



Government Gazette Staatskoerant

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA

Vol. 565

Pretoria, 27 July 2012

No. 35546

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GOVERNMENT NOTICE

SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SAQA)

No. 584

27 July 2012



In terms of Section 13(1)(h)(i) of the National Qualifications Framework Act, Act 67 of 2008, SAQA must develop and implement policy and criteria for the development, registration and publication of qualifications and part-qualifications.

The SAQA Board approved the attached *Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part-Qualifications on the NQF* for consultation with the Quality Councils and to invite comment from the public.

The closing date for public comment is 31 August 2012.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Samuels', is written over a horizontal line.

JOE SAMUELS
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE OFFICER

27 JULY 2012



POLICY AND CRITERIA FOR THE REGISTRATION OF QUALIFICATIONS AND PART-QUALIFICATIONS ON THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

June 2012

PREAMBLE

1. The South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications. The NQF was established under the SAQA Act, Act 58 of 1995¹, and continues under the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008, which came into effect on 1 June 2009.
2. The objectives of the NQF are to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large through:
 - a. Creating a single integrated national framework for learning achievements.
 - b. Facilitating access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths.

¹ The SAQA Act, Act 58 of 1995 was repealed in 2008 and replaced by the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008. The NQF Act (2008), in section 36, makes allowance for transitional arrangements between the SAQA Act (1995) and the NQF Act (2008).

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- c. Enhancing the quality of education and training.
 - d. Accelerating the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.
 3. SAQA is charged with overseeing the further development and implementation of the NQF and understands it as a system of communication, coordination, and collaboration across education, training, development and work. In advancing the NQF objectives, SAQA embraces diversity, environmental sustainability and social justice.
 4. The NQF is a single integrated system which comprises of three co-ordinated qualifications sub-frameworks, for:
 - a. General and Further Education and Training, contemplated in the GENFETQA Act;
 - b. Higher Education, contemplated in the Higher Education Act; and
 - c. Trades and Occupations, contemplated in the Skills Development Act.
 5. In terms of Sections 5(3), 13(h)(ii) and 27(h)(i) and (iv) of the NQF Act (2008), and notwithstanding the provisions of any other Act, SAQA and the Quality Councils must:
 - a. develop, foster and maintain a coordinated and transparent national framework for the recognition of learning achievements;
 - b. ensure that South African qualifications are internationally comparable and meet appropriate criteria as determined by the Minister ;
 - c. ensure that South African qualifications are of an acceptable quality;
 - d. develop policy and criteria for the registration of qualifications and part-qualifications on the NQF
 6. The quality of qualifications and part-qualifications resides in the:
 - a. fitness and suitability of the qualification or part-qualification for its intended purpose;
 - b. advancement of the objectives of the NQF;

- c. the relationship between the elements of the qualification and its learning components; and
 - d. delivery of the qualification/part qualification and assessment of learner achievement.
7. In evaluating qualifications for registration on the NQF, SAQA continues to apply the criteria which were in place under the SAQA Act until the Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part-Qualifications are approved.
8. Following the approval of this policy and criteria, Quality Councils will have to develop and implement sector-specific policy and criteria, taking into account this policy and criteria as per section 27 (h)(i) of the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008.

PURPOSE

9. This policy and criteria document sets out the requirements that SAQA will apply when it registers qualifications and part-qualifications on the NQF.

DEFINITIONS

10. "**Articulation**" means facilitating the continual progress and mobility of learners within and across each of the three sub-frameworks and to the world of work, which is achieved by the intentional design of structure and content of qualifications.
11. "**Assessment criteria**" means the standards used to guide learning and assess learner achievement and/or to evaluate and certify competence.
12. "**Credits**" means the amount of learning contained in a qualification or part-qualification whereby one (1) credit is equal to ten (10) notional learning hours.
13. "**Entry requirements**" means the academic and/or practical, and/or work experience that a learner must have completed to be able to be admitted for a qualification. This may include recognition of other forms of prior learning such

as non-formal and informal learning and work experience deemed as comparable for entry. In the South African context, entry requirements also take into account the broad socio-political issue of access.

