and quality") serve this specific objective very well. For construct 2 ("preparations for the audit") the highest mean was recorded by interviewees who were interviewed during session 21. These interviewees represented the executive director for teaching and learning, campus rectors and vice-rectors. This high mean can be contributed to the fact that this group was directly involved in either the audit steering team or the extended audit steering teams. They were well informed on all the planning, progress and reports.

Course work master's degree students recorded the lowest mean for "preparation for the audit", possibly because they are not necessarily fulltime on-campus students and were furthermore only contacted and informed about the audit once the site visit and interviewee name list for the audit panel were planned. *It is therefore recommended that in future, processes should be in place to ensure that all students, whether on-campus or off-campus, are equally informed about the preparation for the audit. The next audit, with the focus on teaching-learning, will certainly involve students. Proactive actions by*

the teaching-learning portfolio of the university to involve students in the teaching-learning quality trajectory may have positive results in the next audit cycle.

A further distinct difference was recorded between stakeholders who indicated that they had read the NWU self-evaluation report and those who indicated that they had not read it. Stakeholders who did read the report were clearly more convinced that they were informed about the purpose of the audit, about what to expect during the audit interview, that the logistical arrangements were sufficient and that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of the audit. It can be argued that those stakeholders who had not read the self-evaluation report technically possibly also did not contribute to the compilation or did not comment on the draft that was made available electronically for comments. In addition, some stakeholders who were nominated to be interviewed had to be withdrawn on short notice and replaced by others, after requests by the HEQC. In some cases, stakeholders who had to participate as interviewees withdrew at short notice and also had to be replaced by others. These circumstances could have contributed to the responses for questions related to construct 2 ("Preparation for the audit") by stakeholders who indicated that they had not read the NWU self-evaluation report. *It is therefore recommended to develop and implement processes that will enable all stakeholders that have to participate as interviewees to have timeous access to the self-evaluation report and to ensure that they do read it. If the plans of the HEQC go ahead for the next audit cycle, the self-evaluation report will be limited in scope and hence not be so elaborative. Proactive actions in support of continuous involvement of all the appropriate teaching-learning stakeholders may have positive results, especially in terms of improved inter-campus collaboration and information efficiency.*

Furthermore, a practically meaningful difference was identified between those stakeholders who indicated that they did attend a briefing session and those who indicated that they did not attend a briefing session[171]. Although the briefing sessions only took 60 to 70 minutes each, the whole purpose of the audit was explained, what to expect during the interview, what the logistical arrangements would entail and how the

[171] Different from the briefing session as reflected in Annexure D.

university approached the audit. It is clear that those who did not attend the briefing sessions were probably less prepared in terms of what to expect of the audit than those who indicated that they attended a briefing session. A similar finding was made for those respondents who indicated that they had read the briefing document, compared to those who indicated that they had not read the briefing document. Those who did read the briefing document (see Annexure C) were more adamant that they were informed about the audit, that they were informed about what to expect during the interview, that the logistical arrangements were sufficient, that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for the audit, and that the chairperson explained the purpose of the interview. It can be concluded that the briefing document increased stakeholders' level of preparedness regarding issues related to preparation for the audit.

A large effect size was recorded between academics as a group, compared to those of deans and executive management (as a group) with regard to construct 2 ("The preparation for the audit"). It can be concluded that deans and executive management were better informed about the audit, about what to expect during the interview, regarded the logistical arrangements more favourably, were more adamant that they had the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for the audit and that the chairperson explained the purpose of the interview (compared to academics who participated as interviewees in the audit). It can be concluded that much more time was spent on audit-related issues by deans and the executive management during the preparation and execution of the audit than by academics. Although more time could possibly be spent on academics in future, it remains the ultimate responsibility of deans and the executive management to ensure that academics are well informed and prepared. *It is recommended that the time spent on academics in the preparation and execution of the audit must be more focussed and intense, as academics form the backbone of a university.* Their level of awareness and their active and willing participation in an institutional quality audit are of immense importance in sustaining the quality drive at the university. A small to medium effect size was also recorded (for construct 2) between students and academics who participated as interviewees. Academics were to a larger extent than students convinced that they were informed about the audit, that they were informed about what to expect during the interview, that they were given the opportunity

to contribute to the preparation of the audit and that the chairperson explained the purpose of the interview. Another difference in opinion was recorded between senate members as a group and deans/executive management. Again, deans and the executive management were to a larger extent than senate members[172] of the opinion that they were informed about the audit, that they were informed about what to expect during the interview, that the logistical arrangements were sufficient, that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of the audit, and that the panel chairperson explained the purpose of the interview. Further practically significant differences for questions related to preparation for the audit were recorded between the Mafikeng group (less adamant) and the Potchefstroom group (more adamant) who both represented the teaching-learning portfolio. Similar differences were recorded between Potchefstroom (teaching-learning), who were more adamant that they were informed about the purpose of the audit and about what to expect during the interview, and that they were provided the opportunity to contribute in the preparation for the audit than the Vaal Triangle (teaching-learning) group. The fact that the institutional office, from where the audit was steered[173], is situated in Potchefstroom, could have contributed to these experiences. Stakeholders who participated as interviewees from the Potchefstroom campus were possibly better informed due to their geographical position closer to the institutional office. Stakeholders from the Potchefstroom campus also had close access to steering team members[174] as well as those who assisted with the logistical arrangements in the university's project office[175]. *It is therefore recommended that it should be ensured that all stakeholders, especially those who are selected as interviewees, are equally engaged, in spite of factors such as the large distances between campuses, and with consideration of their distinct different levels of accountability in the preparation and execution of the audit. In preparation for the next audit, more functional inter-campus collaborations need to be established in support of*

[172] Deans were excluded from this group although they are senate members.
[173] With campus representatives.
[174] In the institutional office.
[175] In the institutional office.

unity but also to support equity of provision[176] *(teaching-learning) on the respective campuses.*

Although the construct "the audit and quality" recorded the lowest mean of 3.27 between all stakeholders who participated as interviewees and who completed the questionnaire, there are no serious matters for concern. It needs to be taken into account, however, that the international students who were interviewed are not equally of opinion on issues related to the audit itself and quality improvement in general, compared to other sub-groups of the total population of stakeholders who participated as interviewees in the audit. The possibility exists that the international students saw this as an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with (the audit and) quality improvement[177] in general. *Although a non-representative sample of international students studying at the university was interviewed together as one group, it is recommended that the issues that international students struggle with need to be further investigated and addressed. In view of the next audit, the student experience of international students in particular needs to be analysed and contextualised within the university's vision and mission but also its teaching-learning philosophy. This will certainly contribute to improved process efficiency linked to the student experience.*

It is significant that employers (of graduate students) recorded the highest mean for their views on the audit itself and quality improvement. *Further investigations into how a more representative group of employers perceive the quality of the university could be beneficial for improving the general efficiency of university processes but also the effectiveness of the university's outputs in terms of graduates, research publications, patents and other aspects. In view of the next audit, a comprehensive analysis of employers'*[178] *feedback on the levels of preparedness and ability to perform in the workplace may add value. The overall effectiveness of the university can be positively influenced by the sufficient capturing, analysis and integration of these findings into the university's planning.*

[176] A recommendation has also been made in this report to investigate the possibility for intercampus colloquia where comparable academic programmes are offered.
[177] As perceived on their respective campuses.
[178] Scientifically identified and selected within the context of a traditional multi-campus university with a distinct vision and mission.

