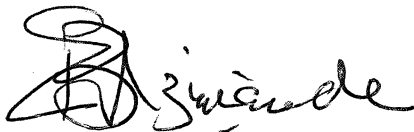


**DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
DEPARTEMENT VAN HOËR ONDERWYS EN OPLEIDING****No. 832****1 November 2013****DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING****THE HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING INFORMATION POLICY**

I, Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande, MP, Minister of Higher Education and Training, in terms of section 41B(1) and (4) of the Further Education and Training Colleges Act, 2006 (Act No. 16 of 2006) and section 25B of the Adult Education and Training Act, 2000 (Act No. 52 of 2000); read with section 3 of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997); section 8(2)(b) of the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No. 67 of 2008); and section 5(1)(a)(i) of the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act No. 97 of 1998), hereby publish the Higher Education and Training Information Policy as set out in the Schedule. I hereby repeal the National Education Information Policy, published in Notice No. 994, Government Gazette No. 26710 of 27 August 2004, as amended by Notice No. 677 published in Government Gazette No. 33426 of 6 August 2010, in so far as it relates to the legislation assigned to the Minister of Higher Education and Training, in particular to the Further Education and Training Colleges Act and the Adult Education and Training Act.



Dr BE Nzimande, MP
Minister of Higher Education and Training

Date: 15/10/13

HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING INFORMATION POLICY



Department of Higher Education and Training

October 2013

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ACRONYMS

AET	Adult Education and Training
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FETCA	Further Education and Training Colleges Act
FET	Further Education and Training
HEA	Higher Education Act
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
HETIS	Higher Education and Training Information System
IT	Information Technology
NASAA	National Archives of South Africa Act
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
PAIA	Promotion of Access to Information Act
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PSETI	Post-school Education and Training Institution
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SASQAF	South African Statistical Quality Assessment Framework
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SDA	Skills Development Act

PART I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

DEFINITIONS

“Adult education and training centre” means a centre, either public or private, providing adult education and training as contemplated in the Adult Education and Training Act, 2000 (Act 52 of 2000).

“DHET entities” refers to those public entities listed in Part A (National Public Entities) of Schedule 3 for the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) that report to the Minister of Higher Education and Training. These are the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), the Council on Higher Education, the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations and also uMalusi that is deemed to be a DHET entity in regard to the functions in terms of the Further Education and Training College Act, 2006 and Adult Education and Training Act, 2000.

“e-Government” is defined as the continuous optimisation of government service delivery, constituency participation, and governance by transforming internal and external relationships through technology, the internet and new media.

“Further education and training” means all learning and training programmes leading to qualifications above the general education but below higher education level as contemplated by the Further Education and Training College Act, 2006.

“HETIS” is the higher education and training information system including all processes, rules, standards, and responsibilities for information collection and management in the post-school sector;

“HETIS officer” means an official charged with certain responsibilities regarding post-school education and training information in terms of this policy.

“Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee” means the committee established in terms of this policy that advises the Director-General with regard to higher education and training information standards.

“Institution Management Information System” means an information system used by an institution to handle administrative, management and planning functions.

“National data and statistics” means data and statistics used in the public domain that are sustainable but have not been designated as official by the Statistician-General as contemplated by the Statistics Act, 1999 (Act No. 6 of 1999);

“PFMA” means the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act No.1 of 1999)'

“Post-school education and training institutions” means the institutions that provide education and training, which include public universities, national institutes of higher education and private higher education institutions, public and private Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, public and private adult education centres and skills providers. These are established, declared or registered by any law assigned to the Minister of Higher Education and Training.

“Statistics” means aggregated numerical information relating to demographic, economic, financial, environmental, social or similar matters, at national, provincial or local level, which is compiled and analysed according to relevant scientific and statistical methodology (Statistics Act, No 6 of 1999).

“Students” means students and learners.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of education and training information

1. The effective gathering, dissemination and analysis of information in the post-school education and training system of any country are vital for sound education and training planning, monitoring and management. In the case of South Africa, effective use of information can greatly advance meaningful democracy, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in the post-school education and training system. The constitutional duty of the state to provide a post-school education and training system that develops individual citizens and the nation as a whole is thus of great consequence.

