



**THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY**  
*Policy and Criteria for the Registration of  
Qualifications and Part Qualifications on the  
National Qualifications Framework*



**Compiled and produced by: The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).**

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Postnet Suite 248  
Private Bag X06  
Waterkloof  
0145

**Helpdesk:** +27 (0) 86 010 3188

**Facsimile:** +27 (0) 12 431 5039

**Website:** [www.saqa.org.za](http://www.saqa.org.za)

**E-mail:** [saqainfo@saqa.org.za](mailto:saqainfo@saqa.org.za)

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## Foreword

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is the principal instrument through which national education and training qualifications are recognised and quality-assured.

SAQA developed the *Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part Qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework* as part of its mandate to “further develop and implement the NQF”. Section 13(1)(h)(i) of the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008, requires SAQA to:

*develop and implement policy and criteria, after consultation with the QCs, for the development, registration and publication of qualifications and part qualifications, ...*

SAQA developed the Policy jointly with senior managers from the Quality Councils [Council on Higher Education (CHE), General and Further Education and Training Council (Umalusi) and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)]. The process furthermore included a call for public comment through a Government Gazette and the SAQA website.

Implementing the policy will contribute to the NQF objective to “*facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths*”.

Inherent to the policy is the goal to strengthen accountability within our education, training and development system and to make visible the quality and parity of all qualifications registered on the NQF.

SAQA continues to work with the Quality Councils and other NQF partners to make sure that all South Africans benefit from quality qualifications.

**Joe Samuels**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

# Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part Qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework

## Preamble

1. The South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications and part qualifications. The NQF was established under the SAQA Act, Act 58 of 1995<sup>1</sup>, and continues under the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008, which came into effect on 1 June 2009.
2. The objectives of the NQF are designed to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large. 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 unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.
3. SAQA is charged with overseeing the further development and implementation of the NQF and understands it as a system of communication, coordination, and collaboration across education, training, development and work. In advancing the NQF objectives, SAQA embraces diversity, environmental sustainability and social justice.
4. The NQF is a single integrated system which comprises of three co-ordinated qualifications Sub-frameworks, for:
  - a. General and Further Education and Training, contemplated in the GENFETQA Act
  - b. Higher Education, contemplated in the Higher Education Act
  - c. Trades and Occupations, contemplated in the Skills Development Act.
5. In terms of Sections 5(3), 13(1)(h)(i) and 27(h)(i) and (iv) of the NQF Act (2008), SAQA and the Quality Councils must:
  - a. Develop, foster and maintain an integrated and transparent national framework for the recognition of learning achievements
  - b. Ensure that South African qualifications are internationally comparable and meet appropriate criteria as determined by the Minister
  - c. Ensure that South African qualifications are of an acceptable quality
  - d. Develop and implement policy and criteria for the registration of qualifications and part qualifications on the NQF
  - e. The Quality Councils must recommend qualifications for registration on the NQF to SAQA.

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

6. The quality of qualifications and part qualifications resides in the:
  - a. Advancement of the objectives of the NQF
  - b. Fitness and suitability of the qualification or part qualification for its intended purpose
  - c. Outcomes of the learning that took place
  - d. Comparability with similar international qualifications, best practices and standards
  - e. The relationship between the learning components (modules, courses, subjects) of the qualification
  - f. Delivery of the qualification/part qualification and assessment of learner achievement.
7. Following the approval of this Policy and these Criteria, Quality Councils will have to develop and implement sector-specific policy and criteria, taking into account this policy and these criteria as per section 27 (h)(i) of the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008.

## **Purpose**

8. This Policy and Criteria document sets out the requirements that SAQA will apply when it registers qualifications and part qualifications on the NQF.

## **Definitions**

9. "Articulation" means facilitating the progress and mobility of learners within and across each of the three Sub-frameworks and to the world of work, which is achieved by the intentional design of structure and content of qualifications.
10. "Assessment criteria" means the standards used to guide learning and assess learner achievement and/or to evaluate and certify competence.
11. "Credits" means the amount of learning contained in a qualification or part qualification whereby one (1) credit is equal to ten (10) notional learning hours.
12. "Entry requirements" means the academic and/or practical, and/or work experience that a learner must have completed to be able to be admitted for a qualification. This may include recognition of other forms of prior learning such as non-formal and informal learning and work experience deemed as comparable for entry. In the South African context, entry requirements also take into account the broad socio-political issue of access.
13. "Exit Level Outcomes" refer to the outcomes which define the level of performance according to which a candidate completing the qualification is assessed.
14. "International Comparability" means an analysis of how a qualification compares with and relates to similar international qualifications, best practices and standards.
15. "Learning" means the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, values, skill, competence or experience.
16. "Learning programme" means a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification.
17. "Level" means one of the series of levels of learning achievement arranged in ascending order from one to ten according to which the NQF is organised.

18. “Level Descriptor” means that statement describing learning achievement at a particular level of the NQF that provides a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.
19. “National Qualifications Framework” is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications.
20. “Notional hours of learning” comprise the total amount of time it would take an average learner to meet the outcomes defined in a learning experience and include, inter alia, face-to face contact time, time spent in structured learning in the workplace, time for completing assignments and research, and time spent in assessment processes.
21. “Outcomes” means the contextually demonstrated end-products of specific learning processes, which include knowledge, skills and values. Outcomes could be generic in that they apply across many fields of learning (generic outcomes include aspects such as “ability to problem-solve” or “understanding the world as a set of inter-related systems”).
22. “Part qualification” means an assessed unit of learning that is registered as part of a qualification.
23. “Qualification” means a registered national qualification.
24. “Qualification type” means the classification of a qualification within a Sub-framework of the NQF.
25. “Recognition of Prior Learning” means 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.
26. “Sub-framework” means one of three qualifications Sub-frameworks which make up the NQF as a single integrated system: The Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework, the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework and the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework.