A small effect size was recorded for construct 4 ("audit and quality") between those respondents who indicated that they had read the NWU self-evaluation report and those who did not. It can be argued that those stakeholders who had to participate as interviewees in a triangulation exercise such as this, need to know and understand the content of the self-evaluation report. *It is therefore recommended that in future audits, more time should be set aside before the panel visit to enable all participants (stakeholders) to fully comprehend the self-evaluation report. In view of the next audit's focus on teaching-learning, the stakeholder involvement will probably be downsized.*

A clear difference was recorded between the views of academics and those of deans/executive managers for construct 4 namely "audit and quality". The latter (deans/executive management) were more positive about the audit and quality improvement than academics. This could possibly be ascribed to the fact that the whole audit was discussed at almost every meeting that deans and/or executive managers had to attend in the three years preceding the audit panel visit. They were well informed about the purpose of the audit and how it would contribute to quality improvement. Academics, on the contrary, had to be informed by means of electronic and printed newsletters and e-mails, and by their respective line managers during faculty board meetings, amongst others. The disparity in views between academics and deans/executive managers should be addressed, as academics can be regarded as the heart of a university. Academics are possibly the key stakeholders in supporting and maintaining the quality trajectory of the university. *It is recommended that in future audits, academics be more involved in the preparation and execution of the audit process in order to support a more equitable view, in line with that of the deans and executive management. This will be very beneficial in light of the context and focus*[179] *of the next rounds of audits. The general effectiveness of the whole university can be positively influenced by this step.*

Interviewees' ability to reflect on their work formed part of construct 4 ("audit and quality") (see Annexure A, question 5) and the only differences could be recorded

[179] Teaching-learning.

between academics (as a group) and deans/executive management as a group (see table 5.9). *It is therefore recommended that academics be proactively engaged on a continuous basis in the preparation for the next audit in order to ensure that they are better able to reflect on their work. This recommendation is very important, as the next cycle of audits will primarily focus on teaching-learning.*

The chairperson's role (see Annexure A, questions 7 and 8) was recorded in two constructs. Question 7, with the focus on "the chairperson stating the purpose of the interview" was reported as part of construct 2 ("preparation for the audit") and question 8 ("the chairperson explained that all answers will be treated confidentially") (reported as a separate construct) delivered some interesting results. In sessions where the large panel interviewed only one group of stakeholders, the chairperson did not clearly state the confidentiality of the interview during the first stages of the audit (especially day 1). The data suggests that this pattern improved as the audit continued[180].

The interviews and the panel members' engagement proceeded very well and the professionalism and level of preparedness of the interviewers were generally applauded and appreciated. Some exceptions were reported in cases where concurrent interview sessions were conducted. It seems as if the allocation of only one interviewer to a group could have contributed to discomfort amongst some stakeholders who participated as interviewees. *It is therefore recommended that in future audits, at least two interviewers be made available by the HEQC. In addition to improving the validity of their conclusions and findings, they will also be able to assist each other and to ensure that they are fully aware of whom they are interviewing. The efficiency of the audit panel itself can be improved by this recommendation.*

The stakeholders' own participation (see Annexure A, question 6). Generally it can be concluded that the levels of participation are acceptable. However, some sub-groups of stakeholders' participation with regard to specific issues related to the audit are limited.

[180] The researcher (together with the vice-rectors and the vice-chancellor's advisor) had a discussion with the vice-chancellor (VC) at the end of each day and tabled some suggestions that the VC could make during his "end of the day discussion" with the panel (see Annexure B). It was mentioned to the VC that some interviewees experienced some discomfort with the fact that they were not assured that the interview would be treated as confidential. The apparent rectification of this deficiency led to skewed data on question 8 and hence the separate reporting of question 8 in this thesis.

Such groups include, amongst others, students in contrast with academics, academics in contrast with deans/executive management, and senate members[181] in contrast with deans/executive management. It can be argued that due the comprehensive[182] nature of the first institutional quality audits at universities in South Africa it was difficult to pre-determine each stakeholder's level of idealised participation. The next cycle of audits, with a clear focus on teaching-learning, could to a reasonable extent clarify the idealised levels of stakeholder participation. *It is therefore recommended that equitable participation of stakeholders[183] is ensured in the preparation for the next audit.*

6.3 Limitations of the study

The first limitation of this study is that the research was limited to only one university, which represents a small section of the total higher education sector in South Africa. This was again due to the research being a case study with a view to identify deficiencies in the preparation and execution of an institutional quality audit at one university, but also to stimulate further research in the wider higher education environment. There is therefore a lack of generalisation of the findings beyond the case of this one university.

A next limitation is that although a wealthy cluster of data was generated by means of this case study survey, not all available data could be captured and analysed within the limited context of this research thesis.

The research was somewhat one-sided in the sense that the entire research was based on the stakeholders only. A useful addition to the research would have been to obtain the perceptions of the audit panel members of how they each viewed the issues that were investigated. It would have provided some focussed information on the university's contribution towards the development of the next cycle of institutional quality audits.

[181] Excluding deans.
[182] The audit panel could literarily have triangulated an array of findings made in the self-evaluation report (based on the audit criteria).
[183] Especially those stakeholders who are to be interviewed by the panel.

The strict capping on the number of interviewees[184] in each session limited the participation of a broader sample of stakeholders. The group of external stakeholders who are not employed by the university is a typical example. The inputs by a broader representation of industry partners, external examiners, external moderators, employers and alumni – to name but a few – could have added much more depth to the whole survey and analysis.

No in-depth analysis could be made of those sessions where only one panel member interviewed a group[185] of interviewees; equally, the verbal feedback generated during the debriefing sessions could not be included and analysed as part of this thesis, as it fell beyond the scope of this research thesis.

In the next section, recommendations will be made for future research.

6.4 Further research possibilities

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations are suggested for further research:

- Analyse the feedback of all the remaining sub-groupings that participated as stakeholders and that were interviewed by the audit panel;
- Reconceptualisation of the audit preparation process in order to ensure equitable attention to and hence improved participation of stakeholders in a multi-campus environment where comparable or similar academic programmes are offered on different campuses, although these campuses have limited contact due to the large distances geographically separating them from each other, amongst others.
- The value of and application of this type of data and analysis (in this survey) in the planning cycle of the university;

[184] By the HEQC.
[185] Not more than eight interviewees.

- How the quality discourse in higher education may be extended towards the external stakeholders as well; and
- Research of the efficiency of carefully selected processes and systems at the university and the effect it has on overall effectiveness. The research should be pre-informed by the implementation of affirmative action, based on the feedback and findings generated by means of this survey.

6.5 Conclusion

The current research concentrated on the experiences of stakeholders in an institutional quality audit at one university only. A number of findings were made which would lead to more research into the evolving field of institutional quality audits at universities, and more specifically at South African universities.

It is important not to over-accentuate the purpose and scope of an institutional quality audit. In support of future developments in institutional quality audits, the emphasis should possibly change to ensure that all stakeholders are equally consulted during the preparation, so that stakeholders may be aware of possible deficiencies and differences between the different campuses of a multi-campus university such as in this case study.

In view of the next round of institutional quality audits, further discourse has been started by the HEQC in an attempt to learn from past experiences. University managements have a major role to play in capacitating all stakeholders, which will have an impact in the university society and its operational sphere.

In addition there seems to be a major need to draft and skilfully integrate all university stakeholders' conduct into the next cycle of institutional quality audits. Stakeholders may buy into the approach much stronger if they believe that their views and opinions are to incorporated and valued.

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ANNEXURE A

HEQC AUDIT

HEQC Audit

North-West University - Debriefing Questionnaire

(Interviewees are requested to complete this questionnaire directly after the interview by clearly indicating your option with an X)

All responses are ANONYMOUS

Statement	YES	NO
A. I have read the NWU Self-Evaluation Report		
B. I have attended a briefing session in preparation for the audit panel interview		
C. I have read a written briefing document in preparation for the audit panel interview		

Indicate to what extent <u>you</u> as interviewee are convinced of the following:

		1	2	3	4
	Statement	**Not at all**	**Small extent**	**Reasonable extent**	**Large extent**
	View:				
1.	The HEQC audit will contribute to the improvement of quality at NWU				
2.	I was informed about the purpose of the audit				
3.	I was informed about what to expect during this interview				
4.	Logistical arrangements for this interview were sufficient (invitations, venue, etc)				
5.	The audit encouraged me to reflect on how I do my work				
6.	I was given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for the audit				
7.	The panel chairperson stated the purpose of the interview				
8.	The panel chairperson explained that all answers would be treated confidentially				
	The questions asked during the interview:				
9.	• served to validate the statements/claims made in the NWU self-evaluation report				
10.	• were clear/understandable				
11.	• were to the point				
12.	• were appropriate for this group of interviewees				
13.	• were occasionally thought provoking				

14.	• provided insight into how the NWU can improve its quality				
	Panel members:				
15.	• listened with an open mind to the responses of interviewees				
16.	• were well prepared				
17.	• allowed interviewees to respond to/elaborate on responses made by fellow interviewees				
18.	• conduct was professional				
	During this interview I had the opportunity:				
19.	• to respond to questions asked by panel members				
20.	• to fully articulate my response(s)				
21.	• to relate to my work				

In retrospect, how did you experience the HEQC audit process (self-evaluation, briefing, panel interview and debriefing)? Did the process meet your expectations? (*Please be very specific*.)……
……..……
……
……
……

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

SESSION NUMBER: ..... (For office use only)

ANNEXURE B

(NWU AUDIT VISIT AND DEBRIEFING SCHEDULE)

COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COMMITTEE

NORTH - WEST UNIVERSITY

AUDIT VISIT SCHEDULE

16 – 20 March 2009

Day 0 – Sunday 15 March

09:30 – 09:45 The Panel arrives at the institution

09:45 – 10:00 Document Orientation (NWU person)

