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GOVERNMENT NOTICE

SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

No. 296

1 April 2015

**Guidelines for Good Practice for Learning that does
Not Lead to a Qualification or Part-Qualification
(LNQ)****Draft for Public Comment
31 March 2015**

Introductory note

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is mandated by the National Qualifications (NQF) Act, 67 OF 2008, to advance the objectives of the NQF, oversee the further development and implementation of the NQF and to co-ordinate the Sub-Frameworks. Learning that does not lead to a qualification or part-qualification (LNQ) in the form of short non-credit bearing learning interventions of various types is not quality-assured by the Quality Councils (QCs) nor registered on the NQF by SAQA.

These Guidelines for Good Practice for LNQ are designed to inform and guide the introduction of quality assurance and management mechanisms of LNQ by the QCs and providers. SAQA believes that through appropriate quality assurance and management, LNQ will facilitate improved access to further learning, offer increased opportunities for RPL for recognition and transition into formal accredited learning resulting in expanded lifelong learning opportunities. Through these guidelines, it will be possible to work collectively to demonstrably contribute towards changing the lives of workers and learners of all ages, unemployed people and other marginalised groups, as important beneficiaries of lifelong learning opportunities.

SAQA encourages practitioners across all sectors of the education and training in the country to engage with the draft guidelines and submit comments to SAQA within 30 days of the publication of the draft guidelines in the Government Gazette. Comments should be sent to:

Dr Sazi Kunene (Director: International Liaison)
skunene@saqa.org.za

Yours faithfully

Joe Samuels
Chief Executive Officer
South African Qualifications Authority

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Glossary of terms

1. The development of the document has as its background in the existing NQF nomenclature, and attempts to contribute to, rather than detract, from existing use of terminology. This section is based on the standard NQF vocabulary contained in the *Standard Glossary of Terms*. The glossary of terms was developed by SAQA in consultation with the Chief Executive Officers Committee as directed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in the *Guidelines on Strategy and Priorities for the NQF 2012/13* (SAQA, April 2014).
2. A distinction is made between formal, informal and non-formal learning:
 - a. Formal learning means learning that occurs in an organised and structured education and training environment and that is explicitly designed as such (Standard Glossary of Terms, 2014);
 - b. Informal learning refers to learning that results from daily activities related to paid or unpaid work, family or community life, or leisure (Standard Glossary of Terms, 2014); and
 - c. Non-formal learning refers to planned learning activities, not explicitly designated as learning, towards the achievement of a qualification or part-qualification; often associated with learning that results in improved workplace practice (Standard Glossary of Terms, 2014).
3. For the purposes of this document, LNQ is proposed to describe non-credit bearing course provisioning. This term is regarded as sufficiently generic in nature to describe this specific category of learning which is of such value and quality that it warrants some form of quality assurance and management. The term LNQ seems to be the most acceptable in that:
 - a. it distinguishes LNQ from other types of offering;
 - b. it relates this type of learning to specific quality assurance and management mechanisms, and
 - c. it is applicable across the levels of the three Qualifications Sub-Frameworks.
4. *Credit-bearing* is a concept which is often used incorrectly and statements to this effect may be misleading. A credit-bearing short course is a type of short learning programme for which credits, in relation to the course's contribution to a part- or full qualification, are awarded. Subsequently, a non-credit-bearing short course is a type of short learning intervention for which no credits are awarded in relation to a qualification or part-qualification. LNQ guidelines deal with non-credit bearing courses only. Credit bearing courses are subjected to the formal processes of accreditation.
5. *Lifelong learning* is learning that takes place in all contexts in life - formally, non-formally and informally. 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 (Standard Glossary of Terms, 2014).
6. *National Qualifications Framework (NQF)* is the 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. The South African NQF is a single integrated system comprising three co-ordinated Qualifications Sub-Frameworks for: General and Further Education and Training; Higher Education; and Trades and Occupations (Standard Glossary of Terms, 2014).

7. *NQF Act* means the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act No. 67 of 2008.
8. *Part-qualification* is an assessed unit of learning with a clearly defined purpose that is, or will be, registered as part of a qualification on the NQF (Standard Glossary of Terms, 2014).
9. *Qualification* is a registered national qualification consisting of a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose or purposes, intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning and which has been assessed in terms of exit level outcomes, registered on the NQF and certified and awarded by a recognised body (Standard Glossary of Terms, 2014).
10. *Quality assurance management of LNQ* means the principles and processes through which LNQ are managed and quality-assured.
11. *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 (Standard Glossary of Terms, 2014).