The overall goal and scope of the policy

2(i) This policy creates a framework that allows for the co-ordinated and sustainable development of post-school education and training information systems. The goal is post-school education and training information systems that would yield valuable data and statistics needed for planning, monitoring and management purposes at all levels, from individual post-school education and training institutions and entities to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

2 (ii) This policy is applicable to all post-school education and training institutions (PSETIs) and DHET entities.

The parts of this policy framework

3. The main components of the framework laid down by this policy are the following:

- i. A vision for South African post-school education and training information systems;
- ii. A framework for establishing and maintaining effective and sustainable standards governing post-school education and training statistics, data and information systems;
- iii. A framework for streamlining the provision of post-school education and training information by the DHET, PSETIs and DHET entities to the public and all role players; and
- iv. A framework for improving the flow of data and statistics between the DHET, the PSETIs and the DHET entities.

Fragmentation in South African post-school education and training information systems

4. The South African post-school education and training system is characterised by a multitude of information systems, computerised and paper-based or manual, which provide the basis for the many business procedures in which the post-school education and training system must engage. This requires, among others, the development of and adherence to effective and adequate information standards governing post-school education and training management information systems.

Problems related to the survey approach

5. In previous years, it was practice for the erstwhile Department of Education to depend heavily on annual national censuses, also called 'surveys', in gathering information from institutions. While this approach fulfils an important need, it is recognised that it is outdated. The approach of the DHET is to promote integrated electronic information systems through the establishment of common information standards that are shared, in order to generate data

that is comparable and of an acceptable quality, and therefore sufficiently reliable to add maximum value to post-school education and training planning, monitoring and management.

The post-school education and training information policy gap

6. Attempts to generate information systems standards at the DHET have been hampered by the absence of a policy framework that would lay down the structures and procedures to be followed in the generation of such standards. Lack of properly mandated standards has prevented the development of systems, and where systems were developed in the absence of standards, the result was systems that could not be integrated and/or interfaced with related systems and systems that were not thoroughly informed by the education and training context.

A VISION FOR INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN POST- SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Principles guiding the Department's vision

7. The principles governing the vision for the South African post-school education and training system are the following:

- i. The aims, principles and operations of this policy may not infringe the ownership rights of the information shared, nor should it unreasonably frustrate the effective planning, monitoring and management of an institution.
- ii. The HETIS must be a well co-ordinated system of education management information sub-systems, such as the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), which facilitate planning, monitoring and management at departmental, institutional and entity levels.
- iii. The ultimate aim of an information system is to improve efficiency in the broader planning, monitoring and management of the higher education and training system, to introduce more transparency in the activities of the DHET and to ensure greater accountability for the use of scarce public resources.
- iv. The HETIS must facilitate public access to accurate, timely and relevant information within the legal framework to all role players. Information on education and training inputs, processes and outcomes at all levels of the system should be accessible to the public, with the exception of personal information, where confidentiality should be ensured.
- v. The existing sub-systems will continue reporting in terms of relevant legislation, procedures and guidelines applicable to the institution.
- vi. The HETIS must be flexible to accommodate the changes taking place within the post-school education and training system and the new priorities at all levels of the system.
- vii. Data flow must be bi-directional, both vertically and horizontally.
- viii. The system must be simple, accessible, efficient and standardised.
- ix. There must be mechanisms for facilitation, support and training on collection, processing, analysis, dissemination and use of information at all levels of the post-school education and training system.
- x. There must be mechanisms for co-ordination between the DHET, PSETIs and the DHET entities to accommodate diverse needs in establishing a core dataset and the use of appropriate and compatible technology.
- xi. The HETIS may, subject to agreement between parties, exchange data with other DHET entities and other government departments such as the Department of

Labour, the Department of Basic Education and others, taking into account the issue of confidentiality and the purpose of data exchange.

Benefits for post-school stakeholders and participants

8. Students will have access to reliable information relating to the skills development opportunities and post-school education and training institutions in the post-school system. HETIS will provide students with information on the educational and skills development choices available. Essential information on post-school education and training as a whole will be available in the DHET and in PSETIs. Essential information on skills development and skills shortages will be available from the Sector Education and Training Authorities.

Information systems in the DHET, PSETIs and DHET entities

9. It is also recognised that with better information systems in place, education and training planners at all levels would have access to greater volumes of reliable data for planning and other purposes, on condition that these information systems adhere to national standards that ensure compatibility at all levels. The PSETIs will benefit from the use of information systems that will facilitate planning, monitoring and management. The systems of the DHET will receive data from systems at institutions and entities in a standardised format, which will allow for more effective planning and administration in the DHET.