10:00 – 10:45 Agenda:

- Revisiting purpose and conduct of audits, including the role of chair, “sub chairs” and auditors
- Audit file orientation
- Updates and other analyses since the portfolio meeting
- Rationale and logic of site visit schedule
- Allocation of reading tasks for the review of on-site documents

11:00 – 11:30 **Brief welcome and presentation from the Vice-Chancellor and team**

11:30 – 11:45 Break

11:45 – 12:15 Feedback from sub-panel visits to campuses

12:15 – 13:15 **Lunch**

13:15 – 16:00 Reading and review of on-site (supporting) documents

16:00 – 16:15 Break

16:15 – 18:30 Finalise Questions for interview sessions

18:30 – 19:30 Dinner (at the institution)

19:30 - Auditors return to hotel to continue with preparations

DAY ONE (Monday, 16 March) FULL PANEL				
			Interviewees	**Notes**
SESSION 1 08:00 – 09:00	The Panel to interview the **Vice-Chancellor**		1	
09:00 – 09:30	Panel Review & Photo session			
09:00 - 09:15	Debriefing			
SESSION 2 09:30 – 10:30	The Panel to interview **Executive Management Team (Strategic/Academic Group)**	Include: • Institutional Management (Maximum of 8 people) (VC not present)		
10:30 – 10:45	Panel Review			
10:30 - 10:45	**Debriefing**		**8**	
SESSION 3 10:45 – 11:30	The Panel to interview members of **Council**	External members Include: • Chair/Vice-Chair of Council • Chairs or reps from key Council Committees chair of the finance committee (Maximum of 8 people)		
11:30 – 11:45	Panel Review	The panel splits into10 Groups		
11:30 – 11:45	**Debriefing**		**8**	
SESSION 4 11:45 – 12:45	Panel to split into 10 Groups and interview the **Academics of the Campuses (lecturers)** The groups should be mixed with people at the same level	1 Panel member per group Group 1 - Recently appointed F/T academic staff Group 2 - Women Academic staff Group 3 – Senior Academic staff Group 4 **-** Part-time academic staff Group 5 – Academic Support staff in faculties-general Group 6 – Academics Group 7 -10 School Directors (Spread across campuses and faculties) (Maximum of 6 people per group)		4.01 Recently appointed staff 4.02 Women academic staff 4.03 Senior academic staff 4.04 Part time academic staff 4.05 Academic Support in Faculties 4.06 Academic staff (general) 4.07 School Directors 4.08 School Directors 4.09 School Directors 4.10 School Directors
12:45 – 13:30	Panel Review & **Lunch**			
12:45 - 13:15	**Debriefing**		**60 +**	
SESSION 5 13:30 – 14:15	The Panel to interview members of **Senate**	Exclude Deans as far as possible (Maximum of 8 people)		
14:15 – 14:30	Panel Review			
14:15 - 14:30	**Debriefing**		**8**	

			Interviewees	Notes
SESSION 6 14:30 – 15:30	The Panel to interview **Deans**	(Spread across campuses and faculties) (Maximum of 8 people)		
15:30 – 15:45	Panel Review			
15:30 – 15:45	**Debriefing**		**8 (Deans)**	
SESSION 7 15:45 – 16:30	The Panel to interview members of the **Institutional Student Representative Council (ISRC)**	Include: • New Executive members (Maximum of 8 people)		
16:30 – 16:45	Panel Review			
16:30 – 16:45	**Debriefing**		**8 (ISRC)**	
16:45 – 17:00	Finalise data for sessions 1-7			
17:00 – 17:15	**Feedback to VC**			
SESSION 8 16:45 – 17:30	The Panel to interview members of the **Institutional Forum**	(Maximum of 8 people)		
17:30 – 17:45	**Debriefing**		**8**	
17:30 – 17:45	Chairperson and senior HEQC staff to have a brief meeting with the Vice-Chancellor and/or his delegate(s).	Feedback and possible concerns from the institution to the Panel		
17:45 – 19:30	Panel review of day 1: reflections, conclusions and issues for follow-up. Overview of the macro issues. Consider possible persons for recall session. Preparation for day 2 – review of sessions and questions.			
19:30 – 20:30	Dinner	At the institution		
20:30 –	Panel members depart to hotel			

DAY TWO (Tuesday, 17 March) FULL PANEL				
			Interviewees	**Notes**
SESSION 9 08:00 – 09:00	The Panel to interview the **Executive Management Team (Admin/Support Group)** (*Focus on Resource Allocation, HR,)*	Group 1 – Finance, Resource Allocation Group 2 - HR (Maximum of 8 people x 2)		9.01 Finance, Planning 9.02 HR, Capacity Building and Employ Equity
09:00 – 09:15	Panel Review			
09:00 – 09:15	**Debriefing**		**16**	
SESSION 10 09:15 – 10:00	The panel to interview **Staff Unions**	All recognised unions or staff associations (Maximum of 8 people)		
10:00 – 10:15	Panel Review			
10:00 – 10:15	**Debriefing**		**8**	
SESSION 11 10:15 – 11:15	The Panel to interview staff responsible for **Macro Quality Management**	Institutional Directors (Quality, Teaching and Learning, Research) Campus Vice-rectors quality and planning ; Institutional ICT person (Spread across Campuses) (Maximum of 8 people)		
11:15 – 11:30	Panel Review	Panel splits		
11:15 – 11:30	**Debriefing**		**8**	
SESSION 12 11:30 – 12:30	The Panel to interview **representatives of the Province and city, community and business partners, employers, research partners and alumni**	Panel to split and meet with groups of a maximum of 6 persons. Group 1 - Employers Group 2 – Employers Group 3 - Community Group 4 - Business & Industry Partners Group 5 - Provincial , Municipal & Local Government Group 6 – Research Partners Group 7 - Alumni & Convocation (Spread across campuses and faculties)		12.01 Employers 12.02 Employers 12.03 Community Partners 12.04 Business and Industry 12.05 Provincial, Municipal, Local Government 12.06 Research Partners 12.07 Alumni & Convocation
12:30 – 13:15	Panel Review and Lunch	Panel splits		
12:30 – 13:00	**Debriefing**		**42+**	
SESSION 13 13:15 – 14:30	The Panel to interview **academic staff and support staff** *(Focus on Teaching and Learning)* **This group of staff should be different from those in session 4**	Panel to split and meet with groups of a maximum of 6 persons. 8 –10 Groups Group 1 - Senior Lecturers Group 2 – Senior lecturers Group 3 - Junior Lecturers & lecturers group 4 - Academic Development and support staff		13.01 Senior Lecturers 13.02 Senior Lecturers 13.03 Junior and lecturers 13.04 Academic and Dev Staff 13.05 ITEA recipients 13.06 School Directors 13.07 School Directors 13.08 School Directors

			Interviewees	Notes
		group 5 - ITEA recipients group 6 – 10 School Directors (Spread across Campuses and Faculties)		13.09 School Directors 13.10 School Directors
14:30 – 14:45	Panel Review			
14:30 – 14:45	**Debriefing**		**60**	
SESSION 14 14:45 – 15:45	The Panel to interview the **Mafikeng Campus**	(Focus on Teaching and Learning) Include Campus Management • Deans • School Directors • Chairs of committees (Maximum of 8 people)		
15:45 – 16:15	Panel review			
15:45 – 16:15	**Debriefing**		**8**	
16:30 – 17:00	**Capture data for sessions 8-14**			
17:00 – 17:15	**Feedback to VC (sessions 8-14)**			
SESSION 15 16:15 – 17:15	The Panel to interview the **Mafikeng Campus**	(Focus on Research and Community Engagement) Include Campus management • Deans • School Directors • Research innovation (Maximum of 8 people)		
17:15 – 17:30	Panel review			
17:15 – 17:30	**Debriefing**		**8**	
17:30 – 17:45	Chairperson and senior HEQC staff to have a brief meeting with the Vice-Chancellor and/or his delegate(s).			
17:45 – 19:30	Panel review of day 2: reflections, conclusions and issues for follow-up. Consider possible persons for recall session. Preparation for day 3 – review of sessions and questions.			
19:30 – 20:30	Dinner	At the institution		
20:30 –	Panel members depart to hotel			