14. **Exit level outcomes** refer to the outcomes which define the level of performance according to which a candidate completing the qualification is assessed.
15. **"International comparability"** means an analysis of how a qualification compares with and relates to similar international qualifications.
16. **"Learning"** means the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, values, skill, competence and/or experience.
17. **"Learning programme"** means a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification.
18. **"Level"** means one of the series of levels of learning achievement arranged in ascending order from one to ten according to which the NQF is organised.
19. **"Level descriptor"** means that statement describing learning achievement at a particular level of the NQF that provides a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.
20. **"National Qualifications Framework"** is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications.
21. **"Notional hours of learning"** comprise the total amount of time it would take an average learner to meet the outcomes defined in a learning experience and include, *inter alia*, face-to face contact time, time spent in structured learning in the workplace, time for completing assignments and research, and time spent in assessment processes.

22. **“Outcomes”** means the contextually demonstrated end-products of specific learning processes, which include knowledge, skills and values. Outcomes could be **generic** in that they apply across many fields of learning (generic outcomes include aspects such as “ability to problem-solve” or “understanding the world as a set of inter-related systems”).
23. **“Part-qualification”** means an assessed unit of learning that is registered or to be registered as part of a qualification on the NQF with a clearly defined purpose.
24. **“Qualification”** means 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 has been assessed in terms of exit level outcomes, registered on the NQF and certified and awarded by a recognized body.
25. **“Qualification type”** means the classification of a qualification within a sub-framework of the NQF.
26. **“Recognition of prior learning”** means the acceptance of such learning for the purpose of awarding credits towards the qualification or the awarding of the complete qualification, or for the purpose of granting admission to the qualification by comparing the previous learning and experience of a learner, howsoever obtained, against the outcomes required for a specified qualification.
27. **“Sub-framework”** means one of three coordinated qualifications sub-frameworks which make up the NQF as a single integrated system: The Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework, the General and Further Education and Training Sub-Framework and the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework.

SCOPE

28. These policy and criteria apply to the evaluation, registration and publication of qualifications and part-qualifications on the South African NQF taking into account the relevant sub-frameworks.

OBJECTIVES

29. To advance the objectives of the NQF, these policy and criteria are designed to:
- a. facilitate the registration of qualifications and part-qualifications recommended by the Quality Councils to SAQA on the NQF where they meet the criteria set out in this policy;
 - b. ensure that registered qualifications and part-qualifications are relevant to the world of work and promote responsible citizenship in a democratic society and advance knowledge and innovation for a prosperous South Africa;
 - c. establish and maintain coherence between the three sub-frameworks in order to clarify and strengthen articulation between qualifications within each sub-framework and between the sub-frameworks;
 - d. promote public understanding of, and trust in, the NQF through the registration of high quality, nationally relevant, and internationally comparable qualifications and part-qualifications;
 - e. support the coherence of purpose between education, training and development nationally; and
 - f. support the development of a national career development system.

POLICY FOR THE REGISTRATION OF QUALIFICATIONS AND PART-QUALIFICATIONS ON THE NQF

30. SAQA will register a qualification or part-qualification on the NQF on the recommendation of a Quality Council provided that the criteria for registration on the NQF as set out in sections 40 and 41 are fulfilled.

31. Qualifications and part-qualifications for registration on the NQF must:

- a. include clear specifications of outcomes;
 - b. state the minimum requirements to obtain the qualification; and
 - c. identify the relevant sub-framework under which it is recommended for registration on the NQF.
32. Part-qualifications registered on the NQF should indicate the registered qualification(s) of which they form part, or will form part.
 33. Qualifications and part-qualifications submitted to SAQA for registration, but which do not meet the registration criteria, will be returned to the relevant Quality Council for amendment.
 34. SAQA will publish its intention to register a qualification or part-qualification on the SAQA website and through the Government Gazette, which will be open for public comment for twenty-one (21) days.
 35. The SAQA Board is the final authority that registers qualifications and part-qualifications on the NQF.
 36. Quality Councils will advise SAQA, and SAQA in return will advise the Quality Councils, in writing, of qualifications and part-qualifications that may be regarded as no longer servicing a need in the system. The Quality Councils, in consultation with the relevant Minister and SAQA, will ensure that transitional arrangements are in place leading to the expiration of the qualification or part-qualification. These qualifications, even though no longer offered, still form part of the NQF.
 37. All qualifications and part-qualifications registered on the NQF will be published on the SAQA website.
 38. Foreign qualifications to be registered on the South African NQF, must meet these criteria and be recommended for registration by the relevant Quality Council.