The need for inclusiveness

10. Transformation in terms of post-school education and training information systems should be inclusive. Parallel to the development of improved computerised systems and the diffusion of e-Government, should be the ongoing improvement of manual systems in line with the design of computerised systems, so that elements of education systems are not excluded and the transition from manual to computerised systems can be streamlined.

Improved education management

11. Planning, monitoring and management, at all levels from organisational and institutional level to departmental level, will be improved through the greater availability of accurate and relevant information on the education and training system. This will result in better-informed implementation and resource allocation strategies, which will improve the overall performance of the education and training system. Through access to this information, legislators and other publicly elected officials will be in a better position to serve their constituencies in education and training related matters.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK THAT INFORMS THE POLICY

Related Legislative Mandate

12. This policy is closely linked to other legislation and government initiatives, and is governed by the following legislation:

HEA	: Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No.101 of 1997);
FETCA	: Further Education and Training Colleges Act, 2006 (Act No.16 of 2006);
AET	: Adult Education and Training Act, 2000 (Act No.52 of 2000);
NQF	: National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No. 67 of 2008);
NSFAS	: National Student Financial Aid Scheme, 1999 (Act No. 56 of 1999);
SDA	: Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act No.97 of 1998);
PAIA	: Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000);
NASAA	: National Archives of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act No. 43 of 1996); and
Statistics Act	: Statistics Act, 1999 (Act No.6 of 1999).

13. This policy creates a framework that improves the processes by which post-school education and training institutions and the DHET entities provide information. The Minister of Higher Education and Training must monitor and evaluate the standards of education and training provision, delivery and performance, to a large extent through the use of the DHET statistics. This policy promotes the processes required to ensure that reliable education and training statistics are available.

The Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000

14. This policy will abide by the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000). While the Promotion of Access to Information Act deals mainly with access to individual records, this policy deals mainly with access to data and statistics as a whole. Moreover, where the Act focuses mainly on action to be taken by the state in response to requests for information, this policy focuses to a large degree on the pro-active steps that the department, the post-school education and training institutions and the DHET entities must take in order to ensure wide access to information, which will reduce the need for individual requests. This policy directly complements the Promotion of Access to Information Act, by specifying the level of the education system at which specific information is made available in the first instance.

The Statistics Act, 1999

15. This policy complements the Statistics Act, 1999 (Act No. 6 of 1999). Section 14 of the Statistics Act deals with the obligation of government departments to work closely with the Statistician-General, for example in maintaining standards of statistical reporting and co-ordinating the statistical collections of the country. This policy creates a framework for the DHET to comply with this obligation in a more organised and effective manner through improved procedures for ensuring the accuracy and proper presentation of education and training statistics.

Batho Pele public service delivery

16. This policy complements the Batho Pele strategy of Government to improve service delivery to the public, by creating a framework for systems development. This policy will facilitate the improvement of the post-school education and training information systems which will, in turn, improve the lives of those who participate in the post-school education and training sector.

South African Qualifications Authority

17. This policy complements the initiatives of the SAQA to create, manage and further develop the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD); by specifying that the development of student records should be in line with the NLRD initiative, optimum use should be made of resources in Government and unified datasets should be enhanced.

Focus on education and training specific information

18. This policy complements state regulations and standards governing financial and personnel systems used in all sectors of Government.

PART II**DUTIES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING*****DUTIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING******Need to respond pro-actively to the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000***

19. In terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000), the DHET has an obligation to provide information to a variety of interested parties. To comply effectively with this obligation, the DHET must ensure that the most appropriate points of access for particular types of information are made clear to the public. Moreover, the DHET must be pro-active in satisfying the information needs of the public by distributing commonly requested information to potential requesters. Such a pro-active approach can reduce the need to respond to individual requests, and can ensure that more disadvantaged communities, which may normally not make formal information requests in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, are empowered with the information they need.

Minimum information to the public

20. The DHET must make at least the following publicly available: (i) list of basic information on PSETIs, (ii) information data on state-funded programmes and learning opportunities, and (iii) annual statistics reports. In terms of section 20 of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000), the DHET HETIS officer must transfer information requests to other information officers more suited to responding to the request. The DHET may not make facsimile or electronic mail addresses of PSETIs and DHET entities available for the purpose of marketing. Additional information can be made available according to publication and/or data dissemination standards.

