



# GUIDELINES FOR APPROVAL OF DISTANCE TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

“Promoting Quality Healthcare and safeguarding the  
Public is our Prime Concern”

1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2017

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## **Foreword**

The Health Professions Council of Zambia (HPCZ) is a Statutory Body established under the Health Professions Act No. 24 of 2009 of the Laws of Zambia. The Council is mandated to register health practitioners and regulate their professional conduct, License and regulate all health facilities, Accredite healthcare services provided by health facilities, recognize and approve training programmes for health practitioners. The Law gives the Council the responsibility of ensuring that students undertaking health related training through distance learning acquire the desired knowledge, skills and attitude that are necessary for the delivery of quality health care services.

The increase in the number of training institutions and demand for distance learning/e-learning has resulted in the development of these guidelines. The guidelines have been developed as a yardstick to ensure that training institutions meet the minimum set standards.

Distance Learning is the use of modules, electronic equipment, computer- based devises and internet based application to facilitate the process of teaching and learning. It allows students to learn at their own pace, at their convenient times and also stimulate active learning which gives them freedom to share, discuss and contribute in the process of learning. It is an innovation in training health professionals that cuts down costs and replaces the traditional classroom set up.

These guidelines have been developed for providers who are preparing approval of training programmes to be offered through Distance Learning Model. The training institutions seeking approval of its programmes must meet all the standards contained in this document.

The Council anticipates that compliance to these standards will enable training institutions to offer and sustain their distant model training programmes thereby equipping the students with the required skills, knowledge, and competencies to safely manage patients.

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**Prof Sekelani Banda**  
**Chairperson**  
**Health Profession Council of Zambia**

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## **List of Abbreviations**

APAS	Annual Performance Appraisal System
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
GNC	General Nursing Council
HPCZ	Health Professions Council of Zambia
ICT	Information, Communication Technology
TI	Training Institution
ZEMA	Zambia Environmental Management Agency

## Definition of Terms

Approval:	The process by which the Council formally recognizes and certifies a training programme to be offered at a training institution
Council:	Refers to the ' <i>Health Professions Council of Zambia</i> '
Distance Learning	Refers to the use of modules, electronic equipment, computer-based devices and internet based application to facilitate the process of teaching and learning
Curriculum:	The planned interaction of learners with instructional content, materials, resources and processes for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives
Faculty:	Academic staff of the training programme
Review of the programme:	Refers to the process of evaluating the status of compliance with the accreditation standards, programme objectives and statutory requirements
Minimum Requirements:	A set of standards that a defined training institution should satisfy before approval
Training and Examinations Committee	This is a Committee of the Council that advises the Council on standards, policies and regulations related to training of health practitioners
Establishment:	The minimum number of staff required in order to deliver the program effectively
Health Practitioner:	Refers to a person registered as a health practitioner under section eight of the Health Professions Act
Health Professions Act:	Health Professions Act No 24 of 2009 of the Laws of Zambia
Training Programme	This refers to the profession whose member is required to register under section eight

## **Mandate of the Council**

The Health Professions Council of Zambia is a Statutory Body established under the Health Professions Act No. 24 of 2009 of the Laws of Zambia and mandated to implement the following core functions:

- Registration of health practitioners and regulation of their professional conduct
- licensing of health facilities and accreditation of health care services provided by health facilities
- Recognition and approval of training programmes for health practitioners

## **Vision**

The vision of the Health Professions Council of Zambia is *“to be a model Health Professions regulatory body in Africa by the year 2030”*

## **Mission**

The Mission of the Council is *“to regulate and monitor professional conduct of health practitioners, health facilities and training institutions in order to ensure compliance with set standards and assure provision of quality health services.”*

## **Core Values**

1. *Integrity*
2. *Accountability*
3. *Fairness*
4. *Client focus*
5. *Creativity*
6. *Hard work*

In executing its mandate with regard to this core function of training and specifically with online (distance), the Council shall continue to:

- Strengthen its policies and systems
- Monitor the implementation of online and distance training programmes
- Undertake periodic evaluation of online and distance training programmes
- Update the database of training programmes
- Enforce the Health Professions Act.

