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GENERAL NOTICES

NOTICE 1036 OF 2013

National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa

Draft for Public Comment
15 October 2013

Introductory note

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act (Act 67 of 2008) mandates the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to develop policy and criteria after consultation with the Quality Councils, for assessment. The attached draft policy has been developed by SAQA in close consultation with an Assessment Reference Group (please see a list of Reference Group members at the end of this document).

There are a number of national assessment policies in existence. The present policy speaks to all existing national assessment policies, and all future assessment policies relating to NQF qualifications and part qualifications, and professional designations in South Africa. The purpose of the National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment (hereafter referred to as the National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment) is to set minimum criteria and provide guidance for effective, valid, reliable and consistent, fair and transparent, and appropriate assessment in the context of the NQF.

SAQA initially developed policy, criteria and guidelines for assessment in 2001 and 2005. These documents have been used widely but need to be updated for alignment with the NQF Act 67 of 2008 that replaced the SAQA Act 58 of 1995. The new National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment take into account the roles of the Department of Higher Education and Training, the Department of Basic Education, SAQA,

the Quality Councils, Professional Bodies, providers at all levels in the system, and learners.

SAQA encourages all practitioners directly or indirectly involved in assessment to engage with this draft policy and submit comments to SAQA within 45 days of its publication in the Government Gazette. Comments should be sent to:

   Dr Heidi Bolton (hbolton@saqa.co.za)

It is the intention that this policy will contribute to the quality of learning and assessment for all learners and educators[1]. The policy has been developed in line with the principles of lifelong learning which involve development of the whole learner, and an approach in which assessment is seen as a dynamic part of learning. Assessment is sought which enables learning and which can measure changes in learning.

We trust that through this policy it will be possible for the key NQF organisations and stakeholders in the system collectively and demonstrably to work to better the lives of learners of all ages and in all fields of learning.

SAQA looks forward to working with the Quality Councils and a broad range of stakeholders to refine the policy.

Joe Samuels
Chief Executive Officer

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[1] The term 'learners' includes all those engaged in learning whether pupils at school; students at colleges, universities, comprehensives or universities of technology; unemployed people, people in the workplace, youth and adults across the board. 'Educator' includes teachers, lecturers, facilitators, assessors, moderators. The terms 'learners and educators' have been used in the interests of maximising inclusivity.

Glossary of Terms

The following list of terms is elaborated in an attempt to clarify concepts used in this document.

"Accountability" means that all role-players can provide evidence of the development and moderation of assessment tasks and processes, and that these tasks and processes are aligned with National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment as well as sectoral policies derived from the national policy.

"Accredited provider" means a legally established institution (public or private) that has been recognised, usually for a particular period of time, by a Quality Council or its appointed agent, as having the capacity or provisional capacity to offer a qualification or part qualification registered on the NQF at the required standard.

"Affirmation" means confirming what a learner knows in a subject-specific, discipline-specific, occupation-specific, profession-specific, or trade-specific way rather than just noting that something has been ''well done'' by a learner or candidate.

"Applied competence" means a learner's ability to integrate concepts, ideas and actions in authentic, real-life contexts which is expressed as practical, foundational and reflexive competencies.

"Assessment" means the process used to identify, gather and interpret information against the required competencies in a qualification, part qualification, or professional designation in order to make a judgment about a learner's achievement. Assessment can be formal, non-formal or informal; it should include Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Accumulation and Transfer wherever possible, it must be integral to learning, and serve to better learning at all times.

"Assessment body" means an entity accredited/ delegated by a Quality Council to conduct external summative assessment and moderate site-based assessment for specified qualifications, part qualifications, professional designations, or prior learning.

"Assessment criteria" are elements or standards used to guide learning, assess learner achievement, and/ or evaluate and certify competence.

"Assessor" means a person able to conduct high-quality internal and external assessment for specific qualifications, part qualifications, or professional designations. Assessors may also be called lecturers, teachers, educators, trainers, examiners, moderators, chief markers, markers, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessors, and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) officials.

"Bias" means assessment practices that hinder or advantage particular learners or groups of learners. An absence of bias is sought, where assessment processes are clear, transparent and available to all learners. All learners and educators are treated with equal respect and consideration regardless of social, economic, cultural, faith-based, ethnic, gender or other differences. Disabled learners and educators are given appropriate support.

"Blended learning" is learning and assessment based on a variety of modes, types, sites, outputs, contexts, platforms and other aspects including contact and technology-mediated learning.

"Council on Higher Education (CHE)" is an independent statutory body 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 67 of 2008 to achieve the objectives of the NQF and to develop and manage the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF).

"Credit" means a measure of the volume of learning required for a qualification or part qualification, quantified as the number of notional study hours required for achieving the learning outcomes specified for the qualification or part qualification. One such credit is equated to ten (10) notional hours of learning.

"Credibility" means a respected outcome, process or product which results from a fair, valid, and reliable validation process designed to enhance the quality of a qualification, part qualification, or professional designation.

"Credit accumulation" means the totalling of credits towards the completion of a qualification, part qualification, or professional designation. In Higher Education it includes the process where learners are able to accrue credits from a programme at one date, and have these credits counted towards the

full programme at a later date, subject to their currency. In General and Further Education and Training it refers to the accumulation of subject credits or learning area credits.

"Credit transfer" means the vertical, horizontal or diagonal relocation of credits towards a qualification or part qualification registered on the same or different sub-framework. In Higher Education it includes recognition of part qualifications from another institution or from another faculty or discipline in the same institution. In General and Further Education and Training (GFET) it means recognition of credits between qualifications on the GFET sub-framework of qualifications, credits of qualifications registered on another sub-framework, and/or exemption. For Trades and Occupations it means recognition of part qualifications from another institution or workplace based provider, or recognition within the same discipline, but another occupation.

"Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT)" means an arrangement whereby the diverse features of both credit accumulation and credit transfer are combined to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace. In Higher Education, credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) is the process whereby a learner's achievements are recognised and contribute to further learning even if the student does not achieve a qualification or part qualification. All credits for an incomplete qualification may be recognised by the same or a different institution as meeting part of the requirements for a different qualification, or may be recognised by a different institution as meeting part of the requirements for the same qualification. Individual mobility between programmes and institutions is determined by curriculum requirements and is flexible.

"Diagnostic assessment" means assessment conducted before teaching or training starts, for the purposes of creating suitable learning environments.

"Dynamic assessment" refers to assessment practice in which mediation, feedback and systematic monitoring of learner change form an explicit part of the learning context. The goal of dynamic assessment is to see whether, by how much and in what ways those being assessed change as a result of being presented with opportunities to learn.

"Educator" is an inclusive term referring to teachers at schools; lecturers at colleges, traditional universities, comprehensive universities, and universities of technology; trainers in workplaces; facilitators, assessors, moderators, and people teaching, educating, training, facilitating or assessing learners across the board.

"e-learning" is learning that makes use of technology-mediated features.

"Evaluation of learning" means a process involving gathering evidence and making informed judgments about a learner's knowledge, skills, practice or aptitude in relation to an area of learning or work. Evaluation involves taking a number of factors into account and making a judgment about worth, merit or impact of learning or a programme of learning.

"Examiner" means a person appointed to develop, administer, and oversee a formal assessment, including a person appointed to develop assessment instruments (such as exam papers, marking guidelines, etcetera). An examiner is a specialist.

"External assessment" means assessment conducted by a person or body not directly involved in the development and/or delivery of the learning being assessed, and at a site external to the site of learning.

"Fairness" in assessment means that learners are assessed on what they know and have been taught; where questions are set in relation to the cognitive and affective curriculum covered in the teaching and learning; and where in the case of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), there has been preparation for the mediation of the required knowledge.

"Feedback" means reporting back to learners very specifically, on how they have performed in an assessment activity, regardless of the level of formality of the assessment activity. Feedback specifies what was done well, and why, and provides what was missing from learners' texts, performances or demonstrations, in order to enhance learning.

