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GOVERNMENT NOTICE

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

No. 809   **24 October 2014**

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK ACT, 2008 (Act 67 of 2008)

GUIDELINES ON STRATEGY AND PRIORITIES FOR THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (NQF), 2014/15

I, Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande, MP, hereby publish *Guidelines on Strategy and Priorities for the National Qualifications Framework, 2014/15* in terms of section 8(2)(c) of the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008.

The *Guidelines* give direction to the work of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Quality Councils during the coming period.

DR BE NZIMANDE, MP
MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
DATE: 03|10|2014

DRAFT MINISTERIAL GUIDELINES TO ADDRESS PRIORITIES FOR THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (NQF) 2014/2015

This Document

Introductory Comments

1. In terms of section *(2)* of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, No. 67 of 2008 I may update the Ministerial Guidelines annually. A *Guideline* document for the period 2013/2014 was not published, as stated in my letter to the Chairperson of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Board, to afford SAQA and the Quality Councils (QCs) opportunity to address issues which required a longer time frame. However, I issued a number of important directives to SAQA and the QCs in my determination of the NQF Sub-frameworks (Government Notice 1040 of 2012, 14 December 2012).

2. A process has been followed to arrive at the issues which I raise in this *Guideline 2014/2015*. First, a draft *Ministerial Guideline 2014/2015* was developed and circulated for comment to SAQA and the three QCs and the Inter-departmental Steering Committee on NQF matters. Comments were received and have been considered and acknowledged. It can be noted that the issues which I would like to have addressed by SAQA and the QCs in the remaining period of the 2014/2015 financial year do not have financial implications for these bodies.

3. It is most likely that the 2015/2016 financial year will require actions to be performed by SAQA and the QCs which will need to be funded, and therefore a draft *Ministerial Guideline 2015/2016* will be developed and circulated well ahead of the start of the next financial year.

4. This *Guideline* acknowledges the progress made in a number of areas by SAQA, the Council for Higher Education (CHE), the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) and the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi).

5. It is with gratitude that I acknowledge that good progress has been made in the following areas over the period from 2011 to date:

    a. System of Collaboration: SAQA and the QCs have developed an updated *System of Collaboration* which has enabled a smooth transition from the SAQA Act, No. 98 of

1995 to the NQF Act, No. 67 of 2008 and the robust policy engagements which have resulted from the Chief Executive Officers' (CEO) Committee.

b.   The amended and updated *NQF Implementation Plan 2011-2015* of 30 November 2013, which reflects realistic time frames for implementation of NQF matters by SAQA and the QCs.

c.   The *Gazettes* of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF) and the General and Further Education and Training qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF), although amendments are required to both these policy documents of the CHE and Umalusi Boards respectively.

d.   SAQA's guidance to the QCTO prior to the publication of the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework policy document (OQSF) in a gazette by the QCTO on 30 July 2014.

e.   The development, publication and implementation of policies and criteria for the Registration of qualifications and part qualifications; Recognition of professional bodies and registration of professional designations; Level descriptors for the South African National Qualifications framework; A national policy for the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The collaboration between SAQA and the QCs in the development of these policies is acknowledged.

f.   The further development of the system of qualifications verification for the Verifications Project of the Public Service.

g.   The progress being made with the development of the Counter Fraud Strategy by SAQA.

h.   The progress being made in aligning existing qualifications with the new sub-frameworks.

i.   The positive engagements with the Department of Higher Education and training (DHET) in terms of the Career Advisory Services (CAS) project which SAQA managed on behalf of the DHET, and which is due to be concluded by SAQA on 30 September 2014.

j.   The positive partnerships with international counterparts and other countries.

6.   The core focus of this *Guideline* is the *White Paper on Post-School Education and Training* (White Paper) (November 2013) and the priorities described herein are intended to guide the development of the plans and activities related to the implementation of the White Paper in the next years.

7. This *Guideline* also draws on the elements contained in the two previous *Guideline* documents and identifies priorities from the previous *Guideline* documents and the *NQF Implementation Plan 2011-2015,* which have not yet been completed and which will require urgent attention by SAQA and the Quality Councils (QCs).

Strategic considerations

8. In my foreword to the White Paper I point out that there has been widespread public interest in the post-school education and training policy. The White Paper focuses its attention on the vision for the system and the principles governing that vision, as well as being a definitive statement of the government's vision for the post-school system, outlining our main priorities and our strategies for achieving them. It is a vision for an integrated system of post-school education and training, with all institutions playing their role as parts of a coherent but differentiated whole.