## **Executive Summary**

The role of the Council is to ensure that the training institutions operate efficiently and effectively to attain the objectives of the programme. It also ensures that health practitioners that graduate from training institutions have necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes required to provide quality health care services.

The guidelines have been developed as the minimum acceptable standards required to be put in place to ensure acquisition of required knowledge, skills and attitudes for trainees. There are **Seven (7) Standards** and includes:

- Standard 1: Institutional Setting and Governance
- Standard 2: Curriculum Development and Implementation
- Standard 3: Admission Criteria and Student Welfare
- Standard 4: Faculty Management and Supervision
- Standard 5: Educational Resources
- Standard 6: Health and Safety
- Standard 7: Quality Improvement

It is imperative to note that under each standard, training institutions are required to provide necessary documentation, recruit qualified staff, and acquire appropriate equipment and materials. Training institutions are further required to put in place systems that improve the delivery of training programmes.

## **1 Standard 1: Institutional Setting and Governance**

### **1.1 Mission Statement of the Training Institution**

The mission statement should address the quality of training with respect to acquisition of professional competences in line with the Ministry responsible for Health.

### **1.2 Vision Statement of the Training Institution**

The vision statement should be relevant to the training of health professionals and in line with the Ministry responsible for Health.

### **1.3 Strategic Plan**

The institution should have a strategic plan that shows the education road map supported by adequate human, financial and capital resources.

### **1.4 Needs Assessment**

The institution should conduct a needs assessment or consult relevant institutions (e.g. Government Ministries, Professional Associations and Training Institutions) for online and distance training programmes.

### **1.5 Legal compliance**

The training institution should comply with all relevant laws and regulations. The following certificates should be made available to the Council:

- i. Registration of Business under the Registration of Companies Act
- ii. Certificate of Registration from the Higher Education Authority
- iii. TPIN Number under the Zambia Revenue Authority Act
- iv. NAPSA Number
- v. Waste management contract
- vi. Lease agreement or proof ownership of the premises
- vii. Registration and valid practicing certificates for lecturers registrable with HPCZ or GNC

### **1.6 Governance and Supervision**

- i. There should be clear governance and leadership structures to spearhead the implementation of the training programme. The institution shall provide clear documented evidence on the following;
- ii. Establishment of Senate or Board of Directors or any other equivalent Body
- iii. Organisational structure of the training institution.
- iv. Appointment of a Dean/ Principal at a level of a Senior Lecturer with a minimum of ten (10) years teaching experience in a health-related field.

- v. Appointment of full time Programme Coordinator with a minimum of five (05) years teaching experience and should have a higher qualification than the programme being coordinated.
- vi. Induction programme for new members of staff and evidence of implementation
- vii. Appointment letters and job description outlining reporting levels for all staff
- viii. Affiliation of programme with the higher training institution which has a record of ten (10) years of experience in offering the same
- ix. System for supervising and evaluation of the performance of the teaching staff
- x. A code of conduct and grievance procedure for students and academic staff

### **1.7 Establishment of Standing Committees**

It is required that the training institution should establish various committees to discuss various issues relating to running of the programme. The standing committees should include;

- i. Education Committee
- ii. Examination Committee
- iii. Selection Committee
- iv. Discipline Committee
- v. Appeals Committee
- vi. Finance Management Committee
- vii. Quality Improvement Committee

## **2 Standard 2 Curriculum Development and Implementation**

The training institution should define the competencies to be acquired by students and shall be responsible for the detailed design and implementation of the curriculum that enable the students to achieve those competencies and objectives. It is expected that if a training institution decides to use an approved curriculum, it shall seek authority from a training institution that developed the curriculum. All the training institutions shall meet the following:

### **2.1 Curriculum Management**

The curriculum for the training programme to be offered through Distance Learning shall be approved by the Health Professions Council of Zambia and shall be organized in module form.