"Formal assessment" is any assessment for which assessment processes, tools, and results are recorded towards achievement of a qualification, part qualification or professional designation.

"Formal learning" means learning that occurs in an organised and structured education and training environment and that is explicitly designated as such.

"Formative assessment" means a range of formal, non-formal, and informal on going assessment procedures used to focus teaching and learning activities to improve learner attainment.

"Guidance" in the present assessment policy means information provided to steer sectoral, organisational and individual assessment policy and practice, towards alignment of these policies and practices with the national policy.

"Informal assessment" refers to any judgments made or feedback given in the course of teaching and learning activities. Informal assessments may be in written form but are not usually recorded.

"Informal learning" means learning that results from daily activities related to paid or unpaid work, family or community life, or leisure.

"Integrated assessment" means assessment which involves all the differing types of assessment tasks required for a particular qualification, part qualification, or professional designation, such as written assessment of theory and practical demonstration of competence.

"Internal assessment" means any assessment conducted by a provider of learning. It is assessment conducted by a person or body directly involved in the development and/or delivery of the learning being assessed.

"Learner" is an inclusive term referring to anyone learning, including pupils at school; students at colleges, traditional universities, comprehensives, and universities of technology; apprentices, learners in learnerships, interns; people doing training, and people learning non-formally and informally as well as people enrolled for particular qualifications or part qualifications.

"Learning outcomes" are the contextually demonstrated end-products of specific learning processes, which include knowledge, skills and values.

"Learning pathway" means sequencing of qualifications that allows learners to move vertically, diagonally, and in some cases horizontally, through NQF levels giving learners recognition for full or partially completed qualifications or part qualifications. Learning pathways can also lead to professional designations.

"Learning programme" means a structured and purposeful set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification.

"Lifelong learning" means learning that takes place in all contexts in life – formally, non-formally, and informally. It includes learning behaviours and obtaining knowledge; understanding; attitudes; and values and competences for personal growth, social and economic well-being, democratic citizenship, cultural identity and employability.

"Mixed-mode or multi-modal learning" is learning that makes use of different learning sites and different forms of delivery including but not limited to face-to-face, distance and e-learning, and full-time, part-time, and block-release study.

"Moderation" is internal and external verification that provides proof that an assessment system is credible and that assessors and learners behave in an ethical way; and that assessments are fair, valid, reliable and practicable.

"National assessment policy" in the present policy means all policies that are addressed to all organisations of a particular type in South Africa, for example National Assessment Policy issued by the Department of Basic Education may be addressed to all schools, or all Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges. National Assessment Policy issued by a Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) may be addressed to all providers in its sector.

"National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)" is the electronic management information system of the NQF under the authority of SAQA, which contains records of qualifications, part qualifications, learner achievements, recognised professional bodies, professional designations, and all related information such as registrations and accreditations.

"National Qualifications Framework (NQF)" means a comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the classification, registration, and publication of articulated and quality assured national qualifications and part qualifications. The South African NQF is a single integrated system comprising three coordinated qualifications sub-frameworks for: General and Further Education and Training; Higher Education; and Trades and Occupations, respectively.

"NQF Act" means the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act No. 67 of 2008.

"Non-formal learning" means planned learning activities, not explicitly designated as learning, towards the achievement of a qualification or part qualification. It is often associated with learning that results in improved workplace practice.

"Normativity" means relating to an accepted norm or standard in a particular context.

"Notional hours" means the agreed estimate of the learning time that it would take an average learner to meet the defined learning outcomes. It includes consideration of contact time, research, completion of assignments, time spent in structured learning in the workplace, individual learning, and assessment. Ten (10) notional hours equate to one (1) credit.

"Occupational qualification" means a qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession, resulting in learning in and for the workplace.

"Outcome" is a contextually demonstrated end-product of a specific learning process which includes knowledge, skills and values. An outcome can be 'generic' if it applies across several fields of learning (for example 'Ability to problem-solve'), or 'specific' if it applies within a specialised field. Not all learning outcomes are amenable to measurement.

"Part qualification" means an assessed unit of learning with a clearly defined purpose, that is, or will be, registered as part of a qualification on the NQF.

"Portfolio development" means an accumulation of the collection of multiple forms of evidence that is seen to represent a candidate's learning.

"Practicability" means the logistical arrangements around assessment practices such as financial resources, facilities, equipment and time, where applicable simulations could be used.

"Private provider" means a non-state-funded body that offers any education or training programme that leads to a qualification or part qualification registered on the NQF. A registered private provider is a private provider meeting the minimum criteria set by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) for inclusion in the its list of providers allowed to operate in South Africa. Private skills development providers are exempt from this requirement. Registration is a pre-requisite for accreditation by the relevant Quality Council (See also ''Accredited provider'').

"Professional Body" means any body of expert practitioners in an occupational field, and includes an occupational body.

"Professional designation" means a title or status conferred by a professional body in recognition of a person's expertise or right to practice in an occupational field.

"Programme" means a ''learning programme'' in which a structured and purposeful set of learning experiences occur that lead to a qualification or part qualification, or ''curriculum'' (statement of the training structure and expected methods of teaching and learning that underpin a qualification or part qualification to facilitate a more general understanding of its implementation in an education system).

"Progression" is the means by which individuals are permitted to move through NQF levels by accumulating appropriate combinations of credit.

"Provider" means a body that offers any education programme, or any trade and occupational learning programme, that leads to a qualification or part -qualification on the NQF.

"Public providers" are institutions that have been established and funded by the state through the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Public providers include FET Colleges, universities, universities of technology, and comprehensive universities. Private providers, on the other hand, are owned by private organisations or individuals. Although many private providers offer the same qualifications as public providers, private provider institutions are mainly privately funded or sponsored and may be but are generally not subsidised by the state.

"Qualification" means a qualification registered on the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

"Quality" means meeting the requirements of nationally agreed outcomes and performance/ assessment criteria, thus facilitating both provision and monitoring.

"Quality Council" means one of the three Councils (statutory bodies) tasked with developing and managing each of the sub-frameworks of the NQF in order to ensure that agreed quality standards are met: The Council on Higher Education (CHE) for the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF); Umalusi for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETSQF); and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) for the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF).

"Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)" established in terms of the NQF Act 67 of 2008 is mandated to achieve the objectives of the NQF and to develop and manage the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF).

"Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)" means the principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated and assessed for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development.

"Recognition of Professional Bodies" means the status assigned by SAQA to a statutory or non-statutory professional body for the purposes of the NQF Act 67 of 2008 when it fulfils set criteria, including the registration of its professional designations on the NQF.

"Registered examination centre" is an institution recognised as having the capacity to conduct examinations after having gone through a registration process undertaken by a recognised assessment body.

"Registered professional designation" is a professional designation linked to the relevant professional body and underlying qualification, and approved by SAQA for inclusion on the NQF.

"Registration of a private provider" is the inclusion by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), of a private provider that meets minimum criteria set by the DHET, in a list of providers allowed to operate in South Africa. Private skills development providers are exempt from this requirement. Registration is a pre-requisite for accreditation by the relevant Quality Council.

"Registration of a qualification or part qualification" means formal inclusion of a qualification or part qualification on the NQF, with an identification of the relevant sub-framework, when a qualification or part qualification meets the set criteria as recommended by the Quality Council concerned.

"Reliability" in assessment means consistency and the extent to which in similar contexts the same assessment-related judgments can be made. It means for example that assumptions about learners do not influence assessment processes.

"Replicability" means the extent to which assessment can be repeated and lead to comparable results in comparable settings.

"Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA)" means a body established in terms of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and continuing in terms of the Skills Development Amendment Act 37 of 2008, to develop and implement sector skills plans and promote learning programmes in the respective sectors, including workplace learning.