CRITERIA FOR THE REGISTRATION OF QUALIFICATIONS AND PART-QUALIFICATIONS ON THE NQF

39. Qualifications and part-qualifications for registration on the NQF must:

- a. be recommended and submitted to SAQA for registration by a Quality Council
- b. comply with the criteria for registration
- c. be written in English
- d. meet the criteria as laid down by the sub-framework for the qualification/part-qualification type

40. Qualifications and part-qualifications for registration must be submitted in the following format:

a. Title

The qualification must comply with the qualification type description provided for in the relevant sub-framework of the NQF.

- b. Field and Sub-Field (this may include, where applicable, the Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) category and/or Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO) code)

c. Level of the Qualification

The published level descriptors must be used to determine the level of the qualification. In a part-qualification, this may be at the same level as the parent qualification or at a level within the range allowed for in the qualification type.

d. Credits

The credits must be calculated on the basis of one (1) credit is equal to ten (10) notional hours of learning. The minimum credit allocation for a qualification must comply with the requirements for the qualification type as determined within the relevant sub-framework of the NQF.

e. Rationale

The rationale should:

- i. Indicate how the qualification meets specific needs in the sector for which it is developed. Where relevant, include evidence of consultation with a recognized professional body.
- ii. Identify the range of typical learners and indicate the occupations, jobs or areas of activity in which the qualifying learners will operate.
- iii. Indicate the learning pathway where the qualification resides.
- iv. Indicate how the qualification will provide benefits to the learner, society and the economy.

f. Purpose

- i. The purpose should describe the context of the qualification or part-qualification and what it is intended to achieve in the national, professional and/or career context.
- ii. The purpose statement should capture what the qualifying learner will know and be able to do on achievement of the qualification or part-qualification. The Exit Level Outcomes must be linked to the purpose of the qualification. Graduate attributes may be used where appropriate.

g. Rules of Combination

There must be coherence between the constituent parts of the qualification.

h. Entry Requirements

The minimum entry requirements to the qualification must be stated. The entry requirements should be aligned to the approved institutional/provider admissions policies.

i. Exit Level Outcomes and Associated Assessment Criteria

- i. The exit level outcomes should indicate what the learner will be able to do and know as a result of completing the qualification or part-

qualification. These competencies relate directly to the competencies required for the further learning and/or the work for which the qualification or part-qualification was designed.

- ii. Associated assessment criteria are written for the qualification or part-qualification to indicate the nature and level of the assessment associated with the qualification or part-qualification and how the exit level outcomes could be assessed in an integrated way. The criteria can be given as a comprehensive set derived from the level descriptors.

j. International Comparability

A statement on how the qualification compares with or relates to similar qualifications offered in other parts of the world must be given. References may be made to international agreements on relevant qualifications' standards such as the Washington and Dublin Accords for Engineering; International Labour Organisation and World Health Organisation protocols and; the International Standards Organisation.

International comparability could assist in determining the articulation possibilities of the qualification with qualifications in other national and regional qualification frameworks.

k. Integrated Assessment

The assessment undertaken to determine the learners' competence and successful completion of learning in the qualification must be stated. This could include reference to formative and summative assessment; ratio of assignment work to academic examinations; the role of work integrated learning; other forms of integrated learning and; its assessment.

l. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

A statement as to how RPL will be applied to gain entry to or achieve the qualification must be given. RPL should state the scope of RPL in regard to

broadening access as well as to acknowledgement of achievement through experience or forms of learning other than formal learning.

m. Articulation

A statement describing the horizontal, vertical and diagonal articulation possibilities within the relevant sub-framework and between sub-frameworks, where appropriate.

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