DAY THREE (Wednesday, 18 March) FULL PANEL				
			Interviewees	**Notes**
SESSION 16 08:00 – 09:00	The Panel to interview the **Potchefstroom Campus**	(Focus on Teaching and Learning) Include Campus management • Deans • Directors of Schools • Chairs of committees (Maximum of 8 people)		
09:00 – 09:30	Panel Review			
09:00 – 09:15	**Debriefing**		**8**	
SESSION 17 09:30 – 10:30	The Panel to interview the **Potchefstroom Campus**	(Focus on Research and Community Engagement) Include Campus management • Deans • School Directors • Directors, Coordinators of Research entities • Research innovation (Maximum of 8 people)		
10:30 – 11:00	Panel Review	Panel Splits		
10:30- 10:45	**Debriefing**		**8**	
SESSION 18 11:00 – 12:00	The Panel to interview the **students**	Panel to split into up to 10 Groups): **Group A**: **1 - 6** Undergraduate students from all campuses (include: disability, international, Distance Education, residence, Supplemental Instruction) **Group B**: **7 – 10** Postgraduate students from all campuses (Hons, Masters & Doctoral) (include course-work and research) (Maximum of 6 per group)		18.01 Undergraduate 18.02 International students 18.03 Disabled students 18.04Residential students 18.05 SI students 18.06 Distance students 18.07 Honours students 18.08 Research masters students 18.09 Course work masters 18.10 Doctoral students
12:00 – 13:00	Panel Review and **Lunch**			
12:00 – 12:15	**Debriefing**		**60**	

			Interviewees	Notes
SESSION 19 13:00 – 14:00	The Panel to interview the **Vaal Triangle Campus**	(Focus on Teaching and Learning) Include Campus management • Deans • School Directors • Chairs of committees (Maximum of 8 people)		
14:00 – 14:30	Panel review	Panel splits		
14:00 - 14:15	**Debriefing**		**6**	
SESSION 20 14:30 – 15:30	The Panel to interview the **Vaal Triangle Campus**	(Focus on Research and Community Engagement) Include Campus management • Deans • School Directors • Directors, Coordinators of Research entities • Research innovation (Maximum of 8 people)		
15:30 – 15:45	Panel Review			
15:30 – 15:45	**Debriefing**		**6**	
SESSION 21 15:45 – 16:30	The Panel to interview the **Executive Director for Teaching and Learning, Campus Rectors and Campus Vice-Rectors Academic**			
16:30 – 17:30	Panel Review			
16:30 - 16:45	**Debriefing**		**7**	
16:30 – 17:00	**Finalise data for sessions 15-20**			
17:00 – 17:15	**Feedback to VC (sessions 15-20)**			
17:45 – 19:00	Panel review of day 3: reflections, conclusions and issues for follow-up. Consider possible persons for recall session. Sub-group preparation for interviews of day 4			
19:00 – 20:00	Dinner	At the institution		
20:00 –	Panel members depart to hotel			

DAY FOUR (Thursday, 19 March)				
GROUP ONE				
			Interviewees	**Notes**
SESSION 22 08:00 – 08:45	The Panel to interview **Executive Director Research and Innovation Campus Rectors and Campus Vice-Rectors Academic**			**Concurrent with 28**
08:45 – 09:00	Panel Review	Panel splits		
08:45 – 09:00	**Debriefing**		**7+ 8 =15**	**(Session 22 and 28)**
SESSION 23 09:00 – 09:45	The Panel to interview **external examiners of postgraduates and undergraduates**	**Group 1** External examiners in the quality assurance of academic programmes from outside institutions for teaching and learning **Group 2** External examiners of postgraduate studies from outside institutions (8 per group)		**Concurrent with Session 29** 23.01 External examiners (undergrad) 23.02 External examiners (post grad)
09:45 – 10:00	Panel Review	Panel splits		
09:45 – 10:00	**Debriefing**		**16 +8 =24**	
SESSION 24 10:00 – 10:45	The Panel to interview members involved in the **NWU Innovation and Community Engagement**	**Group 1 –** Research innovation **Group 2 –** Community Engagement		**Concurrent with Session 30** 24.01 Research Innovation 24.02 Community Engagement
10:45 – 11:00	Panel Review			
10:45 –11:00	**Debriefing**		**12+8=20**	**(Sessions 24 and 30)**
SESSION 25 11:00 – 11:4	The Panel to interview members of the **Research Ethics Committee**			**Concurrent with Session 31**
11:45 – 12:00	Panel Review	Panel splits		
11:45 –12:00	**Debriefing**		**8+8=16**	**(Sessions 25 and 31)**
SESSION 26 12:00 – 12:45	The Panel to interview **Postgraduate Supervisors**	The panel to split into 2 groups Include Group 1 Experienced supervisors Group 2 Newly appointed supervisors 8 per group across all campuses		**Concurrent with Session 32**
12:45 – 13:00	Panel Review	panel splits		
12:45 –13:00	**Debriefing**		**16+16 = 32**	**(Sessions 26 and 32)**

			Interviewees	Notes
SESSION 27 13:00 – 13:45	The Panel to interview groups of **Researchers**	Group 1 - Rated Researchers Group 2 - Research Fellows Group 3 - Women researchers Group 4 - Emerging researchers 6 per group across all campuses		**Concurrent with 33**
13:45 – 14:00	**Debriefing**		**24 +8 =32**	**(Sessions 27 and 33)**
14:00 – 15:00	**Capture last data**			
15:15 – 15:30	**Feedback to VC**			
13:45 – 14:15	Panel Review and **Lunch**			
14:15 – 14:45	Sub-Panel discussion on research			

DAY FOUR (Thursday, 19 March)				
GROUP TWO (Infrastructure and Support)				
			Interviewees	**Notes**
SESSION 28 08:00 – 08:45	Panel to interview staff of the **Student Academic Administration Division**	Include Admissions, Examinations, Loans and bursaries (Maximum of 8 people)		
08:45 – 09:00	Panel Review			
08:45 – 09:00	**Debriefing**		**8**	
SESSION 29 09:00 – 09:45	Panel to interview the **Library Staff**	Include: • Directors: Library Services • Campus Librarians (Maximum of 8 people)		
09:45 – 10:00	Panel Review			
09:45 – 10:00	**Debriefing**		**8**	
SESSION 30 10:00 – 10:45	The Panel to interview **ICT services staff**	Include: • Director: ICT • Section Managers (Maximum 8 people)	**8**	
10:45 – 11:00	Panel Review			
10:45 – 11:00	**Debriefing**			
SESSION 31 11:00 – 11:45	The Panel to interview staff involved in **Distance Education support and infrastructure**			
11:45 – 12:00	Panel Review	Panel splits		
11:45 – 12:00	Debriefing			
SESSION 32 12:00 – 12:45	The Panel to interview staff involved in **Student Affairs**	Group 1 • Academic Development Practitioners Group 2 • Student Counselling • Career Counselling • Student Health • Sports • Arts and culture (Maximum of 8 people)	**8** **8**	
12:45 – 13:00	Panel Review			
12:45 – 13:00	Debriefing			
SESSION 33 13:00 – 13:45	Panel to interview staff involved in **Residence Affairs**	(Maximum of 8 people)	**8**	
13:45 – 14:15	Panel Review and **Lunch**			
13:45- 14:00	Debriefing			
14:15 – 14:45	Sub-Panel discussion on infrastructure and support			

DAY FOUR (Thursday, 19 March) – Afternoon FULL PANEL				
			Interviewees	**Notes**
14:45 – 15:00	Panel review			
14:45 – 15:00	Debriefing			
SESSION 34 15:00 – 15:30	**Open session**	Any member of the institution (including alumni and partners) may approach the Panel to address them on quality issues. (This should be organised through the contact person of the University) (Institution to inform panel the day before)		
15:30 – 15:45	Panel review			
15:30 – 15:45	**Debriefing**			
SESSION 35 15:45 – 16:15	The Panel to interview the **Vice Chancellor**		**1**	
16:15 – 16:30	Panel Review			
16:15 – 16:30	Debriefing			
SESSION 36 16:30 – 17:15	**Recall session**	The Panel may ask to clarify issues with the ED's, Deans, permanent staff members, etc. (Panel to inform institution day before)	**1**	
17:15 – 17:30	Chairperson and senior HEQC staff to have a brief meeting with the Vice-Chancellor and/or his delegate(s).			
17:30 – 19:00	Panel review and consolidation of findings Prepare spoken feedback Panel members to prepare their written notes			
19:00 – 20:00	Dinner	At the institution		
20:00 –	Panel members continue to prepare their written notes			

DAY FIVE (Friday, 20 March) FULL PANEL				
			Interviewees	**Notes**
SESSION 37 08:00 – 12:00	Panel Review and Finalisation of Oral Feedback			
SESSION 38 12:00 – 12:45	Oral feedback to the Vice-Chancellor	With the Vice-Chancellor and whomever he wishes to have present. The feedback is read by the chairperson of the Panel. There is no discussion on the feedback. The Vice-Chancellor concludes the audit site visit with a few comments.		
12:45	Panel departs	The Panel greets the Vice-Chancellor and senior staff who are present and departs.		