"South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)" is the statutory authority established in terms of the SAQA Act 58 of 1995 and continuing in terms of the NQF Act 67 of 2008, which oversees the implementation and further development of the NQF, the achievement of the objectives of the NQF, and the coordination of the three NQF sub-frameworks.

"Site-based assessment" means assessment tasks administered on-site by educators or examiners at the centre at which tuition is offered.

"Sub-framework of the NQF" means one of three coordinated qualifications sub-frameworks which make up the South African NQF as a single integrated system, namely: the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF); the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETSQF); and the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF) (See also ''Quality Councils'').

"Summative assessment'' means assessment conducted at the end of sections of learning or at the end of a whole learning programme, to evaluate learning related to a particular qualification, part qualification, or professional designation.

"Trade" means an occupation for which an artisan qualification and relevant trade test is required in terms of the Skills Development Act 37 of 2008. SETAs are required to apply to the National Artisan Moderating Body (NAMB) to have an occupation listed as a trade.

"Transparency" in assessment refers to the extent to which the assessment criteria and processes are known, visible to and understood by learners and the various role-players in the assessment process. Assessment is said to be transparent when all role-players can provide evidence of the development and moderation of assessment tasks and processes with which they are involved.

"Umalusi" is the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training established by the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act 58 of 2001. It is mandated by the NQF Act 67 of 2008 to support the achievement of the objectives of the NQF and to develop and manage the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETSQF).

"Validation" is any assessment-related activity or practice which relates to the credibility of assessment.

"Validity" is associated with the appropriateness, usefulness and meaningfulness of assessment procedures, methods, instruments, and materials. Assessment is valid when assessment tasks actually test the knowledge and skills required for defined competences and learning outcomes.

"Vocational orientation" means to provide the knowledge and skills to enter the economy through a general, broad orientation in vocational areas, as well as general learning in essential areas such as Languages and Mathematics.

"Work experience" means exposure and interactions gained through being in the workplace.

"Work Integrated Learning (WIL)" is a characteristic of vocational and professionally oriented qualifications that may be incorporated into programmes at all levels in all three sub-frameworks. WIL may take various forms including simulated learning, work-directed theoretical learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, and workplace-based learning.

"Workplace-based assessment" means an assessment undertaken in the workplace making use of naturally occurring evidence.

"Workplace-based learning'' means the exposure and interactions required to practice the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes required in the workplace.

A. **National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications, Part qualifications and Professional Designations**

1. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act 67 of 2008 mandates the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to develop, after consultation with the Quality Councils, national policy for assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT).

2. The National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment relating to NQF Qualifications, Part qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa (hereafter referred to as National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment) replaces and builds on the strengths of, the policy document *Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit standards and Qualifications* developed in 2001; and *Guidelines for Integrated Assessment* developed in 2005 by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) within the context of the SAQA Act 58 of 1995. It also builds on new insights gained from ongoing research and practice. It establishes the core principles for and understandings of assessment as part of the further development and implementation of the NQF in South Africa in accordance with NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008.

3. The policy has been developed in a context in which there are already multiple assessment policies catering at national level for sub-sectors of the education and training system, where these policies vary in scope, clarity, comprehensiveness, fairness, and in the amount of guidance they provide.

4. The National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment must be read in conjunction with:
   a) National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level Descriptors developed by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)[2012];
   b) National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) developed by SAQA [2013];
   c) National Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) developed by SAQA [2014];
   d) Assessment policies developed by the Department of Higher Education and Training; the Department of Basic Education; the Council on Higher Education; the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations; and Umalusi.

B. **Purpose and Objectives**

5. The purpose of the National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment is to set minimum standards and provide guidance for effective, valid, reliable and consistent, fair and

transparent, and appropriate assessment within the context of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, Act 67 of 2008. Lifelong learning, a competence-based approach, and learning outcomes are key parts of this context.

6. The National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment positions assessment in relation to the overarching principles and priorities of the NQF in South Africa which comprise:
   a) redress of unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities;
   b) access to quality education, training and career paths for all South Africans;
   c) Recognition of Prior Learning: fair recognition of knowledge, skills, attributes and values in the workforce, and amongst unemployed persons, in South Africa;
   d) shared understanding of the quality of qualifications and part qualifications registered on the NQF, and professional designations; and
   e) articulation within and between the three sub-frameworks of the NQF.

7. While National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment are binding, they seek to:
   a) be enabling, to provide sufficient information, guidance and clarity that makes possible their implementation in the spirit intended; and
   b) facilitate differing sectoral approaches in a way that is not restricting of innovation but that is aligned with NQF principles and international best practice.

8. The objectives of the National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment are to:
   a) stipulate assessment policy requirements for the three sub-frameworks of the NQF, ensuring that all of their constituencies are catered for;
   b) develop shared understanding of best practice principles to which assessment relating to NQF qualifications and part qualifications, and all registered professional designations, must adhere;
   c) provide the dimensions of a holistic approach to assessment, and all key aspects of assessment to make visible the requirements;
   d) clarify the assessment-related roles and functions of assessment bodies, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the Quality Councils, education and training providers, professional bodies, and all role-players involved in assessment, with respect to NQF qualifications and part qualifications, and all registered professional designations; and
   e) make systemic monitoring and evaluation mandatory in order to ensure that guidance regarding assessment reaches the organisations and individuals who will be using it.

C. Scope and Application

9. The National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment provides for assessment relating to all NQF qualifications and part qualifications, and all registered professional designations.

10. The National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment applies to:
    a) the three Quality Councils and sub-frameworks of the NQF with their providers of education and training; statutory and non-statutory professional bodies with their registered professional designations; employers, all role-players involved in assessment across the board including learners;
    b) all qualifications and part qualifications registered on the South African NQF; and
    c) all teaching and learning that leads to registered professional designations.

D. Background

11. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in South Africa is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the classification, registration, and publication of articulated and quality assured national qualifications and part qualifications. The South African NQF is a single integrated system comprising three coordinated qualifications sub-frameworks for General and Further Education and Training; Higher Education and Training; and Trades and Occupations, respectively.

12. The NQF was established under the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act, Act 58 of 1995 and continues under the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008, which came into effect on 1 June 2009.

13. The objectives of the NQF are to:
    a) create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;
    b) facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths;
    c) enhance the quality of education and training;
    d) accelerate the redress of past and ongoing unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.

14. SAQA and the Quality Councils must seek to achieve the objectives of the NQF
    by:
    a) developing, fostering, and maintaining an integrated and transparent national framework for the recognition of learning achievements;
    b) ensuring that South African qualifications meet appropriate criteria, determined by the Ministers, and are internationally comparable; and

   c) ensuring that South African qualifications are of an acceptable quality.

15. SAQA's mandate to oversee the further development and implementation of the NQF, and to coordinate the sub-frameworks of the NQF includes Section 13[h] of the NQF Act 67 of 2008, through which SAQA is required, after consultation with the Quality Councils, to develop and implement policy and criteria for assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT).

E. Core Assumptions and Principles of Assessment

16. The purposes underlying any assessment, how assessment is going to be inter-faced with and used as part of learning, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria need to be established and documented before learning commences.