Information to the public for research purposes

21. The DHET must anticipate the needs of researchers to analyse data on the post-school education and training sector and must be pro-active in preparing standards and typical data files. Such files must adhere to the standards, established in terms of this policy, with regard to definitions and formats. In the case of a researcher requiring data not included in the standard and typical data files, and where the research is not officially mandated within the post-school education system, the DHET must assess the possible value of the research against the departmental resources required to prepare the data, and should respond to the request accordingly. The DHET must ensure that the dissemination of the data does not breach the appropriate rules on confidentiality as stipulated in section 17 of the Statistics Act (No. 6 of 1999).

Feedback on analysed information to respondents

22. The DHET must take active steps to supply the PSETIs and the DHET entities with relevant statistical and analytical results of data collection surveys in which they participated. This will make participation in education censuses more meaningful to institutions and entities and will encourage future participation.

Information in DHET Statistics Report

23. The DHET must include statistics tables that contribute to its accountability to the legislature and the public in general in its statistics reports. The standards governing these statistics that were agreed upon must be adhered to. The DHET must publish and disseminate only aggregated data.

Protection of private information

24. In providing information to the public, the DHET must ensure that procedures exist that prevent the release of information considered private or protected in terms of Chapter 4 of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000).

Warehousing of post-school education and training data

25. The DHET must safely and accessibly store data reflecting the current post-school education and training system, and historical profiles of the post-school education and training system from the past, in accordance with the DHET archiving standard.

DUTIES OF PSETIs AND DHET ENTITIES*PSETIs and the DHET entities provide information to the DHET*

26. According to the applicable legislation, referred to in paragraph 12 of this policy, it is the duty of PSETIs and DHET entities to provide information to the DHET.

Adequate definitions of terms and classifications of data collection tools and systems

27. In order to facilitate the collection of accurate and comparable information from PSETIs, the DHET must ensure that all data collection systems and tools include clear and precise definitions of terms used and classification of data to prevent ambiguities and misinterpretations. These definitions and classifications must conform to existing and new approved standards in this regard.

Completion of education census forms

28. The DHET administers a number of regular data collections. It is the duty of all heads of PSETIs and chief executive officers (CEOs) of DHET entities to ensure that education data requirements is completed to the best of their ability, in the knowledge that the deliberate distortion of information constitutes fraud. For planning, monitoring and management purposes, it is necessary for data and statistics to be provided on a regular and cyclical basis by the PSETIs and the DHET entities to the DHET. The data and statistics must be reliable and in accordance with the DHET standards.

Special requests for statistics

29. The DHET may make special requests for additional data and statistics, where these are not covered in the regular cycles of submissions of data and statistics from PSETIs and DHET entities. In making special requests, the DHET HETIS officer must supply clear specifications for the request, and timeframes that are reasonable relative to the nature of the request. The DHET HETIS officer will specify the reason for the special request. It is the duty of the PSETIs and the DHET entities to adhere to the request and provide the DHET with the additional data.

PART III**ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF HETIS OFFICERS*****THE DHET HETIS OFFICER******HETIS officer***

30. The Director-General of the DHET must designate a DHET HETIS officer, whose basic functions will be to:

- i. act as the only departmental official, apart from the Director-General of the DHET, with the authority to approve a data collection system;
- ii. analyse, report on and make continual recommendations for improvements to the electronic and non-electronic PSETI information systems, so that the system can contribute to the vision of education information systems explained in this policy;
- iii. ensure that statistics and data released according to paragraph 30 (v) of this policy comply with standards for accuracy and presentation;
- iv. act as the only departmental official, apart from the Director-General of the DHET, also known as the information officer in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000, with the authority to classify statistics and data of the DHET as national and as a true record of higher education statistics, in accordance with section 14 of the Statistics Act, 1999 (Act No. 6 of 1999);
- v. co-ordinate and control the release of DHET statistics and data to other government departments, statutory bodies such as Statistics South Africa and international organisations;
- vi. monitor compliance with information systems standards where education information systems are being developed at the national level;
- vii. promote the adequate standardisation of information provided by institutions and entities to the DHET;
- viii. organise meetings with all information officers of the PSETIs and DHET entities and with relevant stakeholder information forums in the furtherance of the education information systems vision at the national level;
- ix. organise meetings with all internal data managers of the DHET to promote awareness of the DHET data available from each DHET branch and to cooperate and work together to contribute to post-school education and training statistics reporting;
- x. ensure that there is adequate communication between information officers of the PSETIs, DHET entities and the Education Information Standards Committee of the DHET to ensure delivery; and
- xi. liaise with the Statistician-General and Statistics South Africa to promote the aims of the Statistics Act, 1999 and to ensure that section 14 of the Statistics Act, 1999, requiring the relevant Minister to approve the undertaking of a new statistical collection, or the substantial changing or discontinuation of a statistical collection, is adhered to.