Further explanations required and request for additional documents before site visit:

1. Gap register (based on the self-evaluation) before the site visit
2. Programme reviews and improvement plans
3. Reports on climate surveys
4. Budget process document that sets out resource allocation
5. Calendar for staff development courses – teaching-learning, research and personal development
6. A sample of an action plan resulting from an Internal Programme Evaluation exercise

Further supporting documentation to be available on site:

1. Policy documents pertaining to research
2. Policy documents pertaining to Teaching and Learning
3. University Research Mentoring Policy or Strategy
4. Code of Good Practise for Postgraduate students and supervisors
5. University templates for assessment of postgraduate seminars, thesis and dissertations.

Notes:

The HEQC would appreciate it if NWU note the following:

1. Individual Panel members may break from interview sessions in order to read the supporting documentation provided.
2. Arrange, if possible, for a separate room for supporting documentation to be available for review.
3. Please ensure that there are **not more than 8 persons** for interview in any one interview session, and **not more than 6 interviewees** when the auditors interview individually.
4. Please supply the names and designations of those in each interview in electronic format (in Word format and not in tables for ease of blocking and pasting in 9 point, Arial font – please do not use an Excel format) to the HEQC audit administrator by **Monday, 9 March 2009.**
5. NWU is asked to inform all interviewees of the purpose of the audit visit and the protocol of the interviews. This includes making known the names of the members of the Audit Panel.
6. NWU is requested to provide a briefing on the audit to its external partners invited for interviews.
7. NWU is requested to notify all members of the institution that there will be an open session where any member of the NWU community can address the audit Panel on any quality related matter.
8. NWU is further requested to provide name cards for each of the interviewees, with their designation of department or faculty. The interviewees will be asked to place these cards in front of them to assist the Panel and scribe to appropriately identify and address the interviewees.
9. NWU is also requested to provide the following venues:

a. A main interview room (to accommodate 15 Panel members and a separate table for support staff).

b. Several break away rooms according to the schedule

10. If agreeable to the Vice Chancellor, the HEQC would like the institution to arrange for the taking of a group photograph with the VC and his team, and the Audit Panel. **Possibly on Day 1.**

11. NWU is further requested, if possible, to provide internet access for use by the auditors during the course of the site visit.
12. Please provide modest refreshments for the Panel, including water, tea, coffee, sandwiches, fruit, etc.
13. NWU is requested to provide dinner to the Panel from **Sunday 15 March - Thursday, 19 March**. The cost of these dinners will be for the **account of the HEQC**.

ANNEXURE C

HEQC INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT 2009

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

HEQC INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT 2009

15 – 20 March 2009

BRIEFING DOCUMENT[186]

This document is available in electronic format at:
https://intranet.nwu.ac.za/en/in-im-heqc/static-content/report.pdf

[186] This briefing document was developed for staff and student interviewees. An additional briefing document was compiled for all interviewees from outside the NWU. The additional briefing document included amongst other the abridged curriculum vitae's of panel members. All additional information included for interviewees from outside the NWU was made available to all staff members and students on the university's intranet.

Content:

BACKGROUND

The South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) is an independent statutory body established in terms of the *Higher Education Act, No 101 of 1997*. It advises the Minister of Education on all matters related to higher education policy issues and assumes executive responsibility for quality assurance within higher education and training.

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) is a permanent subcommittee of the CHE, with the mandate to promote quality assurance in higher education, to audit the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions and accredit programmes of higher education.

The HEQC employs an audit methodology consisting of an institutional self-evaluation, followed by validation of the self-evaluation by peers and experts. To carry out a self-evaluation, institutions need to develop an audit portfolio with supporting information and evidence by means of which the effectiveness and efficiency of the institution's management of the quality of core academic activities are evaluated against the HEQC audit criteria (https://intranet.nwu.ac.za/en/in-im-heqc/static-content/criteria.pdf) and any other relevant quality criteria that the institution has set for itself (*HEQC Audit Framework* par 2.7).

The North-West University was requested by the HEQC in 2006 to participate in an institutional audit during 2008, which date was later moved to 2009. The date for the audit visit is 15 –20 March 2009, preceded by separate one-day visits to each of our three campuses during February by some members of the Audit Panel.

The self-evaluation process commenced during the second half of 2006 and concluded in June 2008. The development of the *Self-evaluation Report (*https://intranet.nwu.ac.za/en/in-im-heqc/static-content/report.pdf **)** went through various editions. Opportunities for input by staff and students were provided during the process and staff and students were informed on the process through a variety of means. The report was approved by the Institutional Senate in August 2008 and Council in November 2008, after which it was submitted to the HEQC on 3 December 2008. The self-evaluation report is the primary document on which the audit panel will base its engagement with staff and students during its visit to the University in February and March 2009.

Two key principles were observed in the development of the Self-evaluation Report. The first was that the audit presented an important opportunity to reflect on the progress the University has made since the merger, and the challenges that we still face, in delivering on our mission and approaches to teaching and learning, research and implementation of expertise. The second was that the audit should be experienced as but one activity on the continuous road of quality improvement of our core business.

The design of the University's *Self-evaluation Report* was guided by the HEQC's expectation that the report should focus on an evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the systems being used to assure and enhance the quality of its core academic activities – teaching and learning, research and community engagement. Therefore, the evaluation was conducted with reference to the 19 HEQC Audit Criteria (https://intranet.nwu.ac.za/en/in-im-heqc/static-content/criteria.pdf) as well as the four open-ended questions posed by the HEQC to the University.

The HEQC's audit criteria cover two broad areas which form the focus of evaluation.

Area 1: Fitness of purpose of the mission of the institution in response to local, national and international context (including transformation issues) ● links between planning, resource allocation and quality management.

Area 2: Teaching and learning, research and community engagement: Management of the quality of teaching and learning ● Academic support services ● Short courses ● Exported programmes ● Partnership programmes ● Programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses ● Certification ● Programme management ● Programme design and approval ● Staffing ● Programme review ● Management of assessment ● Moderation system ● Explicitness, fairness and consistency of assessment practices ● Security of recording and documenting assessment data ● Recognition of prior learning ● Research functions and processes ● Postgraduate education ● Community engagement ● Benchmarking, user surveys and impact studies.

The open-ended questions are:

a) In what unique and distinctive ways is NWU enriching and adding excellence to the higher education sector and society – regionally, nationally and internationally?

b) What does our university do to produce a vibrant intellectual culture within the institution and in society at large?

c) How is NWU an incubator of new ideas and cutting edge knowledge and technologies within the national innovation system?

d) In the last three years, what were some of our notable examples of institutional success in promoting and enhancing quality?

The HEQC's Audit Framework and Audit Criteria are available on the NWU intranet at:

http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d000150/

To enable the HEQC to conduct an evidence-based audit, a set of primary evidence documents (qualitative and quantitative evidence) provided as part of the Audit Portfolio. The primary and secondary evidence that are referred to in the Self-evaluation report, as well as further supporting evidence, will also be available to the Panel on-site in the document room during the audit visit. Most documentation is available on the audit website on the intranet.

After the audit visit, the HEQC Panel will submit a Draft Audit Report to the University – normally within four months (15 weeks) after the visit. The report will contain commendations on good practices at the University and recommendations for improvement in specified areas. The University will have the opportunity to comment on the Draft Audit Report, in particular to point out any possible factual errors. The final Audit Report will be provided by the HEQC to the University probably in the first part of 2010 and a summary of the findings will be published on the HEQC's web site. Following the receipt of the Audit Report, the University is expected to draw up a Quality Improvement Plan and submit it to the HEQC, indicating how the University will address the issues brought to its attention. Two years after the submission of the Quality Improvement Plan, the University is expected to submit a progress report.

THE AUDIT VISIT 15-20 MARCH 2009

THE PANEL

A panel of peers has been appointed to review the institution's own self-evaluation report and to conduct any other data-gathering necessary to arrive at a clear picture of the effectiveness of these arrangements. The Audit Panel consists of 7 national peers and 1 international peer.

