

MASTERSTART INSTITUTE (PTY) LTD
Private Higher Education Institution
GRADUATION AND CERTIFICATION POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

MasterStart Institute (Pty) Ltd., (hereafter referred to as MSI) commits itself to the pursuit of academic excellence within the higher education sector. The institution aims to cultivate graduates of the highest standard, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding necessary to excel in their fields. By fostering a rigorous academic environment and encouraging critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation, the institution ensures that its graduates are not only well-prepared for professional success but also able to adapt to the evolving demands of the global job market. This commitment to excellence is reflected in the quality of education, research opportunities, and holistic development offered to students, all of which contribute to producing well-rounded individuals capable of making informed and impactful contributions.

Beyond academic achievement, the institution places a strong emphasis on social responsibility and civic engagement. Graduates are encouraged to apply their skills and knowledge for the betterment of society, addressing pressing challenges such as inequality, environmental sustainability, and technological advancement. By nurturing a sense of ethical leadership and community involvement, the institution seeks to empower graduates to contribute meaningfully to the world around them, not only as professionals but as active citizens committed to creating positive change.

The graduation and certification policy outlines the criteria and procedures students must meet to successfully complete their academic programmes and be awarded their respective qualifications. This policy is designed to ensure that all graduates have met the academic, professional, and ethical standards established by the institution. It governs the evaluation of student performance, the fulfilment of credit requirements, and the necessary steps for the certification process, including the issuance of degrees, diplomas, or certificates upon successful completion of the programme and qualification.

2. PURPOSE

The policy aims to provide clarity and transparency in the graduation process, detailing the roles and responsibilities of both students and the institution in ensuring timely completion. It also includes provisions for students to apply for graduation, address any academic deficiencies, and meet deadlines for completing their studies. By adhering to this policy, the institution maintains the integrity of its qualifications, ensuring that graduates possess the competencies required to contribute meaningfully to their professions and society at large.

3. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

This policy applies to all students, partners, and employees who are contracted to provide, promote and maintain the high standards of certification and subsequent graduation for students who complete a qualification at MSI.

4. POLICY STATEMENT/APPLICATION

The **Graduation and Certification Policy** of MSI establishes the requirements and procedures that students must fulfil in order to be eligible for graduation. It is the institution's commitment to ensure that every graduate has successfully completed their prescribed programme of study, demonstrated the required level of competency, and met all academic, ethical, and professional standards. This policy guarantees that students are prepared to contribute effectively to their chosen fields and society as a whole.

Students must adhere to all academic regulations, including the successful completion of required credits, submission of all necessary documentation, and fulfilment of any additional programme-specific requirements. The institution is dedicated to supporting students throughout this process, offering guidance and resources to help them meet these expectations. Only those who meet all the outlined criteria will be awarded their degrees, diplomas, or certificates, ensuring the value and credibility of the institution's qualifications.

5. DEFINITIONS/ ABBREVIATIONS/ ACRONYMS/ GLOSSARY

- 5.1 **CHE:** The Council on Higher Education.
- 5.2 **DHET:** The Department of Higher Education and Training.
- 5.3 **Distinction:** Achieving more than 75% as a final mark for a module or a programme.
- 5.4 **Graduation:** After completion of a programme, graduation is the receiving or conferring of an academic qualification such as a degree, diploma or certificate.
- 5.5 **HEQSF:** Higher Education Quality Committee.
- 5.6 **NLRD:** The National Learners' Records Database.
- 5.7 **RPL:** Recognition of Prior Learning.
- 5.8 **SAQA:** The South African Qualification Authority.
- 5.9 **USAF:** Universities South Africa

6. POLICY PRINCIPLES

The following principles underpin the Graduation and Certification Policy:

Academic Excellence: The policy ensures that all students meet a high academic standard by completing the required coursework and assessments with demonstrated proficiency. This principle upholds MSI's reputation for producing well-qualified graduates.

Equity and Fairness: MSI is committed to providing a fair and transparent process for all students. The policy ensures that every student, regardless of background, has equal access to the graduation and certification process, provided they meet the set requirements.

Accountability: Both students and the institution share the responsibility for the successful completion of the programme. Students must fulfil all academic and

administrative obligations, while the institution provides clear guidelines and support throughout the process.

Ethical and Professional Standards: Graduates must not only demonstrate academic knowledge but also uphold ethical standards in their work. The policy ensures that students are held to high moral and professional standards, reflecting the values of the institution.