### **2.2 Programme Evaluation**

The training institution shall put mechanisms of evaluating the programme in order to attest whether it's achieving the programme objectives and also to enhance the education programme quality. The evaluation report shall be submitted to the Council annually. The evaluation shall have a component of student feedback. The students shall give feedback on the courses being taught, lecturers and other relevant information.

### **2.3 Monitoring of Completion of Required Clinical Experiences**

The training institution shall have a mechanism to oversee and monitor the students in a practicum site to ensure that students fulfill the clinical experiences set out in the curriculum. The training institution shall sign memorandum of understanding with the practicum sites and students shall be provided with logbooks. The Clinical instructors shall be appointed and appropriately remunerated by the training institutions.

### **2.4 Residential Sessions**

The training institution shall have residential sessions at least **six (06)** weeks per academic year

### **3 Standard 3. Admission Criteria and Student Well Being**

The training institution should have clear, documented selection policies that are merit based and should consistently be applied to prevent discrimination and bias.

#### **3.1 Admissions Committee**

The admissions committee is responsible for selection and admission of students in a particular programme. The admissions committee shall develop the selection criteria and ensure that the criteria meets the minimum 5'O levels (*or its equivalent*) which include English, Mathematics, Biology/Agriculture Science, Physics/Chemistry/Science and any other subject. The institution should ensure that the selection is fair, balanced and devoid of favoritism.

#### **3.2 Indexing of Students**

The Health Professions Council of Zambia shall index all students enrolled in the first month of being enrolled in the training programme.

#### **3.3 Number of Students enrolled in a training programme**

The institution should indicate the number of students to be enrolled in particular programme and shall not exceed **one hundred (100)** per class. Recruitment of students shall be determined by the following factors:

- Staffing levels
- Classroom space
- Library resources
- Skills laboratories
- Practicum Sites

#### **3.2 Student Services**

Training Institutions are required to provide the following services to students during residential sessions;

- Academic and social counselling
- Healthcare
- Library and internet services
- Recreation facilities
- Student representation forum e.g. Student Union
- Transport
- Tuckshop/Canteen.

### **3.4 Personal counselling**

The training institution shall have in place an effective system for personal counseling for the students that includes programmes to promote their wellbeing and facilitate adjustment to the physical and emotional demands of distance learning.

## **4 Standard 4. Faculty Management and Supervision**

A training institution shall ensure that all faculty employed are appropriately qualified and supervised to ensure compliance to the curriculum requirements, teaching and assessment methods.

### **4.1 Staff Establishment**

There shall be a comprehensive staff establishment and all staff employed shall be trained in Open Distance Learning and should meet the following;

- Institutions should recruit teaching staff that have higher qualification than the level of the programme being offered
- All teaching staff with a health professional background should have valid registration certificates and practicing licenses
- Teaching staff should have certificates in medical education/teaching methodology.
- The acceptable student lecturer ratio for theory during residential period shall be 1:100 (1 lecturer per 100 students) and 1:10 (1 lecturer per 10 students) during practical. This is to facilitate one on one consultation between the lecturer and the students

### **4.2 Clinical Supervision of Students**

Training institutions should ensure that there is appropriate and adequate supervision of students in the practicum sites at all times. The level of responsibility delegated to the students should be appropriate to the level of training and that the activities supervised are within the scope of practice of a supervising health professional.

- It is a requirement that the training institutions identify practicum sites for the students and also sign contracts (MoU) with these practicum sites
- The supervisor/clinical instructor should be appointed by the training institution and should mentor, instruct and supervise the students.
- Clinical instructors shall be responsible for the performance of students in a practicum sites. The Council requires the Instructors to write a comprehensive report on the performance of students at the end of each practicum period.

