

Policy on Observers at Accreditation Visits**Status: Authorised by Council****Document: G-10****Version: Revision-0****Date: 16 April 1998****1. Purpose**

This document records ECSA's policy on Observers taking part in on-site visits to accredit education programmes.

2. Role of observers

Observation of accreditation visits plays an important part in validating and improving ECSA's processes and informing interested parties about ECSA's practices. With its well-developed accreditation system for universities and technikons, ECSA is in a position to assist bodies that are developing accreditation systems. ECSA encourages observers from interested parties to attend accreditation visits. Potential observers include:

1. International observers relating to mutual recognition or equivalency agreements;
2. Internal observers, for example Professional Advisory Committee members, Technikon Accreditation Committee (TAC) observers on University Accreditation Committee (UAC) visits and UAC observers on TAC visits;
3. Representatives of related standards and quality assurance bodies, for example the South African Qualifications Authority, the Mining Qualifications Authority and the Higher Education Quality Committee;
4. Persons charged with quality assurance functions performed on the ECSA accreditation system.

3. Policy on observers

1. Participation as an observer may be initiated by ECSA or an interested organisation.
2. The observer must be acceptable to the institution being accredited. Any identified actual or potential conflict of interest disqualifies an observer. The ECSA Secretariat is therefore required to submit the name, a short biography and a brief motivation for each observer to the Dean of the faculty in which programmes are being accredited at least six weeks before the visit for the institution's approval. ECSA and the intended observer are bound by the institution's decision.
3. The observer may not communicate directly with the institution before or after the visit on matters related to the visit. Communication should be directed to the ECSA Education Secretariat.
4. Observers are expected to be present for the full duration of the visit, including the evening team meetings. Observers may be present at all accreditation team activities including closed team meetings.

5. Observers are supplied with relevant ECSA documents on standards and procedures, including this document, the general visit documentation together with documentation for one programme. Observers are expected to read all documentation prior to the visit.
6. During the investigation phase of the visit, observers should be present at interviews with staff and students. Observers may not independently pose questions to staff and students.
7. Observers are free contributing to discussion in closed team meetings.
8. An observer shall not influence the team recommendation. Observers should be present at formulation of the team's report and recommendation but shall not speak. Observers shall not interpret ECSA criteria.
9. During the visit, the observer shall follow a programme of activities agreed with the visit leader and affected team leaders. This programme may include assigned duties that assist team members. Definition of and ruling on limitations of an observer's activities while on the visit is the sole prerogative of the visit leader.
10. Observers are expected to treat documentation or verbal information gained on the visit as confidential and not release such information to another party without the consent of ECSA and the institution.
11. Observers are expected to make a short report to ECSA on their impressions of the visit. Should the report be marked confidential, it will be treated as such by ECSA.
12. Observer organisations are expected to meet all costs of their participation unless this requirement is waived by ECSA.

4. Revision History

Version	Date	Revision authorised by	Nature of Revision
Revision - 0	16 April 1998	Council	Initial Issue