Quality Assurance: The institution ensures that the graduation and certification process maintain the quality and credibility of its qualifications. This principle ensures that degrees, diplomas, and certificates awarded by the institution are respected and recognised in professional and academic settings.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the following documents and policies and must always be considered as guiding principles to enhance the entire student learning experience:

- Admissions Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- CAT Policy
- RPL Policy
- Student manual
- Complaints and Grievance Policy
- Academic Regulations/ Code of Conduct
- Student registration contract

7. Graduation Rules, Requirements and information

All rules, regulations and requirements will be followed as set out by the Institution, and also as per the requirements of the DHET, CHE, and SAQA.

MSI Students may be eligible to graduate and have their qualification conferred upon them provided that:

- a) They have completed all modules related to the programme/ qualification for which they are enrolled.
- b) They have achieved the minimum number of credits related to the qualification for which they are enrolled.
- c) The completed qualification has been subjected to and surpassed all MSI verification processes.
- d) Satisfy all financial obligations to MSI, including tuition and fees.
- e) Submit a formal application for graduation by the institution's specified deadline.
- f) Once invited to graduate, they have completed and sent back all necessary documentation to confirm attendance, confirm details and make payment in the event of any fees due/related to graduation.
- g) Students who RSVP attendance will receive comprehensive documents outlining all aspects pertaining to the graduation event, the attire, specifications, etc.
- h) They are not under any academic investigation for allegations of breach of the code of conduct or otherwise, or are not currently subject to suspension, expulsion, or exclusion on the basis of breach of academic integrity or any misconduct.

- i) Degrees, diplomas, and certificates will be conferred according to the graduation calendar. Students who meet the requirements outside of the regular confirmed dates may receive certification at the next available graduation period.
- j) Degrees, diplomas, and certificates will be issued with MSI's official seal and the signatures of authorised officials.
- k) Only students whose names appear on the graduation list and in the graduation programme will be allowed in the graduation venue and be allowed to graduate.

A student will only be eligible for all entitlements related to a qualification once it has been formally awarded to him or her during the officially constituted graduation ceremony.

If a student is unable to attend a graduation ceremony for any reason, or does not attend despite confirming attendance, such student will be automatically graduated 'in absentia'. Students need to contact the graduation department and enquire on collecting their certificates *only after* the official graduation.

8. Certification Process

Once the above requirements are met, MSI will:

- a) Extract student and programme data after qualification completion.
- b) Review the student's academic record (academic transcript) to ensure all program requirements have been fulfilled.
- c) Confirm completion of financial obligations and the absence of any disciplinary issues that may impact eligibility for graduation.
- d) The Faculty and Dean of Academics in conjunction with the Quality Assurance committee members, and the Certification Officers will undertake a stringent and thorough verification process, whereafter a final list of graduates will be sent for final verification and approval by the Academic Board.
- e) Notify students of their eligibility for graduation.
- f) Award the appropriate degree, diploma, or certificate during MSI's graduation ceremonies or as otherwise specified.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

- 9.1 **Registrar (or designated Certification Officer):** Owns process, maintains the master register, authorises release or dispatch, approves exceptions.
- 9.2 **Records Office:** Secure storage, inventory, chain-of-custody logs, audit preparation.
- 9.3 **Student Support/Graduations Team:** Notifications, collection scheduling, identity verification at handover.
- 9.4 **Quality Assurance:** Audits and compliance checks.
- 9.5 **IT/ Information Security:** Access controls for digital records; backups.
- 9.6 **Data Protection Officer:** POPIA compliance oversight.

10. Qualification Certificate requirements

The content of the certificate will contain the following:

- a) A graduate's full names and surname as they appear on his/her identity Document
- b) The words: "having complied with the requirements of the Higher Education Act and Council on Higher Education (CHE), was awarded the" Qualification obtained (*i.e. Higher Certificate, Diploma or Degree*)
- c) The Qualification name as accredited.
- d) The words "with Distinction" (if applicable)
- e) "at a Congregation of the Institution on" and then the date.
- f) Signatures
- g) Higher Education Act, 1997 and its programmes are accredited by the Council on Higher Education (CHE).
- h) Student number
- i) Official certificate number

Data of students who have graduated and received their certificates will be submitted to the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) in accordance with DHET regulations. This ensures that all qualifications are officially recorded, verifiable, and accessible for employers, other educational institutions, and relevant regulatory bodies. MSI is committed to maintaining the accuracy and integrity of these records to support graduates in the recognition and verification of their academic achievements."