### **4.3 Student Assessment and Examinations**

The institution should have documented regulations that guide the faculty on procedures for student assessment and examinations. Each training institution is expected to comply with the assessment and examination procedures outlined in the curriculum and as specified by the relevant examination body. It is a requirement that there should be a minimum of three continuous assessments before end of term/semester/year examinations.

The assessment strategy and design must ensure that;

- All assessments must provide a rigorous and effective process by which compliance with external-reference frameworks can be measured.
- Professional aspects of practice must be integral to the assessment procedures in both the education setting and practice placement setting.
- Assessment methods must be employed that measure the learning outcomes.
- The measurement of student performance must be objective and ensure fitness to practice.
- There must be effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate standards in the assessment.
- Clearly spell out procedures for students appeal in case of grievances.
- Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for a procedure for the right of appeal for students.
- Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of qualified and experienced external examiners within the same profession.

## **5 Educational Resources**

These are resources required in the delivery of training and comprise of financial resources, human resources, learning resources, information and records systems, and physical facilities. Information systems should be maintained securely and confidentially.

### **5.1 Classrooms**

The training institution should have accessible facilities for residential sessions which should be inspected and approved by Health Professions Council of Zambia.

- Institutions should provide a minimum of 1 classroom per intake where each student occupies an area of 2m<sup>2</sup>.
- The infrastructure should meet the Public Health (Buildings) Regulations in terms of:
  - Location
  - State of the building
  - Room size
  - Natural and artificial ventilation
  - Natural and artificial lighting
  - Drainage and sewerage
- The classroom should be well furnished with chairs and tables

### **5.2 Teaching Aids.**

The following teaching aids should be available for each classroom.

- A white board and markers
- Projector/LCD
- A laptop/desktop computer
- Flip stands and charts

### **5.3 Offices for members of staff**

The training institution should have adequate offices for management and members of staff preferably within the College premises, which include computers, chairs, tables, printers, photocopiers and internet access. The infrastructure should meet the Public Health (Buildings) Regulations in terms of:

- Location
- State of the building
- Room size
- Natural and artificial ventilation
- Natural and artificial lighting
- Drainage and sewerage

## 5.4 Skills Laboratories and practical demonstration rooms

- Training Institutions should provide well-equipped laboratories for student's practical where each student occupies an area of 4m<sup>2</sup>.
- This is important for the acquisition of required skills and competencies. (*Refer to the guidelines for approval of training programmes*).

## 5.5 Library

- The library should have adequate space to accommodate at least **25%** of the students' population attending residential classes
- The training institution should have a library with adequate prescribed and recommended books
- The training institution should have a system for distance learning students to borrow books from the library for the specified period
- The institution should ensure that all the hardcopy prescribed books are available to a ratio of **1** copy per **10** students and **1** copy per **15** students for recommended books per programme.

## 5.6 Practicum Sites (Memorandum of Understanding)

- The training institution should sign a memorandum of understanding with practicum sites.
- The students should be provided with logbooks which should be checked on a regular basis
- There should be instructors who should be appointed by the training institutions

## 5.7 Information Technology Facilities and Equipment

### 5.7.1 Campus Computer Laboratory

ICT infrastructure that should include but not restricted to the following;

- Computer laboratory equipped with a minimum sixty (60) functional computers that are connected to the internet
- A high speed broad band internet with WiFi connection as an added advantage
- All computers should be equipped with appropriate software's

The students should be provided with E-books, E-granary, and LCD

### 5.7.2 Student portal

The school should have a functional student web based portal that provide a platform for Interaction with students in terms of;

- Online Registration
- Exchange of notes/ materials
- Assignments

- Exam Registration
- Dissertation Results
- Viewing of results (Final & CA Results)
- Lecturers Contact
- Correspondence Forms
- Lecturer Evaluation

### **5.7.3 Lecturers portal**

A secure lecture portal to enable lecturers;