Name	Role	Designation	Institution
Prof Niek Grové	Auditor (Chairperson)	Registrar	University of Pretoria
Prof John A Cooke	Auditor	Dean of Science and Agriculture	University of KwaZulu-Natal
Dr Kenneth Netshiombo	Auditor	Executive Dean of Arts and Design	Durban University of Technology
Prof Wendy Kilfoil	Auditor	Director: Education Innovation	University of Pretoria
Prof Beatrys Lacquet	Auditor	Executive Dean: Engineering and the Build Environment	University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
Prof Maureen Robinson	Auditor	Dean of Education	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Prof Agyampong Gyekye	Auditor	Dean of Business and Management Sciences	University of Venda
Dr Julie Jackson	International Auditor	Pro-Vice Chancellor (Quality Enhancement)	La Trobe University, Australia
HEQC Staff			
Dr Lis Lange		Executive Director	HEQC
Dr Lumkile Lalendle	Audit Officer	Director Institutional Audits	HEQC
Ms Belinda Wort	Audit Administrator	Manager: Institutional Audits	HEQC
Dr Denyse Webbstock	Consultant	Director Quality Promotion and Assurance	University of KwaZulu-Natal
Mr A B Heyns	Consultant	Scribe	HEQC
Observer			
Mr Kgomotso Legari	Observer	Manager: Quality Promotion and Capacity Development	HEQC

***CV*'s of the Panel members are available at:**
https://intranet.nwu.ac.za/opencms/export/intranet/html/af/in-im-heqc/documents/HEQC_Audit_Panel.doc

THE INTERVIEWS

1. A subset of the Audit Panel will conduct interviews on specific campus-related aspects on our three campuses during the week of 16 – 20 February 2009. The dates are in the process of being finalised.
2. From **16 to 20 March 2009** the panel will conduct scheduled interviews with students, academic and administrative staff, management at all levels, members of Council, alumni, external stakeholders (e.g. employers, donors, research partners) and other constituencies. The Panel will be based at the NWU Institutional Office (See Section 3). The schedule for the Audit Visit is available at https://intranet.nwu.ac.za/en/in-im-heqc/index.html
3. The main purpose of the Panel site-visit is to audit the *Self-evaluation Report* using the 19 Audit Criteria and to test the knowledge of and the consistency in the application of the University's quality arrangements (e.g. policies and systems) across the institution. The interviews are an important opportunity for the Panel to validate the institution's own self-evaluation and to develop an understanding of the institution's approach to its academic activities.
4. In addition to processes related to the quality of the core functions and operations of the University, **institutional mission, transformation** and **strategic planning and management** are important areas of scrutiny during the audits of all higher education institutions. During the first two days of the audit interviews there will be a strong focus on these issues, and interviewees are encouraged to be forthcoming and willing to talk honestly about these issues. Keep in mind that the audit has a developmental focus. Its aim is to help the University to achieve its goals.
5. The purpose of the interview is for interviewees to provide the Panel with information and insights about your experience of the institution's quality management arrangements. *This is not a public relations or fundraising exercise, nor a 'complaints' session*. Instead this is an opportunity for a constructive, reflective and analytic account of systems and practices at the institution: present the panel with an accurate and informed view of the quality management arrangements at the University.
6. You are not expected to agree with everything that is written in the *Self-evaluation Report*. Although this Report was generated in a consultative manner and all the formal decision-making bodies of the University considered and approved it, there is no guarantee that everyone will agree with everything in the Report. The Panel will expect you to *convey your views honestly*, even if you do not support the *Self-evaluation Report*.
7. The Panel will try to get a sense of what is happening in your *own contexts* (school, faculty, support division, etc. as well as your impression or understanding of how representative that is of the situation across the institution.
8. In view of the purpose of the interviews during the site visit, you

    a) are kindly requested to **familiarise yourself** with the **Self-evaluation Report** before your interview, and particularly the sections of the report

that deal with the areas that you will be discussing with the panel. You may also consult relevant sections of the evidence documents from the set of evidence documents on the audit website or audit CD. You also need to look at the theme of the interview session and prepare yourself according to the criteria that are applicable to that theme;

b) need to **understand the context of the audit** as explained in this briefing document;

c) need to understand that the Panel will be trying to make an **honest assessment** of the quality arrangements of the University. They will be endeavouring to determine how **effective** these arrangements are and will try to get a sense of how **consistently** they are being applied across the institution (in all faculties, schools and support divisions);

d) need to understand that the Panel has to test the validity of claims made by the University in the *Self-evaluation Report*;

e) need to keep in mind that **the Panel has specific lines of enquiry** that it wishes to pursue – the Panel sets the agenda and the Panel determines who they want to interview;

f) can expect questions from the members of the Panel that may be fairly broad, or may focus on specific details regarding particular arrangements or practices. Please take your cue from the questions directed to you, and be sensitive to any signals from the panel that your answer is too detailed or deviates from the focus of the interview. Panel members may ask follow-up questions. Do not regard repetitive questions or requests for further detail as criticism. The Panel needs to triangulate the evidence presented in the *Self-evaluation Report*, the evidence documents and the opinions and experiences of the different groups of interviewees. They may also need to elicit information or views that are not in the written documents available to them.

g) are kindly requested to read through the *curricula vitae*

(https://intranet.nwu.ac.za/opencms/export/intranet/html/af/in-im-heqc/documents/ CvsPanel2Feb09.htm)of the panel members so that you know who the people are that will be interviewing you;

h) need to know that the Panel will split into smaller groups for some of the interviews (so not all Panel members will necessarily be present during each interview).

9. Do not expect academic interaction or seminar-like discussions during the interviews. The Panel has to focus on the validation of the evidence presented to them on the University's quality arrangements (judged on the basis of the HEQC's 19 Audit Criteria).

10. The Panel would like to enable all interviewees to respond to at least one question. It is important for you to focus on the question you have been asked and answer directly. Because of time constraints, it may be possible that not everyone in the group will be asked a question.

11. If you are not able to answer a specific question, refer the panel to another participant who is in a better position to answer it.

12. The Panel will strictly adhere to interview session time frames, and are likely to ask short and focused questions. Try to be succinct and clear in your

responses, while providing context and concrete examples wherever possible to support your views.

13. You may notice the members of the Panel passing notes to one another during the interview. This is so that the Panel members can co-ordinate the content and order of questions asked during the session. Although they will have prepared for the session, Panel members will still need to fine-tune their questioning in the light of the responses during the session.
14. If you are not happy about a particular interview session, you should discuss this with the staff member conducting your debriefing session. Provision has been made for follow-up interviews to be scheduled where necessary.
15. When the HEQC reports are written, the information or observations contained in them will not be ascribed to any specific individual. Information on the sources of the information or observations will remain strictly confidential.
16. You are kindly requested to participate in a short **debriefing session** directly after your interview during which a short questionnaire is also to be completed.Your anonimity is guaranteed.
17. You will be informed in advance by e-mail of the date, time and venue of your interview and more detail regarding the debriefing session after the interview.

ON-SITE EXHIBITION OF DOCUMENTS

A selection of key institutional documents will be exhibited on-site at the document room so the Panel can peruse them where necessary. The list of documents includes:

Faculty related documentation

Each faculty has examples of the following:

1. Strategic documentation, i.e. faculty plan, quality manual, marketing material.
2. Minutes of meetings: Faculty Board, Faculty Exco, and other related committees such as Teaching-Learning or Research Committees
3. Performance management: Task agreements of academic staff and job descriptions of support staff
4. Examples of Masters' dissertations and Doctoral theses and the related examiners' reports.
5. Quality management: (e.g. IPE and EPE reports)
6. Module files: selected undergraduate and postgraduate modules containing examples of study guides, examination papers, marked examination scripts, memoranda, internal and external moderators' reports and student feedback.