11. Management of Uncollected Certificates and Secure Storage

An uncollected Certificate is a certificate issued which has not been collected or successfully delivered within the defined timelines below. MSI will ensure all issued certificates (including transcripts and completion letters) are safeguarded, traceable, and delivered to graduates securely, and that uncollected items are managed in a consistent, and compliant manner.

All graduation certificates are considered official legal documents issued under the authority of MSI and in compliance with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Once printed and issued, they remain the property of the graduate; however, MSI carries the responsibility of ensuring that any uncollected certificates are safeguarded until they are formally released to the rightful recipient. Certificates are never re-issued, and only one original will ever be produced for each graduate.

Graduates are notified when their certificates become available for collection. Certificates may be collected in person, or by an authorised proxy presenting a signed letter of authority together with certified copies of both the graduate's and proxy's identification documents. Graduates may also request delivery by secure courier, provided they supply written consent, a verified delivery address, and assume responsibility for courier costs. MSI maintains strict identity verification procedures at the point of release to protect against fraud or misrepresentation.

Uncollected certificates are securely stored under controlled conditions. Physical certificates are kept in lockable, fire-resistant storage within a restricted-access area, with access limited to authorised personnel only. A formal register is maintained to track the location, custody, and eventual release of each certificate. Digital records of issued certificates are securely stored within MSI's student information system, with role-based access controls and regular data backups to ensure both accuracy and security.

If a certificate remains uncollected, MSI will issue periodic reminders to the graduate within defined timelines. After six months of non-collection, the certificate will be transferred from active storage to the secure archives. Even in archival storage, certificates remain available for collection by appointment, and MSI will never destroy an uncollected certificate unless formally required to do so by a relevant statutory authority. This ensures that graduates may still access their official award document at any point in the future.

To uphold the integrity of academic records, MSI conducts regular audits of all uncollected certificates and storage facilities. Any discrepancies, suspected tampering, or security breaches are reported immediately to the Registrar and investigated according to institutional policy. By maintaining rigorous controls over storage, access, and release procedures, MSI ensures that all certificates are handled with the highest level of care and in compliance with regulatory standards.

12. Lost or misplaced certificates

In accordance with the requirements of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), MSI issues each graduate with only one original certificate at the time of qualification. Certificates are legal documents and will not be re-issued or replaced if lost, stolen, or destroyed.

Graduates who require evidence of their qualification after the loss or misplacement of the original certificate may request an official academic transcript and/or a verification of qualification letter from the Registrar's Office. These documents carry the institution's official seal and signature and are recognised as valid confirmation of the graduate's achievement.

To request a transcript or verification letter, graduates must follow the official procedure:

1. **Submit a Written Request** – The graduate must submit a formal written request to the Registrar's Office, clearly stating the purpose of the request (e.g., employment, further study) and specifying whether a transcript, verification letter, or both are required.
2. **Provide Proof of Identity** – A certified copy of a valid government-issued identification document (e.g., ID book or passport) must be included to verify the graduate's identity.

3. **Sworn Affidavit** – For lost, stolen, or destroyed certificates, MSI requires the graduate to submit a sworn affidavit confirming the loss or theft of the original document.
4. **Payment of Applicable Fees** – Administrative fees for processing the request must be paid prior to issuance, unless the loss was due to an MSI administrative error.
5. **Processing and Verification** – The Registrar's Office will verify the graduate's details against official records to ensure accuracy and authenticity.
6. **Issuance of Documents** – Once verified, the transcript and/or verification letter will be issued. These may be collected in person, sent via secure courier (at the graduate's cost), or delivered digitally where applicable.
7. **Record Keeping** – A copy of the request and all supporting documentation will be retained in the graduate's official record to maintain an audit trail and ensure compliance with institutional and regulatory requirements.

This procedure ensures that graduates have access to official proof of their qualifications while preserving the integrity of the original certificate and complying fully with DHET and SAQA regulations.

13. Certificate and Academic Transcript Language

As per the Language Policy, the Language of MSI is English and therefore all Academic transcripts and certificates will be issued in English only.

14. Policy Life Cycle

This policy should be reviewed by the Academic Board every 2 years.