Guidelines statement

12. This LNQ *Guidelines for Good Practice* document is designed to inform and guide the establishment of an enabling environment for quality assurance and management of learning that does not lead to the achievement of a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF by SAQA. This includes all forms of learning that does not earn credits (non-credit bearing) towards qualifications or part-qualifications. It is important that these learning interventions meet minimum standards in the interest of the learner and the public.
13. This document aims to clarify LNQ and puts forward possible models for the quality assurance processes of LNQ.
14. Through this document, it will be possible to work collectively towards demonstrably contributing towards changing the lives of workers and learners of all ages, unemployed people and other marginalised groups, as important beneficiaries of lifelong learning opportunities.

Background and Context

15. In 2000 the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) initiated the recording of short courses to enable providers of short courses to be brought into the standards-setting and quality-assurance processes set up for the education and training system. Some of the aims of the recording process were to:

- a. gauge the then current extent of short course delivery;
 - b. provide Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) with information about how and what type of education and training was being delivered in the system, thereby informing the development of unit standards and qualifications;
 - c. provide SGBs with insights into how articulation between unit standards and/or skills programmes and full qualifications could be structured; and
 - d. reassure providers and learners that a process is being put in place to bring this area of provisioning into the new system in a coherent and systematic way.
16. The recording of short courses came to an end in November 2001. No new submissions were accepted and since then all short course providers were referred to the relevant Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) Body to initiate their accreditation processes. Essentially the recording of short courses was an attempt to facilitate the development of processes to be more inclusive of different types of providers and modes of delivery in the emerging education and training system.
17. In 2004 SAQA produced the document called *Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes* which provided criteria and guidelines for providers of non-credit bearing short courses which could best be described as an informal approach to short course provisioning. These (2004 Document) criteria and guidelines could be seen as initial acceptance by policy makers in the NQF community that short course provisioning not leading to a qualification or part-qualification has a very particular place in the system and an important role to play in the development, up-skilling and multi-skilling of human resources. It stated that short courses and skills programmes were relevant to all sectors and therefore critical that they be subject to the quality assurance processes already in place for education and training ¹providers of qualifications and part-qualifications.
18. The need for the 2004 document stemmed from the lack of clarity about what was then referred to as short course provisioning and the formalisation of a mode of delivery, which had, up to then, been an informal area of education and training.
19. The regulatory environment within which the 2004 document was drafted was vastly different from the reality of the current South African education and training landscape, in particular the emerging emphasis on the contribution of education and training to the achievement of national goals. With regard to formal qualifications (including credit-bearing courses), three Quality Councils (QCs) are responsible for the development and management (through quality assurance and other measures) of three distinct Qualifications Sub-Frameworks of the NQF. Providers wanting to offer qualifications or part-qualifications seek accreditation from the QCs.

¹ Providers of qualifications are providers who offer a learning programme that leads to an award of a nationally recognised qualification (e.g. Certificate, Diploma or Degree).

Purpose and Scope

20. LNQ is one of the most dynamic features of the emerging education and training system of South Africa. This kind of learning, which is not credit-bearing², is particularly associated with 'just-in-time', and 'just-enough' learning to meet a specific need for a workplace or similar environment (including daily living), or where learners require a targeted intervention to upgrade skills and knowledge to ensure success in their chosen field of learning.
21. LNQ is also associated with continuing professional development and occupational up-skilling for professionals and tradespeople. Therefore, it is considered a viable and common method for optimising functioning for all contexts. The provisioning of LNQ will facilitate access to learning in a manageable manner in terms of cost, time, energy and resources for grant givers/sponsors, and employers and employees alike.
22. The aim is to create an enabling framework for the quality assurance and management of those courses that may contribute to the provision of lifelong learning opportunities, including entry into meaningful work and up-skilling of the existing workforce, in a sustainable and ethically accountable manner.
23. The guidelines for good practice for LNQ are designed to inform and guide the development and implementation of simple, transparent, integrated standards and implementation mechanisms, showing clear lines of accountability to ensure the quality of this form of learning offered in South Africa.
24. The guidelines are designed to be clear and user-friendly to ensure that the information is accessible to the public. The implementation standards and mechanisms must be very carefully designed in order to protect the South African public against false claims and the creation of expectations that may not be met and provide clarification of concepts that cause confusion for the public and providers.

Objective

25. The objective of the LNQ guidelines for good practice is to inform and guide the development of standards and implementation mechanisms for LNQ in order to achieve improved appropriate quality assurance through standardised and recognisable practices.