17. Adherence to the following assessment principles is required:
   a) **validity**, where assessment procedures, methods, instruments and materials are appropriate, useful and meaningful. Assessment is valid when assessment tasks actually test the knowledge and skills required for defined competences and learning outcomes;
   b) **validation**, where assessment includes steps to collect 'validity evidence' and ensure credibility. 'Validity evidence' refers to all processes related to assessment that ensure the assessment remains valid. Credibility can be achieved through a credible peer-review process where all aspects of the assessment process are documented, substantiated, explained and available for scrutiny by stakeholders;
   c) **reliability**, where to a great extent, similar assessment-related judgments are made across similar contexts in consistent ways, and where assumptions about learners do not influence assessment processes;
   d) **transparency and accountability**, where:
     (i) assessment criteria and processes are made known and visible to learners, and the various role-players in the assessment process;
     (ii) all role-players can provide evidence of the development and moderation of assessment tasks and processes with which they are involved;
     (iii) assessors and those being assessed have clear understanding of the purpose of the testing and its consequences and the appropriateness of inferences made about test outcomes; how marking and moderation is carried out, and by whom; the levels of expertise and/ or experience needed; and what kinds of actions are possible when there is a dispute about assessment outcomes; and the rights and responsibilities of those assessing and being assessed;

e) **fairness**, where:

(i) learners are assessed on what they know and have been taught; where questions are set in relation to the cognitive and affective curriculum covered in the teaching and learning that led to the assessment concerned; and

(ii) where in the case of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), there has been mediation between knowledge and skill gained in informal and non-formal ways, and the formal knowledge and skill required;

f) **absence of bias**, where:

(i) assessment practices do not in any way hinder or advantage particular learners or groups of learners;

(ii) assessment processes are clear, transparent, and available to all learners;

(iii) all learners and educators are treated with equal respect and consideration regardless of social, economic, cultural, faith-based, ethnic, gender, or other differences; and

(iv) disabled learners are given appropriate support;

g) **sensitivity to language**, where:

(i) in cases of translation into different national languages, assessment is consistent; and

(ii) care is taken to use appropriate language in assessment so that learners are assessed on appropriate knowledge and skills, and language does not become a barrier in learning and assessment processes;

h) **supportive administration procedures** where physical and other conditions under which assessment is conducted are standardised, and constructed so as to ensure that assessment activity and outcomes are as far as possible not affected by factors that are unrelated to the assessment process itself; the conditions and processes of assessment are clear to all participants; assessment processes are not compromised by inadequate, unfair or irrelevant contextual influences; assessment outcomes are subject to statistical procedures that assess such factors as normativity, validity and reliability, and reduce sources of measurement error through processes of moderation;

i) **assessment range**, where the full range of competences needed for a qualification, part qualification or professional designation is assessed. This range includes types and levels of competence in each instance; and

j) **a match between content to be assessed, learning outcomes, and purposes of assessment,** where:

(i) assessment policy and practice relate to the purposes and principles of assessment and the stated learning outcomes and assessment criteria;

(ii) the form of assessment is appropriate and the tools enable an accurate representation of the content, skills and values being tested; and

(ii) the applicability and limitations of assessment policy and practice are made known.

F. Content of Assessment

18. The following criteria must be taken into account when determining the content of assessment:
    a) in deciding the scope of any assessment, the cognitive and affective content and types and levels of knowledge and skills covered in curricula and programmes must be taken into consideration;
    b) distinctions can be made between quantitative (volume of learning) increase and qualitative (type of learning) change;
    c) assessment can require the reproduction of knowledge, skills and values; application of knowledge, skill and values in known settings; application of knowledge, skills and values in contexts never experienced prior to the assessment; or transformation based on growth, application and development of knowledge and skill – all of these aspects could be considered when appropriate;
    d) the goal of assessment is to focus on both how much learning has taken place, and what kind of learning has occurred;
    e) carefully designed assessment can be used to facilitate learning, and to raise learner awareness of learning;
    f) distinctions can be made between latent and manifest capabilities – already developed capabilities can be demonstrated when suitable opportunities are presented for those being assessed. Latent abilities may only show in ideal contexts. Conventional assessment measures performance, while creativity may be required to assess latent potential: assessment can be designed to reveal fully developed and latent competences, and the extent to which developed and latent competences differ for an individual. Assessment tasks can be set to develop learners' 'developing edges' (or 'zones of proximal development');
    g) assessment needs to take into account learners' prior learning and experience; and
    h) dynamic assessment – assessment with instruction – must be adopted.

19. Dynamic assessment can take the forms of test-teach-test methods, and the giving of feedback in different forms. The goal of dynamic assessment is to see whether and by how much those being assessed change as a result of opportunities to learn. Key features include:
    a) dynamic assessment is at least in part an assessment of **learning potential**, since its focus is on the extent to which a learner can demonstrate quantitative or qualitative change as a result of receiving mediated instruction (potential is viewed as the extent to which a learner's performance can change as a result of mediation and feedback);
    b) dynamic assessment needs an **intensive interactive relationship** between the educator and the learner, or between the educator and groups of learners. Interaction and intervention, through explicit or implicit deliberate and sequenced mediation and feedback, represent the cornerstones of dynamic assessment;

c) dynamic assessment represents an attempt to assess the extent to which **mediation and feedback enable a learner** to respond to new learning contexts and to call on learning that is relatively unrelated to prior knowledge and experience. Mediation includes presenting the learner with support and learning 'cues' that reduce or downplay the role of and necessity for, prior learning or experience. Mediation and feedback is aimed at enabling the learner to complete successively more complex tasks through raising the learner's awareness of the requirements for success in a preceding task or set of tasks.

G. Criteria for Implementation of this Policy

General implementation criteria

20. Implementation of the National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment must include:

   a) adopting and facilitating the principles, content, and implementation criteria in this policy document;
   b) where articulation has been agreed within and between sub-frameworks, and where agreement is being sought towards articulation, actively seeking to use assessment to enable articulation; and
   c) an orientation to learning outcomes, demonstrated as well as latent competences, dynamic assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT).

Assessment relating to formal, non-formal and informal learning, and implementation of Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) and the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

21. As part of a fair and accountable system for teaching and learning, assessment in respect of formal, informal and non-formal learning must be transparent and must be taken into account in the following ways.

   a) Formal learning is learning that occurs in an organised and structured education and training environment and that is explicitly designated as such. What is to be assessed and assessment criteria in relation to this formal learning must be made clear to learners in applicable ways (through discussion, aural or enacted demonstration, or other appropriate means).

   b) In order to be registered on the NQF, the design of qualifications and part qualifications must have included consideration of Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) possibilities. Assessment that is part of CAT must take the following into account wherever feasible:
   (i) **credit accumulation**, or the totalling of credits towards the completion of a qualification, part qualification, or professional designation.

(ii) **credit transfer**, or the vertical, horizontal or diagonal relocation of credits towards another qualification or part qualification registered on the same or different sub-framework.

(iii) allowance for **Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)**, or arrangements whereby the diverse features of both credit accumulation and credit transfer are combined to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace, wherever applicable. All education and training institutions and workplaces must actively seek agreements and/or curriculum alignment with other applicable institutions and workplaces in order to develop CAT procedures. Further guidance in this regard can be found in the National Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SAQA 2013).

(iv) CAT can be carried out at any NQF level.

c) Assessment is also integral to recognition processes regarding informal and non-formal learning, which must be acknowledged where appropriate, through a **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** process. The following forms and features of RPL must be noted (further guidance is provided in the National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning, SAQA 2013):

   (i)   RPL is multi-contextual, and how it takes place differs between contexts. There are two main forms of RPL which reflect differing RPL purposes and practices:
   - RPL for access – to provide alternative access routes into programmes of learning; and
   - RPL for credit or recognition – to provide credit or recognition for learning and/or experience obtained informally or non-formally towards a qualification, part qualification or professional designation.

   (ii) Assessment in RPL occurs not in isolation but as part of the RPL process which includes:
   - candidate support before, during and after the RPL process;
   - preparation for an RPL process or sub-process;
   - mediation of knowledge obtained informally or non-formally, and that required formally;
   - assessment of competence; and
   - certification.

   (iii) RPL can be carried out at any NQF level.

