



Ensuring Quality, Standards and
Recognition for Tertiary
Education

The Grenada National Accreditation Board

INFORMATION FOR INSTITUTIONS APPLYING FOR PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

Information for Institutions on Applying GNAB's Programme Accreditation Criteria to Different Programme Types

Defining a Programme

A programme is regarded as an integrated package of courses and activities in an academic or professional field leading to a qualification. However, organizational arrangements in institutions differ and there are sometimes questions about what should be considered as a programme.

A programme includes all of the courses a student is required to take for a qualification, including courses that are required by an institution or a college, as well as those required by a department. This often includes general education courses as well as those in a professional or academic field. It may also include courses that may be offered as service courses.

A programme that is offered on two or more separate campuses of the same institution is a single programme and should be evaluated as such. However, since there may be significant differences in facilities, resources, experience of teaching staff, employment of graduates or other matters, evidence should be obtained about what happens on each campus and any differences noted and considered in institutional planning. Programme reports should show institutional evaluations for each campus and a combined result.

A programme offered on a remote campus as well as on an institution's main campus should be dealt with in the same way. A programme that is offered either on-campus or through distance education should also be evaluated using the same procedures. However, there are a number of additional matters that relate to distance education and the distance education portion of the programme that must be considered to ensure that students pursuing distance programmes have the same access to resources as those in face-to-face delivery modes.

A programme may have an early exit point, for example, it may be possible for students to complete two years of study and receive a diploma or to continue for several more years and complete a bachelor's degree. If this is done, it is essential that the diploma be planned so that it provides a complete and useful qualification in its own right. For example, it might include significantly more practical and applied work in the field than students would normally undertake in the first two years of a bachelor's degree programme. It is not acceptable for such an award to be granted simply because students fail or drop out after the early parts of a longer programme.



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The distinction between what is regarded as a single programme or a cluster of related programmes is difficult to define and may be best explained through examples.

For example, a bachelor's degree programme to prepare a student as a civil engineer would be regarded as a different programme from a programme to prepare a mechanical engineer, even though there may be some courses that are common to both. Similarly, if a student had completed the bachelor's degree programme and wished to take a post graduate programme leading to a master's degree or a doctorate in the same general field, that would be regarded as a separate programme. The test in these examples relates to there being a qualification that is regarded as being complete in itself, and in the case of a professional programme, qualifying the person who has taken the programme for professional practice in the field. The distinction does not necessarily relate to the organization of an institution or college into departments. In the particular example given, it is likely that a civil engineering department would offer both the undergraduate and the postgraduate programmes. It would also be possible if an institution wishes to organize itself in that way for a single department to offer programmes in both civil and mechanical engineering.

The title of an academic award is not necessarily a useful guide to what should be regarded as a programme. For example, general titles such as Bachelor of Arts, or Business, or Science, could include many different programmes. In an Arts degree, there could be programmes in history and or social sciences, in psychology, in social work, or many others. A Business degree could include separate programmes for accountants, for economists, or for management and administration, and these would be different programmes leading to quite different occupational skills.

The programmes that have been used in these examples are separate entities, and will be evaluated or accredited as such. However, this does not prevent groups of related programmes from being considered together by an external review team in the accreditation process, provided it is possible for external review panels to include the necessary expertise. A panel might consider an undergraduate and a post graduate programme in the same field at the same time. However, the institution's self-study and the reports of the review panel will deal separately with each programme and it would be possible for one such programme to be accredited and not the other.



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Applying Accreditation Criteria and Standards to Mixed Mode or Blended Programmes and Programmes that are Offered Through Alternative Methodologies

A number of variations are possible in the way distance education and on-campus face to face programmes are offered.

- Programmes can be offered only on campus using face to face delivery.
- Programmes can be offered only through distance education.
- Programmes can be offered through both face to face delivery mechanisms and through distance education, with students able to enroll in either format.
- Programmes can be offered on campus using face to face delivery with the possibility of students taking some courses in distance education mode.
- A single course might involve elements of both face to face and distance education.
- Programmes can be offered using distance education methodologies with some programme elements being taken face to face.

Irrespective of the delivery mode, programmes being submitted for evaluation must satisfy all accreditation criteria and standards to be specially accredited by GNAB. The following general statements should be taken as a guide, but the final decision on the application of the criteria and standards will be made by GNAB

- If a programme is offered only through distance education, the criteria and standards established and approved by GNAB must be met for it to be accredited. A programme in which laboratory or field experience activities, or periodic seminars are offered in face to face format in combination with distance education methodologies is regarded as distance education for the purpose of this statement.
- If a programme is offered on campus but some courses make use of packages of instructional material; it is regarded as a face to face programme. However, as part of normal teaching practice, there should be adequate student support for the instructional packages used.
- If a programme is offered either through distance education or through on campus delivery, the relevant set of standards must be applied similarly to each sub-set of the programme. Both aspects must be met the criteria and standards for the programme as a whole to be accredited.
- An institution may elect to have the two sub-sets of the programme (i.e. the distance education section and the on-campus section) considered as separate programmes. In this situation, the two sections can be separately considered and it is possible that one could be accredited and the other not. A necessary condition for this approach is that the programmes must be clearly identified as separate in all of the institution's documents and their accreditation status made clear to students and the community. If a student takes a portion of the programme in one format and wishes to complete the programme in the other, the institutions normal processes for transfer between programmes should apply.