



POLICY: CERTIFICATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Da Vinci Institute is an accredited private higher distance education provider offering qualifications on NQF levels five to ten, which are registered on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). This Policy forms part of the institutional Integrated Quality Management System and details the principles for ensuring that programme offerings adhere to academic standards and empower students to contribute to the transformation of their communities, society, and the economy of the future. This approach is underpinned by the Business and Community- driven Action Learning discourse on the co-creation and distribution of relevant knowledge.

2. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Academic Transcript	A document that indicates all relevant student information and achievements, including, the programme modules, level of the programme, module credits and marks obtained by the student
Certification	Process for the formal recognition of a qualification or part-qualification awarded to a successful learner
Certificates of qualifications	Awarded on completion of Higher Certificates, Advanced Certificates, Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, Bachelor degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas, Master's Degrees and Doctoral Degrees - which are ratified by The Da Vinci Senate following a recommendation by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee
Council on Higher Education (CHE)	An independent statutory body that is responsible for advising the Minister of Higher Education and Training on all Higher Education policy issues, and for quality assurance in Higher Education. The CHE is the council for quality assurance in Higher Education, mandated by the NQF Act (Act 67 of 2008) to achieve the objectives of the NQF and to develop and manage the HEQSF
Marks Committee	Sub-committee of the Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee
Programme	A purposeful, coherent and structured set of learning experiences that lead to a qualification. Programmes may be disciplined-based, professional, career-focused, inter- or multi-disciplinary in nature. A programme has recognised entry and exit points. All higher education programmes should have core and elective elements.
Qualification	A registered national qualification consisting of a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose or purposes, intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning and which are assessed in terms of exit level outcomes, registered on the NQF and certified and awarded by a recognised body

Qualification Award	The formal acknowledgement, by the relevant authority, of achievement of the stated learning outcomes for a qualification
South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)	Formal recognition of a qualification or part-qualification awarded to a successful learner

3. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This Policy is benchmarked against and should be read in the context of the relevant legislation underpinning the principles against which institutional policies and operational procedures are developed, implemented, and maintained. These include:

A. Relevant legislation:

- I. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.
- II. National Qualifications Framework Act, No. 67 of 2008.
- III. Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2020. Norms of Certification in the Higher Education Sector.
- IV. Department of Higher Education (DHET), 2013. Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF).
- V. Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997.
- VI. Protection of Personal Information Act, No. 4 of 2013.

B. Applicable Da Vinci documents:

- i. Prospectus
- ii. A3: Curriculum Design and the Development of Learning and Assessment Resources Policy
- iii. A9: Invigilated Examinations Policy
- iv. A10: Assessment and Moderation Policy
- v. Student Contract.

4. SCOPE

This Policy is relevant to all students, alumni, staff, and faculty of The Institute.

5. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to provide clear guidelines for the certification of students who have met all the relevant requirements for the award of a qualification. The Policy also sets out the requirements for the awarding of Senate Awards.

6. GOVERNANCE OF CERTIFICATION

- a. Registry is the custodian of the certification process.
- b. Certification is approved by Senate, which is the highest academic authority.
- c. Certification decisions and approvals are documented and retained as an audit trail.
- d. Certificates issued, cancelled, and destroyed are maintained in a register.
- e. Registry shall ensure that all data submitted through the Higher Education Quality Committee Information System (HEQCIS) for submission to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) is accurate, complete, and submitted within the prescribed timeframes.

7. CERTIFICATE CONTENT REQUIREMENTS

The Institute issues digital qualification certificates through a secure digital certification platform, and each certificate shall:

- a. have the same official status as paper certificates.
- b. incorporate appropriate security and authentication features.
- c. be capable of independent verification, and
- d. be issued and managed in accordance with The Institute's approved certification processes.

Each digital certificate contains the following:

- The Institute's name and logo
- Student's full name as per identity document or passport
- Qualification title
- SAQA ID
- NQF level
- Distinction (Cum Laude) status
- Certificate number
- Date of issue
- Watermark
- Official seal
- Signatures of delegated officials.

The Institute furnishes students with password protected links to their Digital Certificate, and the Registry Office maintains a register of all certificates issued for verification purposes.

The Institute shall take reasonable measures to ensure the ongoing integrity, security, and authenticity of digital certification records.

8. MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY OF STUDENT ACADEMIC

RECORDS

- a. The Institute maintains academic records relating to student registration, academic progression, assessment outcomes, credit attainment and qualification completion to support the integrity of qualification certification and awards.
- b. Appropriate information management and cybersecurity measures are implemented to protect academic records from unauthorised access, alteration, disclosure, loss, or destruction. Academic information is maintained within approved institutional systems that support data integrity, traceability, and business continuity (Refer to TM1: Acceptable use of Information Policy and TM2: Information Security Management Policy).
- c. Access to student academic records is restricted to authorised personnel in accordance with their institutional responsibilities. The Institute processes personal information in accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (Act No. 4 of 2013), as amended, and any other applicable legislation (Refer to TM10: Records Management Policy).
- d. The Institute conducts periodic reviews, and reconciliations to verify the accuracy and completeness of academic records. Any discrepancies identified are investigated and addressed through established institutional procedures.

9. AWARDING OF A QUALIFICATION

The Institute shall award qualifications and issue certificates only to registered students who have successfully completed all programme requirements, including the required credits, complied with the applicable academic rules and institutional policies, and whose qualification has been approved in accordance with The Institute's governance processes (Refer to A14: Academic Administration Policy, Prospectus and Student Contract).

Furthermore, the following shall apply:

- a. A student must attain a weighted pass mark of 50% or better for each module at the associated NQF level of the programme.
- b. All module results are provisional, pending institutional quality assurance processes.
- c. Students who have been granted exemptions through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) shall have the relevant modules recorded as "Exemption" on the academic transcript.
- d. The final Academic Transcript will be prepared and signed by the Registrar and issued with the Certificate, at Graduation.
- e. A student is deemed to have met the requirements for graduation only upon approval by Senate.
- f. Students only receive their certificates, diplomas, degrees at or after the graduation ceremony. By law, no qualification certificate may be issued prior to the official graduation ceremony.

10. AWARDING OF A QUALIFICATION WITH CUM LAUDE (DISTINCTION)

A qualification may be awarded with cum laude in recognition of exceptional academic achievement. To qualify for the award of cum laude, a student must satisfy all the criteria set out below. The award of cum laude shall be approved as part of the certification process and shall be reflected on the qualification certificate and academic transcript.

The following rules apply when awarding a qualification with cum laude:

- a. The rules, governing the final mark are reflected in the Student Contract available in The Institute's Annual Prospectus, and all students are required to consult the Prospectus for the year in which they are registered.
- b. A registered student must achieve a weighted average of 75% over the whole programme to achieve their qualification with a cum laude pass.
- c. This implies that a student must complete all modules with a minimum of 75% (refer to A10: Assessment and Moderation Policy).
- d. All modules must be passed on the first attempt.
- e. Students who have been granted exemptions through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) shall have the relevant modules recorded as "Exemption" on the academic transcript. Cum laude will be calculated on the overall mark achieved at The Institute.
- f. Since no mark is allocated to a Doctoral thesis, no Doctoral student may be awarded the qualification with the status Cum Laude.

11. EXECUTIVE DEAN'S MERIT LIST

The Executive Dean's Merit List recognises students who have achieved an overall qualification average of 75% or higher. Eligible students shall receive a letter indicating such, and their names will appear in the graduation booklet.

12. SENATE AWARDS

The Da Vinci Institute Senate Awards recognises graduates who have demonstrated exceptional academic achievement, leadership, innovation, societal contribution, resilience, and research excellence beyond the normal expectations of their qualification requirements.

The following six awards may be bestowed upon eligible graduates:

- a. **The Da Vinci Doctoral Excellence Award:** For a Doctoral graduate
- b. **The Da Vinci Community Engagement Award:** For a graduate from all programmes
- c. **The Da Vinci Mandala Research Award:** For a Master's graduate
- d. **Postgraduate Achiever Award:** For a Postgraduate graduate
- e. **The Benjamin Anderson Award:** For a Bachelor's graduate
- f. **The Natalie Du Toit Award:** For a graduate from all programmes.

The awards are conferred retrospectively during the **October graduation** ceremony, honouring the previous year's graduates, and remain subject to Senate approval. The Institute reserves the right not to award one or any of the Awards. Refer to the Prospectus on further information about these awards.

The following requirements apply to all Senate Awards unless otherwise specified:

- a. The candidate must be in good academic standing with The Institute and must have successfully completed the qualification in accordance with institutional academic regulations.
- b. The candidate must demonstrate academic integrity and ethical conduct throughout the duration of their studies. Any proven misconduct, plagiarism, unethical research practice, or disciplinary action may disqualify the candidate.
- c. The candidate must have passed the qualification successfully and, where applicable, the dissertation or thesis must have received positive examiner reports and recommendations on the first attempt.
- d. All nominations must be formally supported by a supervisor, head of faculty, or relevant academic representative through a written motivation aligned to the award criteria.
- e. Nominations by supervisors, Heads of Faculty or relevant academic representatives must include sufficient supporting evidence where applicable, including, examiner commendations, publications or conference presentations, community testimonials, evidence of implementation or societal impact, academic transcripts, research outputs, and evidence of innovation or leadership.
- f. Nominations to Senate should be made by the Heads of Programme, and informed or advised by Faculty or Learning Coordinators where applicable. All supporting documentation must accompany the nomination. At no stage may nominations be made or advanced without the knowledge and approval of the Head of Programme.
- g. All recommendations remain subject to review and final ratification by Senate.