Models for the management of quality assurance of LNQ

26. Models for quality assurance and management must be kept as simple as possible. This stems from the acknowledgement that learners, and the public at large, may become confused (and possibly misled), by non-standardised approaches and procedures. It must be acknowledged that the contexts for delivery of LNQ differ substantially. There is no one-size-fits-all, and each sector has to contextualise its needs. Therefore, the provision of LNQ must be quality assured and effectively managed.

² Credit-bearing is where a course is registered as part of a qualification or part-qualification on the NQF

27. QCs are offered the following options for managing the quality assurance of LNQ

Option A: Managed by a Quality Council

28. A QC can decide to take responsibility for the management of quality assurance of LNQs offered by its providers. The QC will set out the rules for participation and provides the necessary supporting infrastructure and data exchange platform. The oversight bodies may implement a fee structure to cover the administration costs of the process.

Option B: Peer evaluated self-regulation

29. An Organised Constituent Provider (OCP) group (comprising a number of providers recognised by a common QC) *voluntarily* subscribe to a code of conduct and submit themselves to a transparent peer evaluation process based on a set of guidelines developed by the OCP (appropriately designed to facilitate LNQs).

30. Included in this Option is the principle that the establishment and maintenance of such a system and its supporting activities must be entirely self-funded. A fee structure to compensate the QCs for their oversight roles forms part of the agreement.

Option C: A combination of A and B

31. A QC oversees the establishment of a single OCP of its accredited providers for managing their own LNQ. The QC delegates the responsibility for maintaining an appropriate system and supporting peer evaluation processes to the OCP within a set of rules agreed upon by the OCP and the QC.

Roles and responsibilities in managing the quality assurance of LNQ

Providers of LNQ

32. A LNQ provider could be a QC accredited provider of formal qualifications who also offers LNQ and subscribes to the quality assurance management system of LNQ providers.

33. Currently, there are providers of LNQ that do not fall within the ambit of any QC. It is recommended that the proposed system makes provision for these providers to be quality-assured and managed and consider funding their participation in a quality assurance system that may be different from that of providers of formal qualifications.

34. A quality-assured and managed LNQ provider must, as required by most national and international quality criteria guidelines:

- a. define and describe its purpose, including a description of its vision and mission;
- b. develop, document and maintain a quality management system (QMS); and
- c. develop and document review mechanisms.

35. There should be no misleading claims made or implied about the quality assurance and management of the provider or the LNQ it offers. This includes not using terms already reserved for qualifications and part-qualifications.

NQF bodies

36. SAQA should establish, through the CEO Committee, a committee on LNQ.
- a. The committee on LNQ can consist of representatives from the Department of Higher Education and Training, SAQA, the QCs, public and private providers, professional bodies, organised labour and other stakeholders;
 - b. The committee on LNQ should report to the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) Committee managed by SAQA; and
 - c. The committee will monitor on all LNQ quality assurance-related matters and advise the CEO Committee.
37. Standardised practices within the respective QCs must evolve given that a single approach does not work across different contexts. At a minimum a peer evaluation system should be set in place to:
- a. share good practices;
 - b. monitor adherence to the QC frameworks for providers participating in the LNQ system;
 - c. adhere to generally agreed quality assurance and management principles; and
 - d. protect the integrity of the processes and outcomes concerned.
38. A QC may:
- a. not delegate the function of quality assurance of LNQ to a provider in the absence of a framework for the monitoring of LNQ and;
 - b. prohibit a provider from offering LNQ should there be any evidence of misleading claims made to the public, or if there is any other reason for a QC to intervene to protect the public.

Conclusion

39. Lifelong learning is a key objective of the NQF and the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). In the NSDS booklet (April 2001:11), it is expressed as follows:
- “The notion of life-long learning is one of the key principles of the South African Qualifications Authority. It is recognition that individuals should have opportunities for self-improvement at any stage of their lives, be they employed, unemployed or seeking a first job. As the economy grows and develops, so new skills will be demanded and people will need to retrain for them. The provision of opportunities to learn at any age also guarantees second chance opportunities for people, who for a variety of reasons may have ‘missed out’ [the first time round].”*
40. Provision of opportunities for lifelong learning are therefore a key principle of the emerging education and training system of South Africa. Where this principle is linked to career paths and learning pathways, it becomes even more meaningful for the employer and employee.

41. A systemic approach to the establishment of an enabling environment for the appropriate management of quality assurance and promoting of good practice in LNQ is in the interest of the public and learners. It forms the basis of guiding providers towards the sustainable and ethical delivery of this important portfolio of learning opportunities.

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