

## **SU to quality-assure new, Africa-centred international school-leaving qualification**

- *an affordable, African alternative to other international school-leaving qualifications offered by examination bodies outside Africa*

A working agreement between Stellenbosch University (SU) and the Independent Examination Board-International (IEB-International) will see the University quality-assure an Africa-centred school-leaving qualification that will be offered internationally.

Referred to as the International Secondary Certificate (ISC), the qualification will be available as from 2022, with the first examinations scheduled to take place at the end of that year. The IEB-International ISC is the equivalent of the IEB National Senior Certificate (NSC) currently being offered in South Africa and neighbouring countries.

The [SU Unit for International Credentialing](#) (SU-UIC), which was launched in 2019 and is housed in the [Africa Centre for Scholarship](#), will be overseeing the external quality assurance of the ISC qualification. This is in keeping with the SU-UIC's overall function, namely to play both an external and internal quality assurance role in respect of international and foreign qualifications from school to postgraduate level.

Prof Sarah Howie, director of the SU-UIC, says the IEB-International ISC is an affordable, African alternative to other international school-leaving qualifications offered by examination bodies outside Africa. "This is a very exciting opportunity for Stellenbosch University to be part of the pioneering work on the continent with regard to international school-leaving qualification alternatives that offer an African-centred approach to curricula and assessment. The IEB is viewed globally as being at the forefront of innovations to improve examination systems and processes."

The agreement with IEB-International, the international arm of the South African IEB, commenced in March 2021. In terms of the agreement, SU's role focuses on the annual establishment and maintenance of consistent, appropriate academic standards in individual subject areas, verifying that the IEB has applied appropriate quality assurance processes to conduct credible annual examinations, and ensuring that the certification is authentic and free from manipulation.

The ISC has been created in response to changes in national regulations preventing the IEB NSC from being offered outside South Africa, explains Prof Howie. Therefore, neighbouring countries who had been offering the NSC needed an alternative. And since Umalusi (South Africa's authority for education quality assurance) is unable, in terms of its mandate, to quality-assure an international school-leaving qualification outside South African borders, SU was approached.

"The IEB-International ISC has been evaluated by Universities South Africa (USAf), and international candidates who obtain the qualification with merit or at an advanced level, and are offered a place at a South African higher education institution, will have met the minimum requirements for admission to degree programmes," says Howie.

Prof Hester Klopper, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Strategy and Internationalisation, has welcomed the agreement. "This will not only further SU's Vision 2040 of being Africa's leading research-intensive university, globally recognised as excellent, inclusive and innovative, and where knowledge is advanced in service of society. It will also expand SU's reach to the school-leaving population internationally, and in Africa in particular, as well as increase our visibility as a university of choice."

According to Howie, several schools in Namibia and Eswatini as well as various distance learning providers have shown interest in offering the IEB-International ISC qualification.

The quality assurance governance committee for the ISC met for the first time on 3 June 2021. This committee will oversee the quality assurance of key ISC processes, the ISC-related work of the SU-UIC, as well as the functioning of the two working committees charged with curriculum and assessment, and standardisation respectively.

Chaired by Klopper, the committee comprises Dr Sizwe Mabizela, Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University, former council chair of Umalusi; Prof Mbulungeni Madiba, dean of Education at SU; Dr Derek Swemmer, executive consultant on higher education, and former registrar of the universities of the Free State and Witwatersrand; Ms Penny Vinjevold, former deputy director-general of Further Education and Training in the Department of Basic Education, and Dr Nan Yeld, manager of the Implementation Preparation Plan for the Council on Higher Education's new Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education in South Africa, and formerly responsible for the unit developing the National Benchmark Tests for universities. IEB chief executive Anne Oberholzer and Howie are ex-officio members.

- For more information, visit [www.sun.ac.za/SU-UIC](http://www.sun.ac.za/SU-UIC) and [www.iebiq.com/pages/aboutus](http://www.iebiq.com/pages/aboutus) or liaise with Prof Sarah Howie at [sarahhowie@sun.ac.za](mailto:sarahhowie@sun.ac.za)