Efficient utilisation of state resources

31. In recognition of the fact that information systems are costly to develop, and the fact that needs across sectors, entities and institutions are often similar, the HETIS officer in the *DHET* must encourage national systems development projects, to avoid duplication and the inefficient use of state resources. The *DHET* HETIS officer thus has to undertake cost-benefit analyses, which will inform the development of systems.

The DHET HETIS officer and the Statistician-General

32. Section 14 of the Statistics Act No. 6 of 1999 requires the Statistician-General to ensure the maintenance of national standards in official statistical collections, and to co-ordinate statistical collections. The South African Statistical Quality Assessment Framework (SASQAF) (2008) indicated that all standards and policies must be in place to promote consistency of statistics collections and results. The HETIS officer in the *DHET* must actively support the Statistician-General in this obligation.

The DHET HETIS officer as designator of national statistics

33. Only data and statistics formally certified as a true record by the Director-General of the *DHET* or the *DHET* HETIS officer may be regarded as valid. In determining whether data or statistics can be certified as a true record, the *DHET* HETIS officer must ensure that a reasonable level of analysis and verification has occurred. The *DHET* HETIS officer must be informed of the purpose for which the data or statistics will be used when determining whether the data or statistics can be regarded as a true record. The *DHET* HETIS officer must be guided by generally accepted practice, and general government standards, in particular those issued by the Statistician-General in terms of the Statistics Act 1999. Where problems or possible problems exist in national data or statistics, the *DHET* HETIS officer must make this clearly known through adequate explanatory notes. Moreover, the *DHET* HETIS officer must clearly state the source of any data or statistics that have been disseminated by the *DHET*. Reasonable consistency between different releases of national data and statistics must be maintained.

The DHET HETIS officer may disseminate preliminary/provisional data

34. Notwithstanding paragraph 33, the *DHET* officials should not be precluded from exchanging data and statistics informally where there is no need for the data or statistics to be declared as a true record. This provisional data has to be referred to as estimates. However, only data and statistics that have been certified a true record may be used in final statistics reports and in final decisions.

HETIS OFFICERS OF THE PSETIs AND DHET ENTITIES*Institution and entity HETIS officers in the post-school sector*

35. Head of institutions and CEOs of entities must designate a HETIS officer or any appropriate official to liaise with the *DHET* on any matter regarding data and information. Those HETIS officers must collaborate with each other and the *DHET* HETIS officer in the furtherance of the HETIS.

Relationship between HETIS officers and the information officer as designated by the Promotion of Access to Information Act

36. Institutions must clearly define and distinguish the functions of the HETIS officers from the roles of the information officers as determined by the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000).

Guidelines for supporting HETIS officers

37. HETIS officers should be supported with adequate finances, human and physical resources in order to perform their contracted activities, which may include, but are not limited to the following:

- i. Design and plan education and training data collection systems in accordance with prescribed standards.
- ii. Manage data capturing processes, both manual and automated.
- iii. Maintain data accuracy and quality.
- iv. Submit data to the DHET HETIS officer in accordance with the required standard;
- v. Archive key historical data in accordance with information standards.
- vi. Analyse systems, including the effectiveness and compliance of management systems and standards.
- vii. Deal with the informal exchange of data and statistics.