Implementation Criteria for Different Assessment Goals

22. As part of developing quality in teaching and learning, different types of assessment such as the following are recognised:
    a) **Formative assessment** – where a range of formal, non-formal, and informal assessment procedures are used to focus teaching and learning activities to improve learner attainment. In some cases formative assessment will be formal and results will be recorded and count towards promotion marks. In other cases it will be informal, may/may not be recorded, and will not count towards promotion. Formative assessment includes but is not limited to:
       - verbal educator-learner interaction with individual learners, groups of learners or whole classes;
       - demonstrations with or without commentary;
       - mediated or unmediated feedback on partly completed work;
       - feedback on ongoing learning and completed work that is directed towards future learning/work; and
       - elaboration of assessment purposes and criteria through verbal, visual, aural or demonstration/ simulation means.

    b) **Summative assessment** – where assessment is conducted at the end of sections of learning or whole learning programmes, to evaluate learning related to a particular qualification, part qualification, or professional designation. Summative assessment usually has as its aim the evaluation and/or the certification of learning that has taken place. As with formative assessment, summative assessment can be formal or informal in nature.

    c) **Integrated assessment** – where the aim is a holistic set of assessment tasks required for a qualification, part qualification or professional designation. Integrated assessment could for example consist of written assessment of theory, and a practical demonstration of competence. The intention is that a learner's conceptual understanding of something can be evaluated through the approach he/she takes in applying it practically, for example. The intention is also to assess learners in the modes in which they are expected to display particular competences.

    d) **Diagnostic assessment** – where assessment is conducted before teaching or training starts, purely for the purposes of creating suitable learning environments.

23. For enhancing quality in line with best practice nationally and internationally, assessment must demonstrate understanding of the following features, and preparation for and the carrying out of assessment must include:
    a) Checking for validity including:

(i)   Validation of assessment tools (checking the match between what is to be assessed and the suitability of the tools actually to measure this)

(ii)   Validation of assessment tasks (checking the match between what is to be assessed and the suitability of the tasks to make this visible/audible)

(iii) Validation of assessment processes including processes for developing assessment tools/tasks, the form of examinations, marking, and moderation (match between the processes and the goals of assessment)

b) Processes to ensure the reliability of assessment including the reliability of:

(i)   Assessment tools and tasks

(ii)   Marking

(iii)   Moderation

(iv)   Recording and dissemination of results

(v)   Appeals processes

(vi)   Certification

(vii)   Secure record keeping

c) Processes to ensure transparency, such as that all stakeholders have access to the meanings, purposes, limits, and consequences of assessment policy and practice.

d) Processes to ensure fairness including but not limited to:

(i) Standardised appeals processes

(ii) Feasible costs

(iii) Equal assessment opportunities for all learners regardless of their ethnicity, age, gender, culture, disability, social class, language and other contextual features

(iv) The language of learning and teaching, which needs to be relevant and accessible and mediated for those learners for whom it is not their   Mother Tongue.

e) Monitoring and evaluation to ensure that it follows the holistic, quality-related and fairness imperatives in the current policy.

24. Moderation of assessment must include documented procedures that relate to the processes of internal moderation and ways in which internal moderation is addressed for the effects of possible bias; statistical procedures that at minimum present and explain the distribution of learner outcomes; processes for the appointment of external moderators that include selection for and documentation of external moderator expertise and experience; and documented processes by which internal or external grading irregularities or sources of error are or will be corrected.

25. Address the range of aspects in each NQF Level Descriptor, namely the following areas for which requirements differ in complexity at the different NQF Levels:

a) the scope of knowledge and skills in particular areas learners are able to demonstrate;

b) knowledge literacy, in which learners demonstrate an ability to evaluate the knowledge and skills needed, and choose appropriate knowledge and skills for particular tasks;

c) method and procedure, in which learners can select and apply appropriate methods;

d) problem solving;

e) ethics and professional practice, which at the lower NQF levels means learners' identifying ethics and values appropriate for a particular context;

f) accessing, processing, and managing information;

g) producing and communicating information;

h) context and systems, where learners work appropriately for the context and system concerned;

i) management of learning, where learners show ability to manage their own learning; and

j) accountability, where learners take responsibility for their own learning.

26. A range of modes of teaching and learning including assessment, such as face-to-face, distance, e-learning, full-time, part-time, portfolio, block release, mixed-mode, blended learning, and multi-modal approaches are encouraged in order to facilitate lifelong learning and to maximise inclusivity.

27. At all times the user-friendliness and availability of assessment-related documentation must be ensured.

H. Assessment Requirements and Responsibilities

28. All assessment bodies are bound by this National Policy for the Design and Implementation of Assessment.

29. Assessment bodies must demonstrate how they have taken account of assessment-related advice provided by SAQA and the Quality Councils.

30. Responsibilities of SAQA:

a) Develop policy and criteria, after consultation with the Quality Councils, for assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT).

b) Oversee the implementation and further development of the NQF – which includes the implementation of assessment, RPL and CAT.

c) Advise the Minister of Higher Education and Training on matters relating to the NQF – which includes assessment, RPL and CAT.

31. Responsibilities of the Quality Councils:

a) After taking into account the relevant national assessment policies and the assessment policies and approaches of the other Quality Councils, develop for use in their sub-frameworks:

   (i) high level policy and criteria for assessment in their sub-frameworks aligned with this National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment;

   (ii) detailed directives and guidelines wherever applicable; and

   (iii) exemplars wherever feasible.

b) Take guidance from the assessment approaches of other Quality Councils, and encourage partnerships in order to align or partly align learning and assessment across sub-frameworks wherever feasible. Where this feasibility exists, development towards alignment must take place.

c) Support and monitor the training and development of stakeholders involved in providing assessment, ensuring that all sectors within their sub-frameworks are catered for and that assessment policy documentation reaches the organisations and individuals who will be using it. Monitoring must include:

   (i) assessing compliance with the principles, content, and implementation criteria in the National Policy for the Design and Implementation of Assessment; and

   (ii) assessing the development and implementation of best practice within and across sub-sectors.

d) Develop and maintain an information management system that is compatible with the National Learners Records Database (NLRD) and other relevant government information management systems, for the recording of assessment results and trends in these results.

e) Ensure equitable fees as appropriate.

32. Responsibilities of providers of education and training:

a) Comply with registration and accreditation requirements. In the case of public and private education providers that offer qualifications and part qualifications located in the Higher Education, and General and Further Education and Training sub-frameworks, registration with either the Department of Higher Education and Training or the Department of Basic Education, respectively, is required[2]. For qualifications on the GFETQSF providers must also be registered as examination centres with the DHET, DBE, or accredited assessment body. All providers providing for qualifications and/or part

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[2] At the time of the finalisation of this policy, private skills development providers that offer qualifications and part qualifications in the trade and occupational sector must be accredited by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations, but are not required to be registered (see the Joint Communiqué issued by the Department of Higher Education and Training, SAQA and the Quality Councils in August 2012). This interim registration measure will be reviewed.

qualifications registered on the NQF must be accredited to do so through one of the three Quality Councils.

b) Progressively develop capacity to implement the assessment policies of their accrediting Quality Council(s) in line with this National Policy for the Design and Implementation of Assessment.

c) Enter into partnerships to align or partly align curricula, learning and assessment in ways that facilitate systemic articulation and learning pathways; potential collaborators include SAQA, Quality Councils, Professional Bodies, the National Artisan Moderating Body (NAMB), the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), and other providers.

d) Support and monitor development of stakeholders involved in providing assessment and the extent of adherence to the National Policy for the Design and Implementation of Assessment in their institutions.

e) Develop and maintain an information management system that is compatible with the National Learners Records Database (NLRD) and other relevant government information management systems, for the recording of assessment results and trends in these results.

f) Ensure equitable fees as appropriate.

33. Responsibilities of recognised professional bodies:

a) Ensure that the implementation of progression pathways and awarding of registered professional designations are based on this assessment policy.

b) Collaborate with SAQA, the Quality Councils and the relevant providers to incentivise and advance quality assessment practices in their constituencies, and

c) Progressively research, develop and enhance their capacity to initiate and support assessment practices in accordance with this National Policy for the Design and Implementation of Assessment.