9. The White Paper represents government's thinking in line with the country's key national policy documents including the National Development Plan, the New Growth Path, the Industrial Policy Action Plans, the Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa and the National Skills Development Strategy Three (NSDSIII) among others. The White paper is a vehicle with which to drive and deepen transformation of the entire post-schooling sector using the mechanisms put into place through institutions that support the education and training process, such as the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), and the three Quality Councils.

10. In chapter nine of the White Paper (2013: 69) it is clearly stated that "The National Qualifications framework Act (No. 67 of 2008) provides the overarching context in which all regulation takes place. The NQF provides the context for provision, assessment, certification and quality assurance".

11. It is also stated that "the NQF overarches the whole education and training system in South Africa" (ibid: 69) and "The South African Qualifications Authority is the body with the overall responsibility for the implementation of the NQF" (ibid: 69). This places significant responsibility on SAQA to continue to provide bold leadership to ensure that the priorities

set out in this 2014/2015 *Guideline,* as well as those still in progress as set out in the two previous *Guideline* documents are addressed and completed in partnership with the QCs.

Priorities for the period to March 2015

12. The activities required from SAQA and the QCs in terms of this *Guideline* comprise two broad areas. The first is for SAQA and the QCs to complete the outstanding issues from the previous *Guideline* documents and the *NQF Implementation Framework 2011 – 2015.* The second is their consideration and advice to me about their respective roles and functions related to the White Paper.

13. Some of the priorities identified in the two previous *Guideline* documents, and the *NQF Implementation Framework document 2011-2015* are work in progress while others have not been concluded. These matters listed below are matters of particular importance to be finalized in the current period based on the imperatives identified in the White Paper. They represent a select number of activities and do not describe the full range of statutory functions for which SAQA and the QCS are responsible. These activities are to be completed and reported on within six months of the publication of this *Guideline.*

Priorities carried over from previous Guidelines
Finalization of the credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) and Assessment policies

14. The *NQF Implementation framework 2011-2015* (2013: 5) states that "SAQA must develop, after consultation with the QCs, the following policies by 2012: Assessment, RPL and credit accumulation and transfer" and that "the standards setting and quality assurance apparatus of the three sub-frameworks must be completed and operationalized by 2013" (ibid: 6). It is acknowledged that the requirement for the development of the SAQA RPL policy has been fulfilled. The CAT and Assessment policies should be published by SAQA within three months of publication of this *Guideline.* The three QCs should publish their respective policies as well within six months from SAQA finalizing their policies.

The NQF Impact Study

15. The NQF Act, No. 67 of 2008 *s* 13 (k) (i) and (ii) requires SAQA periodically to conduct an impact study and report thereon. Your SAQA Annual Performance Plan (APP) 2013/2014 you indicate that a draft NQF Impact Study Report has been compiled and circulated to a limited group. Whilst it is noted that significant work has happened in collaboration with the QCs,

SAQA is requested to indicate when the NQF Impact Study report will be made available to me.

Activities related to the White Paper

16. The White Paper makes the following direct reference or implications for the NQF which could guide the deliberations and consideration:

   a. The simplification of the NQF.

   b. Managing the proliferation of qualifications, and the registration of large numbers of qualifications that are not used by providers.

   c. Reduce duplication and de-register[1] unused qualifications and part qualifications.

   d. Recognition on the NQF of programmes based on unit standards and substantial skills programmes that have legal weight and have meaning in the workplace.

   e. Implementation and monitoring of implementation of an articulation framework.

   f. Finalization about the configuration and remit of the QCs.

   g. Strengthening of assessment and quality assurance systems institutionally and through the QCs, within the context of the criteria and guidelines developed by SAQA.

   h. Ongoing support to the QCTO to build its capacity to become fully operational in terms of its quality assurance role, and reduce the quality assurance work carried out by the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).

   i. The quality assurance regime for qualifications and part qualifications at levels 5 and 6 of the NQF.

   j. SAQA's role in terms of its function of promoting articulation and quality assurance.

   k. A national strategy for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to ensure that RPL is embedded within the education and training system.

I therefore direct SAQA, after consultation with the QCs to provide me with recommendations on how the specific issues and other recommendations raised in the White Paper will be dealt with by SAQA and the QCs.

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[1] De-register in this context requires that even though the qualification or part qualification is not registered full records of the qualification and part qualification is maintained by SAQA on the National Learners' Records Database [NLRD].