Self-evaluation report documentation

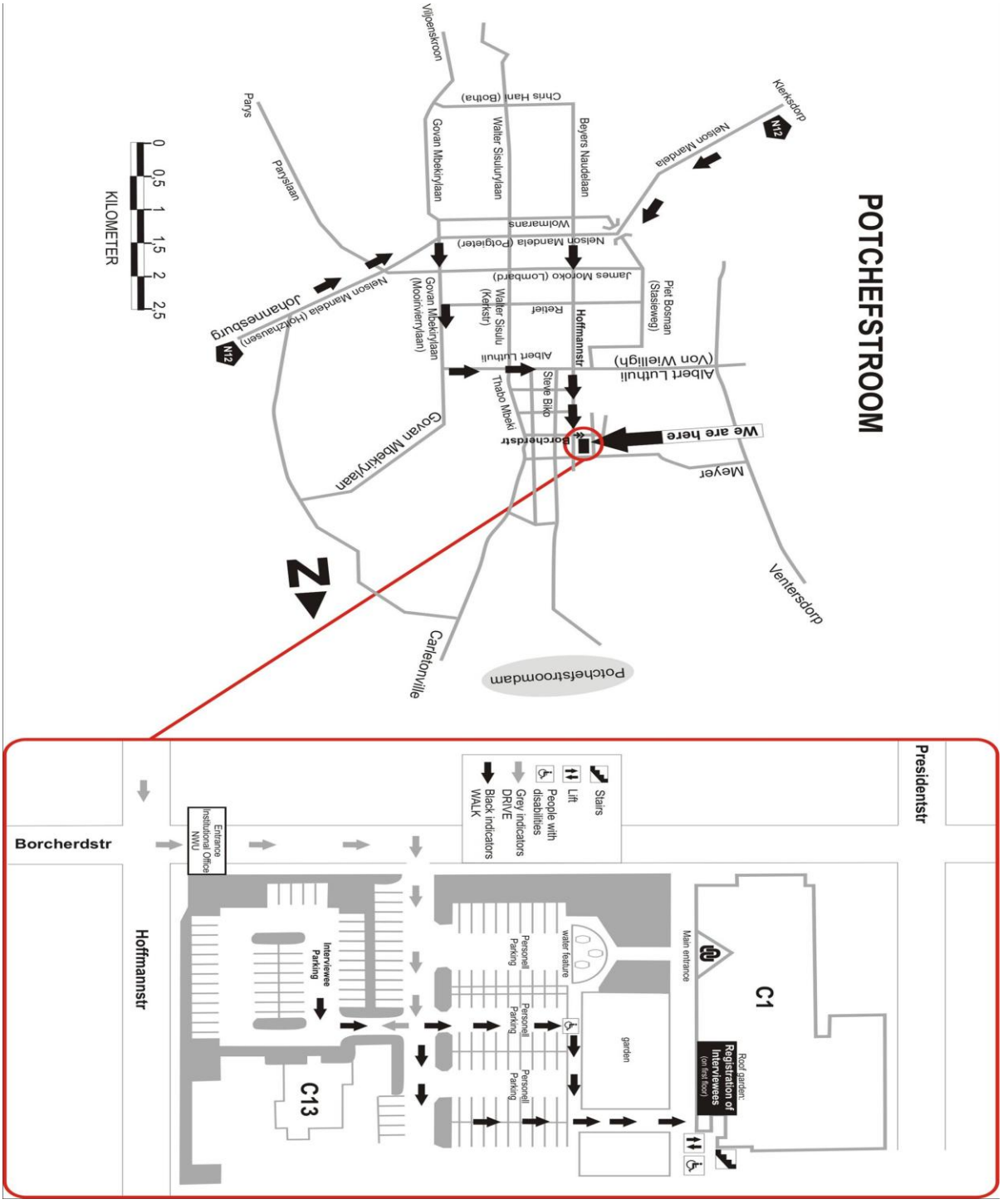
All documentation relating to the footnotes in the NWU self-evaluation report are filed according to the draft file plan for the NWU.

Documentation include amongst others:

1. Governance: awards, minutes of governance structures meetings (Council, Senate, ISRC), annual reports, legislation, governing documentation from government departments and statutory bodies.
2. Management: Minutes of management structure meetings (IM, Campus management meetings), strategic planning (Institutional Plan and campus plans), contracts, management reporting, merger documentation, language matters, oganisational structures, quality management (IPE, EPE, quality manuals, national and international reviews of programmes, institutional audit)
3. Human Resources: recruitment and selection documentation, performance management, skills development reports and fundingemployment equity, remuneration management, promotion management, employee wellness and labour relations.
4. Finance: Budgets, financial reports, bursaries and loans
5. Facilities: Building priorities, Residence management system, IT
6. Marketing and communication: Newsletters, Corporate profiles, marketing material
7. Student administration and affairs:
8. Teaching learning: Programme documents, ICAS approvals, programme alignment, short course management, student academic development, academic staff development, PQM, study guide processes, electronic learning environments.
9. Research: annual research report, evaluation of research, researcher development/training, research ethics, funding of research, equiptment management.
10. Implementation of expertise: Community engagement and related projects, commercialisation, intellectual property.

MAP TO NWU INSTITUTIONAL OFFICE (BUILDING C1)

and VENUES FOR INTERVIEWS



SUMMARY OF CRITERIA FOR THE HEQC'S AUDIT SYSTEM

AREA	SUB-AREA	CRITERION
2.1 Institutional mission; links between plan-ning, resource allocation and quality management	Fitness of purpose of institutional mission, goals and objectives in response to local, national and international context (including transformation issues)	1
	Links between planning, resource allocation and quality management	2
2.2 Teaching and learning, research and community engagement		
2.2.1 Teaching and learning		
2.2.1.1 General quality related arrangements for teaching and learning	Management of the quality of teaching and learning	3
	Academic support services	4
	Short courses, exported and partnership pro-grammes, programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses	5
	Certification	6
2.2.1.2 Quality related arrangements for programme develop-ment, management and review; and for student assessment and success		
2.2.1.2.1 Programme development, management and review	Programme management	7
	Programme design and approval	8
	Staffing	9
	Programme review	10
2.2.1.2.2 Student assess-ment and success	Management of assessment	11
	Moderation system	12
	Explicitness, fairness and consistency of assessment practices. Security of recording and documenting assessment data	13
	Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	14
2.2.2 Research		
2.2.2.1 General quality related arrangements for research (for all higher education in-stitutions)		15
2.2.2.2 Quality related arrangements for research (in depth evaluation for research-		16

intensive institutions)		
2.2.2.3 Quality related arrangements for postgraduate edu-cation		17
2.2.3 Community engagement		18
2.3 Benchmarking, user surveys and impact studies		19

ANNEXURE D

(BRIEFING ON DAY OF THE AUDIT – SESSION NOTES)

Information - Briefing Sessions.

This session takes place immediately before the interviews are conducted.

(Note: some sessions have only one interview group while others have parallel sessions)

1. **Welcome** all interviewees and **thank** them for their attendance and participation.
2. Please ask that all cell phones be switched off.
3. Any interviewee who still has outstanding issues with regard to travelling expenses, accommodation issues, etc. can go to registration (only) after the debriefing session.
4. **Consult the audit schedule** and confirm the session type and clusters (groups) of interviewees.
5. If parallel sessions are taking place, **group the different interviewees** together.
6. Ensure all interviewees and ushers are present
7. Clearly **indicate the usher to the interviewees.** (The usher(s) should be standing in front, with the correct colour flag.)
8. Confirm the session(s) **focus and session number(s)** they will be participating in. The session number is also indicated on the back of the name card.
9. Interviewees participating in the same interview group will all have the same colour sticker.
10. **Calm all interviewees** and **encourage them to be honest** in their responses.

11. **Show all interviewees how the name card they have received works**. The name should face the panel, and the card should be placed on the Perspex stand that is on the table in front of them. Ensure that the panel/auditor is able to see the interviewee name.
12. An usher is awarded to each interview session. **Indicate the colour of the flag,** and compare the colour with the small sticker that each interviewee received.
13. Interviewees should **not remove the colour sticker** until they have been debriefed.
14. During parallel sessions, **the interviewees walking the farthest will leave the council chamber together with their usher first**. Strictly adhere to the time schedule.
15. **Interviewees should strictly follow the usher** as no time can be wasted on the way to the venue. Here they can possibly wait for a minute or two.
16. Clearly indicate that interviewees should **only remove the name card after the interview** (and not the Perspex holder). The name card can be handed in at the debriefing session in Room G06.
17. Immediately **after the interview, the usher will accompany the interviewees** to the debriefing room.
18. The **debriefing will not take much time**. In addition to the short questionnaire that will be completed during the debriefing any interviewee who wants to provide additional **verbal feedback** about their experience during the interview may do so by talking to any of the vice-rectors' Quality/Planning who is available next to the debriefing room (if practically possible).
19. The data generated during the debriefings provide both the HEQC and the NWU with valuable information. This information can be used to improve processes and practices.
20. After the debriefing session, refreshments will be made available.

ANNEXURE E
HEQC INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT 2009

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
INSTITUTIONAL OFFICE

HEQC AUDIT 2009 PROJECT
EVALUATION AND CLOSURE REPORT

26 May 2009

1 Project Overview

1.1 Purpose and Scope

The Vice-Chancellor of the NWU received an invitation from the HEQC, dated 11 January 2007, for the University to participate in an institutional audit (originally scheduled for August 2008) on the basis of the HEQC's set of nineteen institutional audit criteria, supplemented by four open-ended questions. The audit would focus on the NWU's own evaluation of the quality management of its core business processes.

Prior to the formal receipt of the HEQC invitation in 2007, Institutional Management had already appointed an Audit Project Team to start with the preparations in 2006. This Team was chaired by the Executive Advisor in the Institutional Office, and included the Vice-Rectors Quality and Planning from the Mafikeng and Potchefstroom Campuses, the Vice-Rector of the Vaal Triangle as well as the Manager Projects, Director Quality and Manager Quality in the Institutional Office.