34. Responsibilities of all those involved in assessment for NQF qualifications and part qualifications, and registered professional designations:

a) Hold appropriate recognised qualifications, part qualifications and/or professional designations.

b) Be competent to conduct assessment in the specific context concerned.

    c) Adhere to requirements determined by the relevant legislation and relevant body, which may include a professional body, a workplace and/or a Quality Council.

    d) Conduct assessment in line with this National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment.

35. Responsibilities of learners participating in assessment:

    a) Accept co-responsibility as a party to the assessment process.

    b) Participate in assessment processes in an honest manner displaying integrity at all times.

    c) When required, follow the appeals procedures of the assessment providers concerned.

I. Effective Implementation Date

36. This policy comes into effect on the date of its publication in the Government Gazette. It replaces the policy documents *Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit standards and Qualifications* developed in 2001; and *Guidelines for Integrated Assessment* developed in 2005 by the South African Qualifications Authority.

37. List of Acronyms

CAT	- Credit Accumulation and Transfer
CHE	- Council on Higher Education
DBE	- Department of Basic Education
DHET	- Department of Higher Education and Training
FET	- Further Education and Training
GENFET	- General and Further Education and Training
GFETQSF	- General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework
HE	- Higher Education
HEI	- Higher Education Institution
HEQSF	- Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework
HET	- Higher Education and Training
NAMB	- National Artisan Moderating Body
NLRD	- National Learners' Records Database
NQF	- National Qualifications Framework
OQSF	- Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework
QC	- Quality Council
QCTO	- Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	- Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	- South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	- Sector Education and Training Authority
Umalusi	- Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training

38. Members of SAQA's Assessment Reference Group

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NOTICE 1037 OF 2013

National Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer

Draft for Public Comment
15 October 2013

Introductory note

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act (Act 67 of 2008) requires that the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) develops Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT). The attached draft policy has been developed by SAQA in close consultation with a CAT Reference Group (a list of the members can be found at the end of the policy).

CAT involves a range of related practices that are in many cases not explicitly defined as "CAT". Examples include the work of admission committees in higher education, allocation of credits through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), advanced standing, credit transfer, mapping articulation between qualifications and courses, and many others. SAQA encourages all practitioners that are directly or indirectly involved in CAT practices to engage with this draft policy and submit comments to SAQA within 45 days of the publication of this draft policy in the Government Gazette. Comments should be sent to:

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This draft policy and criteria draws on several prior initiatives, including research into CAT models conducted by SAQA in 2006 (see the SAQA Bulletin Vol. 9[2]) and 2010; an Umalusi discussion document on CAT (2010); the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) articulation conference report (2012); as well as a range of relevant local and international publications such as: Butler and Hope (2000); European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDFEOP) (2013); Perold, Cloete and Papier (2012); Victoria Qualifications Authority (2003 and 2004); Laitinen (2012); Australia Department of Education, Science and Training (2006); Engineering Council of South Africa (2009); Nel (2006); Vickers (2013). In addition to the available literature, this policy draws on existing good practices identified in South Africa. These practices have been

investigated and documented through the NQF research conference held in February 2013.

This is the first time that national CAT policy and criteria is developed within South Africa. The conceptual model on which the policy draws will be further strengthened through the implementation of this policy and further research. Despite this limitation SAQA is of the view that this CAT policy and criteria provides an important benchmark that will have a positive impact on the education and training system by putting in place nationally agreed principles.

The core of the CAT model proposed in this policy and criteria is based on two approaches embedded within the South African NQF: (1) a description of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes in relation to the level descriptors of the NQF; and (2) the allocation of credits for the achievement of learning outcomes.

The CAT model described within this policy and criteria is of a reforming nature: while it draws on existing good practices, it also provides a strong impetus for change across various sectors where CAT remains limited. The policy and criteria provides a set of broad principles for CAT as well as specific roles for SAQA, the Quality Councils, education institutions, skills development providers, professional bodies and workplaces. An important feature of this CAT model is an arrangement whereby the diverse features of both credit accumulation and credit transfer are combined to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace. In this regard the policy and criteria provides clarity on the features of both credit accumulation and credit transfer as they can be implemented within the South African context.

SAQA looks forward to working with the Quality Councils and a broad range of stakeholders to refine this policy and criteria.

Joe Samuels

Chief Executive Officer

Glossary of terms

"Advanced standing" means the status granted to a learner for admission to studies at a level higher than the learner's prior formal studies would have allowed, and includes exemption where applicable.

"Apprenticeship" means a learning programme in respect of an officially listed trade, which includes a trade-test in respect of that trade, and leads to a qualification registered on the NQF.

"Articulation" means the process of forming possibilities of connection between qualifications and/or part qualifications to allow for the movement of learners through the formal education and training system and its linkages with the world of work.

"Comparability" means the degree of similarity between two qualifications in terms of purpose, level, credits and learning outcomes in order to determine the extent of credit accumulation and/ or transfer within or between institutions.

"Credit" means a measure of the volume of learning required for a qualification or part qualification, quantified as the number of notional study hours required for achieving the learning outcomes specified for the qualification or part qualification. One credit is equated to ten (10) notional hours of learning.

"Credit accumulation" means the totalling of credits required to complete a qualification or a part qualification.

"Credit matrix" means a system in which learning outcomes can be arranged and compared in levels of increased complexity based on agreed groupings of credits, such as in modules or part qualifications.

"Credit transfer" means the vertical, horizontal or diagonal transfer of credits towards a qualification or part qualification on the same or different level, usually between different programmes, departments or institutions.

"Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) system" means an arrangement whereby the diverse features of both credit accumulation and credit transfer are combined to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace.

"Curriculum" means the underpinning policy provided for a qualification or part qualification to facilitate a more general understanding of its implementation in an educational system.

"Formal learning" means learning that occurs in an organised and structured education and training environment and that is explicitly designated as such. Formal learning leads to the awarding of a qualification or part qualification registered on the NQF.

"Informal learning" means learning that results from daily activities related to paid or unpaid work, family or community life, or leisure, including incidental learning.

"Internship" means structured work experience that is undertaken during or after formal studies.

"Learnership" means a learning programme registered with the DHET which consists of a structured learning component, a practical work experience component of a specified nature and duration and which leads to a qualification registered on the NQF and which is related to an occupation.

"Level descriptor" means a 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.

"Learning programme" means a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification.

"Lifelong learning" means learning that takes place in all contexts in life from a life-wide, life-deep and lifelong perspective. It includes learning behaviours and obtaining knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values and competencies for personal growth, social and economic well-being, democratic citizenship, cultural identity and employability.

"National Qualifications Framework (NQF)" means a comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications.

"NQF Act" means the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act No. 67 of 2008.

"Non-formal learning" means planned educational interventions that are not intended to lead to awarding of qualifications or part qualifications.

"Notional hour" means the agreed estimate of the learning time that it would take an average learner to meet the defined learning outcomes; it includes consideration of contact time, research, completion of assignments, time spent in structured learning in the workplace, individual learning and assessment. Ten (10) notional hours equate to one (1) credit.

"Part qualification" means an assessed unit of learning that is registered as part of a qualification.

"Provider" means an entity that offers any learning programme that leads to a qualification or part qualification registered on the NQF.

"Professional body" means any body of expert practitioners in an occupational field, and includes an occupational body.

"Professional designation" means a title or status conferred by a professional body in recognition of a person's expertise and/ or right to practice in an occupational field.

"Qualification" means a registered national qualification.

"Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)" means the principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated and assessed for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development.

"Residency clause" means the rule that emanates from the Joint Statutes (Section 18, 1955) that sets a limit to the number of credits that may be transferred towards a qualification by a higher education institution, or between higher education institutions, in order to comply with certification requirements with funding implications.

"Skills programme" means a learning programme that is occupationally based and which, when completed, may constitute credits towards a qualification registered on the NQF.

"Work experience" means exposure and interactions gained through being in the workplace.

