

Edexcel offers new international benchmark quality assurance service to SA institutions

By [Jonathan McGill](#)

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According to the World Economic Forum's (WEF) world competitiveness report published in August this year, South Africa was ranked 140th - that's fourth from the bottom - in education.

In a more recent report published by the WEF in November, South Africa placed last out of 62 countries for the quality of education in the subjects of maths and science - subjects that are critical to the development of our country. With government spending on education currently sitting at 20% of GDP, one of the highest around the world, it stands to reason that government funding is not the issue here. And, with the standard of the Matric pass benchmark yet again under scrutiny, surely then these reports indicate a dire need for more stringent quality control measures in our education system.

It seems obvious that in order to raise the standard of education in South Africa with an aim to climb the rankings of the World Economic Forum's next world competitiveness report, South Africa as a nation - businesses, government and educational institutions - need to look for solutions that can be put into effect immediately.

Edexcel Assured Service launched

Edexcel, a Pearson company, answers directly to this need having launched its Edexcel Assured Service this past August. Edexcel Assured is an independent benchmark for organisations that have training or learning programmes that they deliver and assess in-house. Organisations that acquire this service will obtain Edexcel Assured status, thus ensuring that the organisation's quality processes have achieved the Edexcel standard - an independent international quality benchmark.

Operating across nearly 100 countries; Edexcel's expertise in benchmarking and international quality assurance procedures have been developed over many years and are in line with stringent international regulatory requirements. Furthermore, it is routinely applied to our own programmes forming a large part of our day-to-day business operations.

This, coupled with the company's strong track record of developing qualifications, is what makes it an authority in the field of quality assurance. Edexcel is ideally placed to ensure that an organisation's systems and processes are thoroughly developed and properly executed.

The Edexcel Assured Service is a framework that is made up of five quality indicators with clearly defined associated measures. Applicants need to supply a bank of evidence to verify that all measures against which they are being evaluated have been sufficiently met. The five quality indicators are:

1. Learner support: Organisations offer fair access to learning and assessment opportunities and are responsive to the needs of their learners.
2. Resources and environment: Organisations ensure that all programmes are delivered in a safe and healthy environment and that physical and staff resources are matched to the needs of all programmes.
3. Quality management system: Organisations ensure that all programmes are delivered within the scope of a mature quality management system.
4. Administrative arrangements: Administrative processes are clearly defined for programmes within the scope of the Edexcel Assured Service.
5. Assessment and verification: Organisations will ensure that all assessment and verification activities lead to valid and reliable decisions (this quality indicator only applies to organisations that offer assessments to their learners).

These measures serve to ensure that teachers are adequately trained and able to impart knowledge and skills to their students in an environment that is conducive to learning. By the same token, students are provided with sufficient support to ensure they are able to meet standardised requirements during assessment.

The benefits of this service are far reaching. For example, large corporates can use it to introduce certification to internal-training programmes that are not accredited by an awarding body. It offers them quality assurance of an international standard. Once approved, Edexcel assigns a quality advisor who conducts annual audits to ensure that standards are maintained. Corporate training providers, educational institutions, professional bodies, and public sector organisations all stand to gain by adopting this service.

The Department of Education's plans for reform will take years before we start seeing a real change in the system. Businesses and the education sector need to start working together now to put South Africa onto the pathway for economic growth and development. It's vital that the correct quality control systems are put into place in our current landscape in order to maximise educational outputs.

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