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**HEQSF reference number:** H06/14587/HEQSF

**Qualification reference number:** 4765

**Authorised Qualification name:** Master of Urban and Regional Planning

Directorate: Accreditation

Council on Higher Education

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Dear Colleagues

## RESPONSE TO THE DEFERRAL OF THE HEQSF-ALIGNMENT AND ACCREDITATION

### HEQSF review comment

*"According to the programme design there are no compulsory modules with all 27 modules being electives. This cannot be correct as the research modules have to be compulsory in order to satisfy the HEQSF requirement for research. This is acknowledged in the table "Exit Level Outcomes" where it is stated that students have to complete all three research modules. The programme design therefore needs to be corrected to reflect this. Other modules may also have been incorrectly stated as elective instead of compulsory and should be checked. Notwithstanding the above the total number of modules (24) appears to be excessive for the remaining 68 credits (excluding the 3 research modules)."*

### Response

It was difficult to express how the curriculum design is implemented and managed on the prescribed HEQSF-online format. Students may enrol either at the beginning of each year or in the second semester, for which the



institution makes provision for different module codes to ensure students stay within their stream, even though the core of the curriculum remains the same. Because the upload did not allow us to indicate a module as both a compulsory or an elective as well as the fact that the total tally at the end of the modular section will not reflect how the curriculum worked, it was loaded as electives. No space was provided to specify the rules of combination for the constituent modules and, where applicable, progression rules from one year to the next.

Students have to complete an Applied Regional Project and an Applied Urban Planning Project, supported by a module, called GIS for Planners. This programme concentrates on preparing students to be critical thinkers with sound moral judgments for the workplace, with a focus on the application of knowledge and skills. There are therefore two major applied planning projects, of 24 credits each, one on an urban scale and the other on a regional scale. In these projects students need to apply the theory taught in the Honours and Masters levels. In analysing the relevant city or region they need to take the social, economic, environmental and legal context and issues into account. The policy environment from local (e.g. IDP, local economic development and housing strategies) to national policy directives must be considered. Students must also be able to identify issues and then devise creative and innovative solutions to address them as part of a spatial development plan. Students are also capacitated to develop their skills in accessing impacts, risks and advantages of development proposals, including analysing and evaluating alternative solutions for problems. They are encouraged to work effectively as members of teams in multi-disciplinary environments, demonstrating leadership, management skills and initiative while performing professional functions which are critical to the success of any project. A further outcome is that students must be able to apply the necessary techniques to plan and undertake a regional or urban planning project and to be able to explain how it should be executed. Supporting modules include Geographic Information Systems (GIS) that teaches basic skills required by a planner in practice. The planning practice module deals with project management and the practical aspects of working in a planning environment. A module in housing/sustainable settlements also forms part of the Masters. This module has both a theoretical and an applied component in the form of a basic housing plan.

The research component comprises 88 credits of the Masters in the form of a mini dissertation (on the original submission it is indicated that the previous 64 credit research essay was removed). In addition, students are required to complete a module in research methodology (16 credits), and a research proposal (8 credits). The research methodology module covers qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research designs and the

applicable research methods and techniques. This component was introduced to better prepare students to successfully conduct research to complete the Extended Research Essay.

Furthermore, the 24 modules indicated on the list include “repeat code” modules, for students who enrol for the qualification during the second semester of a year. Some of the modules on the list also indicated it has been modified, which in actual fact should be indicated as “removed”. The curriculum structure for the Master of Urban and Regional Planning should be presented as outlined in the table below:

Module Code	Module name	NQF Level	Credits per module	Compulsory/ Optional	Year	Total Credits per year
<b>Master of Urban and Regional Planning</b>						
<i>Core modules</i>						
URDP7912/ URDP7922	Research Proposal in Urban and Regional Planning	9	8	Compulsory	1	204
URGI7904	Geographic Information Systems for Planners	9	16	Compulsory	1	204
URHS7913/ URHS7923	Housing for Planners	9	12	Compulsory	1	204
URMD7900	Extended Research Essay	9	88	Compulsory	1	204
URRM7914/ URRM7924	Research Methodologies for Planners	9	16	Compulsory	1	v
URPP7914/ URPP7924	Professional Practice in Urban and Regional Planning	9	16	Compulsory	1	204
URRP7906	Applied Regional Planning Project	9	24	Compulsory	1	204
URUP7906	Applied Urban Planning Project	9	24	Compulsory	1	204
			<b>Compulsory Credits: 204</b>			
			<b>Total Credits: 204</b>			
			<b>Total Credits on NQF 9: 180</b>			

Therefore, it is requested that the above amendments are made to reflect the correct modular structure.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support in relation to the response in relation the comments made by the accreditation panel. We trust that you will find this response adequate to validate its accreditation and HEQSF alignment.

Kind regards



Ms SJ Paulse

Deputy Director: Directorate for Research and Institutional Planning