- Upload notes and materials
- Upload assignment
- Receive submitted assignment
- Upload results
- Communicate and interact with students

### **5.7.4 Online Lecture platform**

- A training institution offering online programme should have a platform for live video streaming of lectures.
- A platform for simulations to demonstrate practical skills

## **5.8 Security**

- All system secured with password
- User-rights clearly defined
- Enhanced security system for examination module

## **6 Standard 6: Health and Safety for Members of Staff and Students**

### **6.1 Water supply**

The institution should have constant supply of wholesome and piped water with hand washing basins.

### **6.2 Sanitary facilities**

The institution should provide separate sanitary facilities for male and female students as well as teaching staff. The ratio for sanitary facilities should be **1: 25** students

### **6.3 Fire safety**

Fire prevention and fighting systems should be available and accessible in case of fire outbreaks. The following should be in place:

- i. Fire safety policy
- ii. Fire escape signages and assembly points
- iii. Fire prevention alarms
- iv. Appropriate firefighting equipment (for example, serviced fire extinguishers, fire blankets, sand buckets)

### **6.4 Waste Management**

The institution should have procedures and systems for waste management from point of generation to point of disposal compliant with the relevant Laws and Regulations.

#### **6.4.1 Point of Generation of Waste**

Institutions are required to provide waste bins with covers in classrooms, offices, walkways, toilets and dormitories. All bins should be colour coded.

#### **6.4.2 Final Storage and Disposal of Waste**

The training institutions should comply with the following:

- Waste storage facilities should be located away from offices and classrooms
- All waste bins should be water tight
- Trolleys or wheelbarrows should be used to transport waste

Waste should be either disposed of through approved Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) incinerators or collected by licensed Waste Management Companies. Indiscriminate disposal of waste is prohibited.

## 7 Standard 7: Quality Improvement

Training Institutions offering approved programmes are required to establish quality improvement systems through documented policies. It is a requirement that each institution establishes a Quality Improvement Committee and implement quality improvement interventions in line with the National Guidelines on Quality Improvement for Health Care Workers in Zambia.

Though the document focuses on health service delivery, it provides yard sticks and framework for quality improvement which are applicable in many different settings. The Quality Improvement Committee shall be required to produce a bi-annual institutional quality assessment report which shall be forwarded to HPCZ. The Committee shall primarily focus on the following priority areas but not limited to:

<b>Priority Quality Management Area</b>	<b>Quality Assurance Process</b>
<b>Student Entry Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular review and adherence to the entry criteria</li> <li>• Sustainable provision of support services to students</li> </ul>
<b>Teaching Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy for recruitment and management of the qualified and experienced staff</li> <li>• Provision of the support services and teaching aids and equipment</li> <li>• Provision and maintenance of office space</li> <li>• Establishment and implementation of assessment and evaluation of teaching staff</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular assessment and advocacy for preventive maintenance of buildings, ceiling boards, windows, electrical fittings, water supply, sanitation and general surroundings.</li> <li>• Safety of staff and visitors</li> </ul>
<b>Equipment and Furniture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision and maintenance of required equipment and teaching aids</li> <li>• Advocacy for procurement and maintenance of requisite furniture for students, staff and visitors</li> </ul>
<b>Waste Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of safe methods for generation, storage, transportation and disposal of waste in line with state laws and regulations</li> <li>• Provision of waste bins in all classrooms, offices, hostels, restaurants, tuckshops and public walk ways</li> <li>• Orientation of all new students and staff on the waste management process and the need for compliance with waste management regulations.</li> </ul>
<b>Health and Safety</b>	<p>Assessment and implementation of health and safety interventions in all areas of the institutions. This may include but not limited to promotion and :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of sexual health education of students</li> <li>• Implementation of acceptable fire and safety policies</li> <li>• Implementation of public health strategies to prevent disease outbreaks</li> </ul>

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