

Choosing private higher education? BAC accreditation and why it matters

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The demand for higher education in South Africa far outstrips the places available at the country's 26 publicly funded universities. Private tertiary institutions play a critical role in making quality further education more available to the population. This is not simply about offering more or alternative places in tertiary education. Some of South Africa's private higher institutions have evolved into leading providers in their educational fields. Whether, public or private, all tertiary institutions are overseen by the Department of Higher Education and Training, as well as the Council on Higher Education (CHE) which sets the quality standards for all universities and colleges.



The academic dean of one of the country's top private institutions, Dr Jaclyn Lotter of [Sacap \(The South African College of Applied Psychology\)](#) says, "Generally, there is a positive regard when it comes to the quality of higher education in South Africa. However, internationally, only a handful of our legacy universities are really well-known. In our highly mobile world, more and more post-graduate students and qualified job seekers are on the lookout for opportunities to either study further abroad or work internationally. They want their hard-earned qualifications to be recognised on a global scale, and this is why there is an increasing focus on reputable accreditation processes that signify that the college or university where you studied meets an international gold standard for higher education."

“ This is an important way for private institutions that don't have the luxury of elite histories to fairly build their reputations in the modern world based on their high standards of academics, student support, good governance and financial stability. ”

– Dr Jaclyn Lotter, academic dean at Sacap

Sacap has recently achieved accreditation from the [British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education \(BAC\)](#) which has benchmarked over 200 higher education providers in 20 countries impacting on over 300,000 students. A not-for-profit social enterprise established in 1984 and recognised by the UK Government, BAC helps students

choose higher education institutions that meet globally recognised quality standards.

Dr Lotter says: “This is an important way for private institutions that don’t have the luxury of elite histories to fairly build their reputations in the modern world based on their high standards of academics, student support, good governance and financial stability. The BAC accreditation process is a particularly rigorous one, and it is continuous as every four years, institutions must be able to demonstrate that they have maintained or exceeded the standards. Achieving the accreditation makes it easier for parents and prospective students to choose a reliable, quality higher education provider. Sacap graduates also benefit from the ways that BAC accreditation raises the profile of our institution in international markets.”



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The BAC accreditation of Sacap involved not only an extensive 16-month document review process, but included a three-day site visit by three BAC inspectors who evaluated the institution based on:

- Governance, strategy and financial management
- General and academic management and administration
- Teaching, learning and assessment
- Student support, guidance and progression
- Premises, facilities and learning resources
- Quality management, assurance and enhancement

Dr Lotter says: “Working with the BAC has been a developmental process from the start. The inspectors are not just looking to judge and critique, they are also fostering collaboration and providing feedback which helps to position the institution for further improvement and growth. Despite it being a gruelling process, the whole experience was very positive. We chose BAC precisely because it is so rigorous. While Sacap has always maintained and exceeded the standards set by the South African regulators, this was an opportunity to reflect on our entire institution from a variety of angles and through an independent lens from beyond our borders.”

Meeting rigorous international standards and achieving notable accreditation from organisations such as BAC helps to level the playing field for private tertiary institutions in South Africa. Due to high demand and limited places, global recognition assures students of quality education standards as well as potentially opening up international further study and career opportunities.

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