"Workplace-based learning" means the exposure and interactions required to practise the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes required in the workplace.

Preamble

1. This Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) provides for the implementation of CAT within the context of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act 67 of 2008 within South Africa.

2. This Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) is an enabling policy that is closely related to the revised South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)* (2013) and the revised SAQA *National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications, Part qualifications and Professional Designations* (currently being developed). The three policies have been developed in an integrated manner to draw on a common conceptual basis and strengthen the interrelationships between Assessment, RPL and CAT.

3. The policy and criteria is located within the broader context of the Human Resource Development Strategy, the National Skills Development Strategy, and the National Development Plan 2030.

4. The policy and criteria is premised on the notion that social transformation in a developmental state such as South Africa can be achieved in part through well-articulated qualifications within an NQF that has a clearly defined policy on CAT.

Scope

5. This policy and criteria applies to:

    a) SAQA, Quality Councils, education institutions and skills development providers, workplaces, recognised professional bodies, and workplaces.
    b) All qualifications, part qualifications and professional designations registered on the NQF and offered in South Africa.

6. The specific context of each Quality Council and its sub-framework must be considered in the interpretation of this policy and criteria.

Purpose

7. The purpose of this policy and criteria is to facilitate the development of credible, efficient and transparent CAT processes within and between each of the sub-frameworks of the NQF.

Objectives

8. The objectives of this national policy and criteria for CAT are to:

   a) Provide for the development and implementation of CAT as an integral component of qualification design within the NQF and its sub-frameworks.
   b) Position CAT in relation to the objectives of the NQF to support lifelong learning in South Africa.
   c) Directly address CAT related challenges faced within the education and training system, such as the need for a more diverse and differentiated post-school system, unfair exclusionary practices, mainstreaming of RPL, articulation of schooling and college qualifications, and the recognition of worker education and workplace learning.
   d) Specify the roles and functions of SAQA, the Quality Councils, education institutions and skills development providers, recognised professional bodies and workplaces in relation to CAT.

Credit Accumulation and Transfer in the context of the National Qualifications Framework in South Africa

9. The NQF in South Africa is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the classification, co-ordination, registration, and publication of articulated and quality-assured national qualifications and part qualifications. It was established under the SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995). It continues under the NQF Act (Act 67 of 2008), which came into effect on 1 June 2009.

10. The NQF, as an integrated framework overseen by SAQA is made up of three coordinated sub-frameworks, each overseen by a Quality Council that needs to provide for RPL:

    a) Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF) overseen by the Council on Higher Education,

b) General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF) overseen by Umalusi, and

c) Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF) overseen by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations.

11. The objectives of the NQF are to:

a) Create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;

b) Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths;

c) Enhance the quality of education and training; and

d) Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.

12. The objectives of the NQF are designed to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.

13. SAQA and the QCs must seek to achieve the objectives of the NQF by:

a) Developing, fostering and maintaining an integrated and transparent national framework for the recognition of learning achievements;

b) Ensuring that South African qualifications meet appropriate criteria, determined by the Minister as contemplated in Section 8 of the NQF Act (Act 67 of 2008), and are internationally comparable; and

c) Ensuring that South African Qualifications are of an acceptable quality.

Principles

14. This policy and criteria for CAT is based on the following principles:

a) *Access with success*
   Institutions and providers should facilitate the bridging of theory and/or practice components that are identified as weaknesses during admission and RPL processes.

b) *Appropriateness and applicability*
   The comparison of qualifications must take into account the purpose of each qualification as well as the broader application of the qualifications within the context they were designed. The degree of similarity between qualifications will ensure that

students have the necessary knowledge and background to be successful in more advanced courses.

c) *Articulation by design*

All individual institutions and providers should include pathways for articulation in the design of new qualifications and part qualifications, and that these pathways should be widely publicised to existing students and potential applicants. It should furthermore be clear how these pathways connect with the world of work.

d) *Credible methods*

Qualifications must be compared based on credible methods that determine the extent to which their curricular properties, as well as their content and outcomes match as guided by the NQF level descriptors.

e) *Efficiency and efficacy*

Where a large volume of credit transfers must be established and articulation agreements already exist, appropriate and efficient methods should be used to avoid unnecessarily lengthy assessments of comparability.

f) *Equal valuing of learning outcomes achieved through different routes*

The equal value of similar learning outcomes achieved through formal, non-formal and/or informal learning must be promoted.

g) *Equity and inclusiveness*

Arrangements for articulation should benefit learners entering qualifications with credit transfer, as well as those students who enter directly without credits for prior learning.

h) *Parity of esteem*

Promoting parity requires the ability and commitment to communicate diplomatically, offering constructive suggestions, avoiding dictating terms, and providing justification where articulation cannot happen.

i) *Supplementarity*

Where there are differences in prerequisites, the rigour of the curriculum, or the topics covered, an institution may require the learner from another institution to do supplementary work before credits are awarded. This supplementary work must be determined

in a fair, consistent and transparent manner, using credible methods, and in consultation between the two institutions.

j) *Transparency*

Quality assurance practices which include assessment and moderation must be open to scrutiny. Rules, regulations and any register of precedents which inform, influence or govern decisions taken in respect to articulation should be transparent and publicly available to intending students prior to enrolment. This should include transparent information related to fees for CAT where they are charged.

Credit Accumulation and Transfer practice in South Africa

15. The context for CAT is the NQF which is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister for the *articulation* of quality assured national qualifications in South Africa.

16. Articulation within the NQF is both systemic and specific:

a) Systemic articulation is based on legislation, national policy and formal requirements, including within and between the sub-frameworks of the NQF, and the steering mechanisms available to the State such as funding and planning within the education and training system; and

b) Specific articulation is based on formal and informal agreements within the educational and training system, mostly between two or more education and training sub-systems, between specific institutional types, and guided by guidelines, policies, and accreditation principles.

17. The development of pathways for articulation during the design of new qualifications and part qualifications contributes to effective CAT.

18. Credit within the context of the NQF is a measure of the volume of learning required for a qualification or part qualification, quantified as the number of notional study hours required for achieving the learning outcomes specified for the qualification or part qualification. One credit is equated to ten (10) notional hours of learning.

19. Credit accumulation is the totalling of credits required to complete a qualification or a part qualification.

20. Credit accumulation can take place in the following forms:

   a) Intra-institutional – the totalling of credits within a specific institution, or department within an institution
   b) Inter-institutional – the recognition and accumulation of credits between two or more institutions
   c) National - the recognition and accumulation of credits across all institutions within South Africa

21. Systemic and specific articulation allows for credit accumulation within institutions in order to gain admission to, or be granted advanced standing, towards the completion of a qualification or a part qualification as determined by institutional policies.

22. Credit transfer means the vertical, horizontal or diagonal transfer of credits towards a qualification or part qualification on the same or different level, usually between different programmes, departments or institutions.

23. Credit transfer can take place in the following forms:

   a) Block – credit guaranteed by an institution on commencement of a qualification based on previous study and specific articulation agreements
   b) Specified – credits transferred within or between institutions for similar components between qualifications based on a comparison of the qualifications
   c) Unspecified – credits transferred within or between institutions between qualifications which are not necessarily similar but which are deemed relevant to the purpose of the qualification

24. The exemption by an institution of part of a qualification with the right to advance (advanced standing) does not constitute credit transfer but will contribute to improved articulation.

25. Systemic and specific articulation also allows for the vertical, horizontal or diagonal transfer of credits between institutions in order to gain admission to, or be granted advanced standing towards, the completion of a qualification or part qualification on the same or a different level.

26. CAT is an arrangement whereby the diverse features of both credit accumulation and credit transfer, including the different forms of credit, are combined to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace.