The process of providing data and statistics

38. The HETIS officer in the DHET must clearly specify what data and statistics are required from PSETIs and from the DHET entities on a regular basis as indicated in the relevant standard. Specifications must be sufficiently detailed to minimise ambiguities and misunderstandings and must be stated in terms of standards governing definitions and formats. Dates of submission, determined after consultation, must also be specified. The designated HETIS officers or appropriate designated officials or the heads of PSETIs and CEOs of the DHET entities must officially hand over the requested data or statistics to the DHET HETIS officer. The HETIS officers of PSETIs and DHET entities must state formally any conditions regarding the information. Informal exchanges of data and statistics between the PSETIs and the DHET entities may occur, but for preliminary analysis and reporting only, as prescribed in this policy.

Collaboration between HETIS officers for development purposes

39. The HETIS officers or appropriate designated officials of the DHET, the PSETIs and the DHET entities must work together to improve the efficiency and value of statistical collections.

PART IV

HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING INFORMATION STANDARDS

POWER TO SET STANDARDS*Power to set standards*

40. The Minister of Higher Education and Training has the power to determine the standards referred to in paragraph 42 below insofar as they affect the PSETIs and the DHET entities referred to in legislation contemplated in item 1.7 of the Schedule of the Presidential Proclamation No. 44, published in Government Gazette No. 32367 of 1 July 2009.

Consideration of the broader information systems environment

41. Processes used to arrive at information standards must reflect the complexity of the information systems environment itself, and of a system of PSETIs and DHET entities with varying degrees of autonomy. Processes should strike a balance between the urgent need for standards to be generated, the constitutional rights of the PSETIs and DHET entities and the need for consultation. Moreover, processes should be sensitive to the reality that some PSETIs and DHET entities have, for historical reasons, not been in a position to invest as much in information systems as others. In this regard, it must be ensured that processes empower the historically disadvantaged, by ensuring that building capacity accompanies system development, while at the same time valuable lessons gained from systems where considerable investment has taken place, are made to benefit the country as a whole.

TYPES OF STANDARDS

42. For the purposes of this policy, different types of information standards will be identified and developed concerning the statistical value chain, including operational standards in accordance with the SASQAF 2008. The following are some of the information standards required, but do not constitute an exhaustive list:

- i. **Descriptors and definitions of education and training terms.** Terminology and classifications used in the administration and planning of the education and training sector need to be uniform across the country. This terminology should be captured in the higher education and training sector data dictionaries, which should also be a point of departure for specifying the inter-relationships between terms that systems designers require and the data field names that would correspond to particular terms. The existing standards should be integrated.
- ii. **Statistical tables.** Key statistical tables produced, for instance in annual statistical reports, must be standardised for higher education and training sector planning to be possible. Standards in this regard should consider and incorporate official and emerging higher education and training indicators for South Africa and international organisations.
- iii. **Information publications.** In the interest of user-friendliness and comprehensiveness, it is important for certain information publications to be standardised across the DHET, PSETIs, DHET entities and SETAs, for instance lists of institutions made available to the public.
- iv. **Unique identifiers.** Identifiers that are unique at the higher education and training sector are required for a range of people and items, for example learners/students, educators/lecturers, skills, occupations, curriculum offerings and institutions. Standards governing the generation of such unique identifiers are required.

- v. **Data file layout.** Where different datasets exist that must be integrated, the standardisation of data files is essential.
- vi. **Data coding.** Codes used to refer to attributes must be standardised for data integration to be possible.
- vii. **Data quality.** The processes of data capturing and cleaning by the DHET, PSETIs and DHET entities must be governed by minimum quality standards in order to ensure that data accuracy is of an acceptable level.
- viii. **Platforms of systems.** Minimum standards must be set for hardware and software in so far as this is required for integration of systems and transfer of data.
- ix. **Performance of systems.** Certain aspects of the performance of systems should be standardised, in particular aspects relating to efficiency, timeliness, quality of data, the protection of privacy and the backing up of data.
- x. **Communication between systems.** Network protocols must be standardised for the secure and effective transfer of data between systems.
- xi. **Data archiving.** Minimum standards for the archiving of historical data are required to ensure that individual histories, as well as the history of the system as a whole, are available for future use.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING INFORMATION STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Functions of the committee

43. The Director-General of the *DHET* will establish and appoint members to the Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee to advise him or her on the information standards generation process. The functions of this committee will be to:

- i. conduct research into the area of education information standards;
- ii. co-ordinate consultation on standards between key role players;
- iii. receive and evaluate written inputs from role players, including members of the public and information technology (IT) firms;
- iv. advise the Director-General on standards to be made official policy after careful consideration of the options;
- v. be the custodians of the definitive and most recent set of approved information standards for the education system; and
- vi. make standards widely known and available.