The Project Team defined the project objective as twofold:

- Advise the Institutional Management on the establishment of a continual sustainable comprehensive system for quality management of the core NWU business processes
- Oversee the preparations for the HEQC institutional audit of the NWU.

An Audit Project Plan was devised, implementation of which commenced in August 2006. The main components of the Plan were:

- Prepare the self-evaluation portfolio.
- Execute a quality and audit awareness programme.
- Execute the management of documents relevant to the Audit.
- Manage gaps and risks identified by the self-evaluation process.
- Set up and manage an information system infrastructure.
- Plan and prepare the logistics of the Audit site visit.

Senior managers such as Faculty Deans and departmental Directors were the drivers of the self-evaluation process in their respective domains of responsibility. They were also the

sources of information that constituted the building blocks of the report portfolio, and contributed to the construction of the portfolio in the role of critical readers and by managing transfer to the Project Team of information and feedback on portfolio drafts.

The quality and audit awareness programme focused on regular informative and consultative meetings on all three Campuses. Additionally, presentations were made to various groups (also by Campus Radio broadcasts), while newsletters to stakeholders (including alumni), posters, articles in student publications and newspapers, as well as on the staff intranet, were issued. A Quality Audit web page was launched on the student intranet to give students the opportunity to participate in the self-evaluation.

The comprehensive NWU process of self-evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of quality arrangements for its core business of teaching and learning, research and implementation of expertise (commercially and in respect of community engagement), went hand-in-hand with the development of the self-evaluation portfolio.

The dual purpose of the self-evaluation portfolio was:

- To form the basis of a comprehensive quality manual for strategy, management and review of the University's core business processes for teaching and learning, research and post-graduate education, and implementation of expertise (including community engagement), as well as of the primary academic support services;
- To serve as a self-evaluation report in preparation for the HEQC Institutional Audit of the University within the HEQC's Framework for Institutional Audits.

A host of critical readers from all over the University were involved in the revision process of each portfolio draft to provide for an institution-wide perspective. Three experts from other universities (two South African and one from London South Bank University) were also contracted as critical readers of the 8th draft, which was with minor changes approved by Institutional Senate.

While conducting the comprehensive University-wide self-evaluation in preparation for the audit, numerous areas in need of managerial attention were identified. In view of the Project Team's stated objective of advising Institutional Management (IM) on sustainable quality management of the NWU business processes, these gaps were incorporated in the self evaluation portfolio, while at the same time the management of a Gap Register was initiated by the Project Team.

1.2 Subprojects

The main components of the project were addressed by sub projects as listed below:

Component	Subproject
Develop a self evaluation report	Integral part of the main project activities
Create audit awareness amongst students	HEQC Student Awareness
Create general audit awareness amongst staff	HEQC Audit Awareness
Portfolio Printing and distribution	HEQC Portfolio printing distribution
Manage records and specific evidence documentation	HEQC Record management
Prepare and execute the Site visit (including information infrastructure)	HEQC Site Visit

1.3 Outcomes

The specific project outcomes are listed below;

Subproject	Specific outcomes
HEQC Quality Audit	NWU Self evaluation report and CD containing a portfolio of evidence documentation.
HEQC Student Awareness	Ten Questions were developed for the initiative "Better your Campus", on which 793 student responded on issues pertaining quality of student life on all the campuses.
HEQC Audit Awareness	Two Quality Newsletters, translated into Afrikaans, English, Tswana, and Sesotho. 34'000 newsletters were distributed.
HEQC Portfolio printing distribution	230 Colour SE Reports printed and distributed to the following entities, HEQC, Institutional Management, Institutional Senate, Campus Management, Deans and School Directors. The Self evaluation report was translated into Afrikaans, and both were made available on the Intranet and on CD.
HEQC Record management pilot	Evidence documentation was prepared, filed and made available in the Document Room. Evidence documentation was used as pilot to

	compile a draft file plan for the NWU.
HEQC Site Visit	Campus visits took place on respectively the 17, 19, and 20th February 2009. The HEQC Audit Site Visit took place from 15th until the 20th of March 2009. Integrated database for Interviewee management.

2 Project Management processes

Considering the diverse nature of the project several management assignments were considered, *inter alia* the following,

2.1 Project Sponsorship

The Vice-Chancellor took ownership of the project and active involvement was sponsored from his office by the Executive Advisor, Dr Maarten Venter.

2.2 Project Communication Mechanisms

Project team meetings were the main decision making authority. Other mechanisms, e.g., e-mail correspondence, informal lobbying, one to one discussion, general project office meetings were also conducted to ensure timeous delivery Separate information sessions were done to highlight specific issues pertaining either individuals or groups.

2.3 Project Planning

Thorough project planning was conducted prior to the initiation of the project. Project plans were updated and reworked to consider operational needs and changes within the project.

During the planning process various sub-projects were identified and managed as such. Project owners were identified and for all sub-project a project manager appointed.

2.4 Record keeping and updating

Due to the size and scope of the project, project documentation was maintained meticulously in the project physical and electronic filing system. The project documentation includes project plans, budgets, minutes and agendas of meetings, document deliverables, as well as any supporting documentation. All documentation will be archived.

2.5 Risk Management

The main project risks were:

Difficulty in obtaining institution-wide involvement in the self-evaluation process.

NWU staff not taking the self-evaluation process seriously.

Site visit logistics in view of NWU campus distances.

Management of timelines due to dynamic nature of project and continuous review of goal dates.

2.6 Budget management

The total budget spending for the project period (2006-2009) was **R 1,103,279.** For more detail refer to Addendum 1 to this report.

A summary of expenditure is provided in table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of HEQC Audit Project expenditure per sub-project

Project	Cost
HEQC Quality Audit – SE portfolio (includes printing & distribution)	**R 448,277**
HEQC Student Awareness	**R 21,266**
HEQC Audit Awareness	**R 64,893**
HEQC Record management pilot	**R 34,908**
HEQC Site Visit	**R 533,935**
TOTAL	**R 1,103,279**

2.7 Quality Assurance

With the project plan as driver, regular project review sessions were held with the project team to review progress and reschedule where necessary.

3 Lessons Learned

3.1 Things that worked well

3.1.1 The process approach followed in the management of the project created synergies between the IO and the three campuses.

3.1.2 The faculty quality coordinator-structure as communication channel to academia and delivery mechanism on various audit and quality related matters worked effectively.

3.1.3 Involvement of senior campus management staff such as Vice Rectors Quality and Planning ensured participation from all campuses.

3.1.4 Configuration management on documentation is very important.

3.1.5 Utilisation of technology in a project of this scope and complexity is essential.

3.2 Aspects needing attention

3.2.1 Identification of skills necessary to utilise technology earlier in the process would have relieved pressure on project team members.

4 Recommendations

4.1 That the self evaluation report be used as the basis for institutionalizing a culture on continuous quality improvement.

4.2 That the draft file plan be developed into a suitable file plan for the NWU.

4.3 That the feedback obtained from students, during the student awareness project, be analysed and utilized by the relevant Campus Management structures.

4.4 That the gaps that were identified during the self evaluation process, and consolidated into a Gaps Register, be addressed.

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HEQC Audit Project Closure Report.docx

Addendum 1

HEQC Quality Audit: Budget Expenditure

	Salary	Profess. Fees	Stationary	Printing	Travel	Carom.	Catering	Capital	Office Administration	Total
HEQC Quality Audit -SE Portfolio		R 48,441.00	R 21,828.32	R 329,534.41	R 16,410.48	R 4,986.05	R 14,658.92	R 9,644.40	R 2,773.12	**R 448,276.70**
HEQC Student awareness	R 5,750.00			R 15,015.00	R 501.37					**R 21,266.37**
HEQC Audit awareness		R 9,746.40	R 43.40	R 55,103.11						**R 64,892.91**
HEQC Record management	R 4,100.00		R 17,024.31	R 2,534.00			R 240.00	R 11,009.85		**R 34,908.16**
HEQC Site Visit	R 85,680.00	R 20,353.63	R 13,766.99	R 39,317.18	R 146,953.21	R 23,687.95	R 176,306.94	R 20,340.42	R 7,528.63	**R 533,934.95**
Total	**R 95,530.00**	**R 78,541.03**	**R 52,663.02**	**R 441,503.70**	**R 163,865.06**	**R 28,674.00**	**R 191,205.86**	**R 40,994.67**	**R 10,301.75**	**R 1,103,279.09**

Notes

Salary exclude permanent employees

Printing include photocopies

Catering include entertainment and refreshments
Office Administration includes disk space, Internet, office consumables, telephones