27. The comparison of qualifications for the purpose of CAT must be based on accepted and credible methods to determine the transferability of credits, including the following where relevant and feasible:

   a) Triangulation.
   b) Equal value ascribed to similar learning outcomes achieved through the promotion of formal, non-formal and/or informal learning.
   c) Development of a competency matrix.
   d) Comparison of the purposes of the qualifications and learning outcomes.
   e) Horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment and forms of assessment.

28. The bridging of theory and/or practice components that are identified as weaknesses during admission processes, including RPL, must be addressed by relevant providers.

29. A credit matrix is a system in which learning outcomes can be arranged and compared in levels of increased complexity based on agreed groupings of credits, such as in modules or part qualifications. The NQF, through the level descriptors, provides a basis for credit matrices that can be developed by specific sub-frameworks or sectors.

Policy priorities for Credit Accumulation and Transfer

30. CAT has been prioritised in South Africa to promote articulation between qualifications across the three sub-frameworks of the NQF in order to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace. The following are the main areas of prioritisation for CAT:

31. Effective delivery and design of articulation routes

   a) The intentional design of structure and content of qualifications must facilitate the continual progress and mobility of learners within and across each of the three sub-frameworks and to the world of work as set out in the SAQA *Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part qualifications on the NQF*.
   b) Collaboration between providers from different sectors should take place to develop cross-sector qualifications linkages, advance specific articulation and CAT.
   c) Guidelines must be developed to guide collaboration, including multilateral agreements, on a systemic level to advance reciprocity.

d) Parity of esteem between qualifications located in different sub-frameworks must be promoted through the development of career pathways, effective communication and advocacy.

e) Models of good practice relating to CAT must be documented, made available to the research community and used as a basis for the further development of CAT.

f) Career advice services must provide guidance on career pathways and articulation routes.

g) The residency clause must be correctly interpreted and consistently applied to expedite learner mobility and not to limit CAT.

32. Credible quality assurance and standards setting arrangements

a) Credible and coordinated quality assurance arrangements must form the basis for CAT across all sectors.

b) Improved trust between institutions and sectors must be facilitated through transparent processes that are open to scrutiny.

c) New qualifications must be introduced in a considered manner to allow sufficient time for the public, workplaces and other stakeholders to become familiar with them.

d) The recognition of workplace experience for CAT must be actively promoted in collaboration between the Quality Councils and workplaces.

e) Specific attention must be paid to Levels 5 and 6 in the HEQSF and OQSF as a critical level where diverse options for CAT must be developed.

f) The standards setting systems developed and overseen by the Quality Councils must provide an enabling framework within which appropriate arrangements for CAT may be developed.

g) Integrated assessments, including final external integrated summative assessments for trade tests, should support CAT.

33. Adequate resourcing

a) National funding and planning arrangements, including the residency clause in the context of higher education, must facilitate and support CAT.

b) Funding arrangements for collaborative partnerships relating to the development of CAT schemes must be sourced and made available.

c) The sustainability of CAT within and between institutions must be based on mutual consensus and reciprocity.

Responsibilities for the implementation of Credit Accumulation and Transfer

34. The implementation and development of CAT is the joint responsibility of the Department of Higher Education and Training, the Department of Basic Education, SAQA, the QCs, education institutions and skills development providers, recognised professional bodies and workplaces. Specific responsibilities of each contributor are outlined below.

35. Responsibilities of SAQA:

   a) Develop national policy and criteria, after consultation with the Quality Councils, for CAT.
   b) Develop national CAT guidelines for inter-institutional collaboration specifically on Levels 5 and 6 of the NQF and cross-sector qualifications linkages, after consultation with the Quality Councils and other stakeholders.
   c) Support the development of collaborative partnerships across the sub-frameworks of the NQF.
   d) Coordinate the sub-frameworks of the NQF, including the alignment of sub-framework policies on CAT, and articulation across the system.
   e) Establish and manage an adjudication process to monitor unfair exclusionary practices related to CAT.
   f) Set up and provide support to a permanent sub-committee of the CEO Committee for CAT.
   g) Oversee research to improve CAT in collaboration with the Quality Councils. Specific focus should be placed on existing partnerships and models of good practice relating to CAT, and national studies to improve outcomes in CAT within and between the sub-frameworks of the NQF.
   h) Promote and enable the use of a common language to communicate credit system arrangements.

36. Responsibilities of the Quality Councils:

   a) Adhere to the principles and responsibilities as outlined in this policy.
   b) Collaborate with the other QCs to ensure that effective CAT takes place within and across the three sub-frameworks.
   c) Formalise principles and conditions for CAT that guide the development of articulation agreements within their specific sub-frameworks.

d) Initiate and oversee incubation projects within their specific sub-frameworks to strengthen the conceptual understanding of CAT and promote good practices.

e) Develop a policy on CAT for their sub-frameworks, taking into account the relevant national SAQA policies, and the broader context of their specific sub-frameworks and related policies.

f) Participate in the adjudication process of SAQA to monitor unfair exclusionary practices related to CAT within their specific sub-frameworks.

g) Undertake systematic work on the development of sectoral credit schemes within their specific sub-frameworks.

h) Promote the collaborative development of curriculum and qualification pathways between different institutional types to promote CAT.

i) Actively promote the recognition of workplace experience for CAT in collaboration with workplaces.

j) Develop linkages for articulation and progression to promote CAT within their sub-frameworks, including:

- Formal articulation agreements among institutions
- Coordinated quality assurance systems
- Careful alignment of curricula in common fields, taking into account their purpose and the types of knowledge and competencies that they seek to develop
- Curriculum review and extension
- Bridging programmes
- Formation of 'federations' or regional consortia of linked institutions

37. Responsibilities of education institutions and skills development providers:

a) Implement the principles and responsibilities as outlined in this policy to ensure that equity and inclusiveness in access to learning opportunities are possible.

b) Demonstrate through regular internal and external quality audits, including those done by the Quality Councils, that their policies and practices for all types of articulation support the principles as listed in this policy.

c) Seek accreditation by the relevant Quality Council(s).

d) In the case of private education providers that offer qualifications and part qualifications located in the Higher Education and General and Further Education and Training sub-frameworks, registration

with either the Department of Higher Education and Training or the Department of Basic Education, respectively, is also required;[1]

e) Avoid unfair exclusionary practices related to CAT.

f) Collaborate to offer diverse and mutually recognised qualifications, specifically on Levels 5 and 6 of the NQF, through formal articulation agreements and in regional consortia where relevant.

g) Set fair and transparent admission criteria that is consistent with national policy.

h) Undertake collaborative approaches to curriculum development across different institutional types to advance CAT.

i) Initiate and participate in partnerships with education and training providers to promote CAT.

j) Develop and maintain an information management system that is compatible with the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) and other relevant government information management systems, and submit the relevant data to SAQA.

38. Responsibilities of recognised professional bodies:

a) Adhere to the principles and responsibilities as outlined in this policy.

b) Comply with the SAQA *Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation on the NQF*, including not to apply unfair exclusionary practices in membership admission to the body or when recognising education and training providers.

c) Initiate and participate in partnerships with education and training providers to promote CAT.

39. Responsibilities of workplaces:

a) Adhere to the principles and responsibilities as outlined in this policy.

b) Proactively engage with education and training providers to contribute to the acceptance of new qualifications and a general awareness of the role and function of CAT.

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[1] At the time of the finalisation of this policy, private skills development providers that offer qualifications and part qualifications in the trade and occupational sector must be accredited by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations, but are not required to be registered (see the Joint Communiqué issued by the Department of Higher Education and Training, SAQA and the Quality Councils in August 2012). This interim registration measure will be reviewed.

c) Actively promote the recognition of workplace experience and provide for CAT in collaboration with the Quality Councils.

Transitional arrangements

40. This policy comes into effect on the date of its publication in the Government Gazette.

List of acronyms

CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
CHE	Council on Higher Education
GFETQSF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework
MerSETA	Manufacturing, Engineering and Relates Services Sector Education and Training Authority
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority

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