Composition of the committee

44. The Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee will consist of between 15 and 20 permanent members and will include representation from:

- i. the DHET;

- ii. the DHET entities;
- iii. the Department of Basic Education;
- iv. the Department of Science and Technology;
- v. the Department of Public Service and Administration;
- vi. the Provincial Departments of Education;
- vii. Statistics South Africa;
- viii. the State Information Technology Agency;
- ix. Higher Education of South Africa;
- x. the HEMIS Institute; and
- xi. any other relevant stakeholder.

The Director-General of the DHET may appoint DHET officials to represent the DHET in the Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee. Representation from the PSETs and DHET entities will be collective in nature, and individual members will represent interests as a whole and not the interests of their respective entities or institutions. Representation from the IT industry shall not represent the interests of any particular firm, but the industry as a whole. The Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee is not intended to be a fully representative body with decision-making powers. It is instead a specialist advisory body that makes recommendations to the Director-General of the DHET. Appointment to the Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee should be considered in this context.

Technical working group

45. In order to ensure that the necessary technical work is undertaken to prepare standards, the Education Information Standards Committee will designate a technical working group as a sub-committee of the Education Information Standards Committee. The technical working group will receive requests and proposals for standards, prepare the technical standards and present standards to the Education Information Standards Committee for inputs and recommendation to the Director-General. The technical working group will report directly to the Education Information Standards Committee.

Procedures for the committee

46. The Director-General of the DHET must request nominations from the organisations listed in paragraph 45 of this policy in deciding the appointments to be made to the Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee. The Director-General of the DHET must appoint a chairperson of the Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee. The chairperson shall determine the frequency of meetings and meeting protocols in consultation with the DHET. Only the Director-General of the DHET may terminate membership of the Education Information Standards Committee.

Co-option of members to the committee

47. The Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee may co-opt members for limited periods in order to obtain certain expertise, for instance expertise specific to a particular education sector, such as Adult Education and Training.

Process for generating information standards

48. The research conducted or commissioned by the Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee must apply international best practice, local education priorities and trends in the information technology industry to influence the standards-

generating process. Thorough and ongoing analysis of systems and censuses not directly controlled by the education department, but that may influence the development of post-school education information systems, must take place.

Consultation and dissemination of information by the committee

49. Regular and adequate consultation must occur between members of the Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee, but also between the Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee and other role players. Regular updates of current work must be submitted to the Director-General of the DHET.

The committee and role players in general

50. The Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee must attempt to make its work known to all potential role players, and must ensure that it is easy for role players to submit recommendations regarding information standards. The Committee must respond to every submission received within two months of submission.

Use of industry conventions

51. The standards generated by the Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee must be understandable, yet should adhere to conventions that are familiar to participants in the education and training related systems development industry, considering that these participants will constitute important beneficiaries of the standards documentation.

Format of the standards documentation

52. The standards generated must be documented in a format that makes the process of periodical revisions clear and manageable. The format must, for example, make it clear when previously existing standards have been withdrawn or modified.

Final approval

53. When new standards have been generated that serve the interests of the higher education and training sector, the Minister must officially approve the standards concerned and publish such standards by way of a notice referring to the latest amended collection of all standards generated in terms of this policy, in a Government Gazette.

Dissemination of approved information standards

54. The Higher Education and Training Information Standards Committee must ensure that the standards documentation becomes as widely accessible as necessary. Copies of the documentation should be available on a website.

<i>Stakeholder information forums</i>

55. In order to enable the participation of all stakeholders of the post-school education and training sector in the process of generating standards, stakeholder information forums may be set up. In the case where stakeholder forums exist, the DHET will cooperate with them. Each forum will serve a particular related set of institutions or entities such as SETAs, public universities, FET colleges, quality councils or similar bodies. The role of a stakeholder information forum is to request or suggest information standards to the technical working group of the DHET. Stakeholder information forums must be approved by the standards committee and will report to the standards committee via the technical working group.

ADDENDUM

Some of the functions of Further Education and Training colleges and Adult Education and Training centres are the responsibilities of the Provincial Education Departments, hence all the Provincial Education Departments should continue working closely with the <i>DHET</i> .

APPENDIX 1: STANDARDS-GENERATING PROCESS