13. ISSUING OF ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPTS

The final Academic Transcript will be issued to a student with the Certificate at Graduation. However, a student may request an academic transcript from The Institute at any time:

- a. Requests for Academic Transcripts must be made in writing or via email to the relevant Learning Coordinator or Registry.
- b. All Transcripts must be signed, and quality checked by Registry.
- c. A request for the re-issuing of an academic transcript post-graduation can be made to Registry, at an associated cost.

14. RE-ISSUING CERTIFICATES

15.1. Duplicate Certificates

A duplicate certificate may be issued where the original certificate has been lost or damaged.

- a. The student must submit a formal request, stating the reason the original certificate is no longer available.
- b. The authenticated digital certificate constitutes the official institutional credential. Any printed copy is a representation of that authenticated credential and may be generated from the secure platform. As all printed copies originate from the same authenticated digital record, they do not constitute separate certificates.
- c. The certificate shall reproduce the original qualification details and retain the original certificate number.
- d. The Institution maintains an internal register of requests for additional printed copies, recording the graduate's details, the reason for the request, the date of generation or printing, the approving official (where applicable), and any associated administrative information.
- e. The prescribed fee shall be paid before the request is processed (Refer to the Re-Issuing Certificate Form).
- a. Applicants must submit the following certified documents in support of the request:
 - i. An affidavit explaining why the original certificate is unavailable
 - ii. A certified copy of the applicant's identity document
 - iii. Proof of payment of the prescribed fee.

15.2. Replacement Certificates

- a. A replacement certificate may be issued where:
 - i. the original certificate contains an administrative error or is damaged while in the possession of The Institute.
- b. Applications for a replacement certificate must be supported by:
 - i. the original certificate, where applicable.
 - ii. a certified copy of the graduate's identity document or passport.
 - iii. any other supporting documentation required by The Institute.
- c. Where a replacement certificate is issued due to an administrative error by The Institute, no fee shall be charged.
- d. The original certificate shall be returned to The Institute before a replacement certificate is issued unless the Registrar approves an alternative arrangement.
- e. Replacement certificates shall reflect the approved correction while retaining the original qualification details and date of award.

15. WITHDRAWAL AND REVOCATION OF QUALIFICATIONS AND CERTIFICATES

The Institute may withdraw or revoke a qualification or certificate where it has been:

- a. awarded in error
- b. obtained through fraud, academic misconduct, or material misrepresentation, or
- c. awarded contrary to The Institute's approved academic rules.

Before a qualification or certificate is withdrawn or revoked:

- d. the matter shall be investigated by the Registrar or delegated official
- e. the graduate shall be informed of the proposed action and given an opportunity to respond
- f. the recommendation shall be considered by the Learning, Teaching and Academic Committee (LTAC), and
- g. the final decision shall be approved by Senate.

Where a qualification or certificate is withdrawn or revoked:

- h. the student's official academic record and certification register shall be updated
- i. the graduate shall return the original certificate, where reasonably possible
- j. relevant external bodies, including SAQA where applicable, shall be notified, and
- k. any digital certificate issued by The Institute shall be cancelled or amended accordingly.

16. REGALIA AND PHOTOGRAPHY

- a. Graduates are required to wear academic regalia during the ceremony.
- b. Regalia can be hired or purchased from The Institute's supplier, details of which are supplied to students prior to the event.
- c. The colours of the regalia are as follows:
 - i. Higher Certificate: Black gown with Higher Certificate sash
 - ii. Advanced Certificate: Black gown with an Advanced Certificate sash
 - iii. Bachelor of Commerce in Business Management: Black gown with a Bachelor's sash
 - iv. Advanced Diploma: Black gown with an Advanced Diploma sash
 - v. Postgraduate Diploma in Business Leadership: Black gown with a Postgraduate Diploma sash
 - vi. Master's Degrees: Black gown with a Master's sash
 - vii. Doctoral Degrees: Red gown with a Doctoral sash.
- d. The Institute contracts an external photography company to honour this auspicious occasion. As such, all graduands are required to follow the graduation ceremony instructions, as stated in the invitation received prior to the ceremony.

17. REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

Regular review and amendment of this Policy will be done in line with the approved institutional policies and regulatory requirements. This will take place in consultation with the relevant quality assurance structures at the departmental and institutional level, under the auspices of the official custodian of this Policy, namely the Executive Dean.

18. ANNEXURE A: APPROVAL OF CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

Upon completion of a formal academic programme, the following steps must be followed when approving certification.

Step	Description	Notes
1	The Learning Coordinator (LC) must flag the possible graduands by indicated due date as specified by Registry	The LC must submit the consolidated graduation list to Registry for confirmation that the students have completed all the requisite requirements of the programme.
2	Registry populates the graduation spreadsheet, which includes accurate student details as per the Business Growth Partners verification on admission	
3	Registry will send graduation spreadsheet to the Finance Department to confirm all student fees are paid in full	
4	Registry quality checks the students' details on the identity document against the student profile on the Student Information System (SIS)	
5	Registry verifies that the students are within the minimum and maximum duration of programme	
6	Registry verifies the weighted average of each module within the programme and the final programme mark	
7	Registry will prepare and present the list of potential graduates to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTA) or the Research and Ethics Committee (R&E)	
8	The LTA and R&E will recommend the awarding of qualifications to Senate for ratification	
9	Approval of students' final results will be issued by the Secretariat with a decision number	

19. ANNEXURE B: CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

This procedure document shall be followed once approval and ratification has been received by Senate.

Step	Description	Notes
1	Registry prepares certificates of qualifications	On an access-controlled folder and drive, certificate numbers are allocated to ratified students on the certificate register
3	Registry issues Certificates with a unique number as per the Certificate Register	
4	Registry populates the encrypted database with student information to create certificates	A non-disclosure agreement is in place. Certificates contain electronic signatures and seal
5	Upon completion Registry is given access to the encrypted database to download certificates	
6	Registry forwards an encrypted electronic file to the printing supplier for the printing of the certificates	A non-disclosure agreement is in place
7	The printing supplier delivers the printed certificates to Registry	
8	Registry quality checks the printed certificates against the Graduation spreadsheet	The certificates are stored in a locked cabinet in Registry
9	Each certificate is saved on access-controlled folder and drive	
10	Certificates are stored in a locked cabinet in Registry until the graduation ceremony	
11	The link for electronic certificates is e-mailed to graduates post-graduation	
12	Students who graduate in absentia, must arrange with the LC for the collection of the Certificate	LC to forward student details to Registry. For security purposes, only the Receptionist is to support Registry with ensuring certificate is retrieved and signed for by the graduate. ID to be verified with the student.

20. ANNEXURE C: ISSUING OF ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPTS

PROCEDURE

This procedure document shall be followed once approval has been received by Senate.

Step	Description	Notes
	Academic Transcripts	
1	Registry to quality check Academic Transcripts	Registry verifies the student's details on the Learning Management System (LMS) against the academic transcript. Electronic signatures are used.
2	The Learning Coordinator issues the electronically signed academic transcript to the student at graduation.	
3	In addition to the academic transcript issued with the qualification certificate, students may request an official academic transcript from their Learning Coordinator at any time	All requests must be made in writing.
4	Where a student has successfully completed a qualification, but it has not yet been ratified by Senate, the student may request a completion letter from Registry confirming successful completion pending Senate ratification.	All requests must be made in writing.

21. ANNEXURE D: RE-ISSUING CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

This procedure document shall be followed if a student requires a duplicate or replacement certificate.

Step	Description	Notes
1	Should a certificate be incorrect or damaged while in the possession of the Institute, the student must provide a written request for a replacement certificate and return the original certificate where applicable.	No fee is payable where the replacement is due to an administrative error by the Institute.
2	Should the student have lost or damaged the original certificate after it was issued, the	An affidavit, certified copy of the student's identity

	completed request form for a duplicate certificate must be submitted.	document and proof of payment of the prescribed fee are required.
3	Registry will verify the certification details against the unique number in the Certificate Register.	The certificate will be re-issued using the same certificate number as the original.
4	Registry sends the certificate details on an encrypted file to the designer	A non-disclosure agreement is in place. Replacement certificates shall reflect the approved correction.
5	Registry receives the replacement certificate from the designer	
6	Registry sends an encrypted file to the printing supplier for the printing of the certificate.	A non-disclosure agreement is in place.
7	The printing supplier delivers the printed certificate to Registry.	
8	Registry quality checks the printed certificate	
10	The re-issued certificate is scanned and saved on the access-controlled folder and drive	
11	The original, incorrect, or damaged certificate, where returned, must be securely destroyed by Registry before releasing the re-issued certificate to the student.	Registry must update the Certificate Register accordingly.