## Scope

27. This Policy and these Criteria apply to the development, registration and publication of qualifications and part qualifications on the South African NQF taking into account the requirements of the NQF Act and the relevant Sub-frameworks.

## Objectives

28. To advance the objectives of the NQF, this Policy and these Criteria are designed to:
  - a. Facilitate the registration of qualifications and part qualifications on the NQF, which have been recommended to SAQA by the Quality Councils, where they meet the criteria set out in this policy
  - b. Ensure that registered qualifications and part qualifications are relevant to the world of work and promote responsible citizenship in a democratic society and advance knowledge and innovation for a prosperous South Africa
  - c. Establish and maintain coherence between the three Sub-frameworks in order to clarify and strengthen articulation between qualifications within each Sub-framework and between the Sub-frameworks
  - d. Promote public understanding of, and trust in, the NQF through the registration of high quality, nationally relevant, and internationally comparable qualifications and part qualifications

- e. Support the coherence of purpose between education, training and development nationally
- f. Create a basis for and promote lifelong learning
- g. Support the development of a national career development system.

## **Policy for the Registration of Qualifications and Part Qualifications on the NQF**

29. SAQA will register a qualification or part qualification on the NQF on the recommendation of a Quality Council provided that the criteria for registration on the NQF as set out in sections 37 and 38 are fulfilled.
30. Qualifications and part qualifications for registration on the NQF must:
  - a. Include clear specifications of outcomes, using the level descriptors
  - b. State the minimum requirements to obtain the qualification
  - c. Identify the relevant Sub-framework on which it is recommended for registration on the NQF.
31. Part qualifications registered on the NQF should indicate the registered qualification(s) of which they are part, or will form part.
32. Qualifications and part qualifications submitted to SAQA for registration, but which do not meet the registration criteria, will be returned to the relevant Quality Council for amendment.
33. The SAQA Board is the final authority that registers qualifications and part qualifications on the NQF.
34. Quality Councils will advise SAQA, in writing, of qualifications and part qualifications that will no longer be offered. These qualifications, even though no longer offered, still form part of the NQF.
35. All qualifications and part qualifications registered on the NQF will be on the SAQA website.
36. Foreign qualifications being offered by providers in South Africa must meet these criteria for registration on the South African NQF.

## **Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part Qualifications on the NQF**

37. Qualifications and part qualifications for registration on the NQF must:
  - a. Be recommended and submitted to SAQA for registration by a Quality Council
  - b. Comply with the Criteria for registration
  - c. Be written in English
  - d. Meet the criteria as laid down by the Sub-framework for the qualification/part qualification type.
38. Qualifications and part qualifications for registration must be submitted in the following format:
  - a. Title  
The qualification title must comply with the qualification type description provided for in the relevant Sub-framework of the NQF
  - b. Sub-framework  
The Sub-framework on which the qualification is to be registered must be provided
  - c. Field and Sub-Field [this may include, where applicable, the Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) category and/or Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO) code]



d. Level of the Qualification

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

e. Credits

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

f. Rationale

The rationale should:

- i. Provide details of the reasoning that led to identifying the need for the qualification
- ii. Indicate how the qualification meets specific needs in the sector for which it is developed. Details of consultation with a recognised professional body or industry body must be provided in respect of the need
- iii. Identify the range of typical learners and indicate the occupations, jobs or areas of activity in which the qualifying learners will operate
- iv. Indicate the learning pathway where the qualification resides
- v. Indicate how the qualification will provide benefits to the learner, society and the economy.

g. Purpose

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

h. Rules of Combination

There must be coherence between the constituent parts of the qualification

i. Entry Requirements

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

j. Exit Level Outcomes and Associated Assessment Criteria

- i. The exit level outcomes, which are framed against the level descriptors, should indicate what the learner will be able to do and know as a result of completing the qualification or part qualification. These competencies relate directly to the competencies required for the further learning and/or the work for which the qualification or part qualification was designed
- ii. Associated assessment criteria are written for the qualification or part qualification to indicate the nature and level of the assessment associated with the qualification or part qualification and how the exit level outcomes could be assessed in an integrated way. The criteria can be given as a comprehensive set derived from the level descriptors.

k. International Comparability

A statement on how the qualification compares with or relates to similar qualifications or best practices or standards offered in other parts of the world must be given. The Quality Councils will apply this in a manner appropriate to their relevant sector and Sub-framework. Qualifications that are internationally comparable could assist in determining the articulation possibilities of the qualification with qualifications in other national and regional qualification frameworks

l. Integrated Assessment

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

m. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Institutional RPL policies must clearly state how RPL will be applied to gain entry to or achieve the qualification. The RPL policies of the Quality Councils and/or providers must be made available to SAQA upon such request. The RPL policies of education, training and development providers must be aligned to the national SAQA RPL Policy

n. Articulation

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





Telephone: 012 431 5000

Facsimile: 012 431 5147

Helpdesk: 086 010 3188

Website: [www.saqa.org.za](http://www.saqa.org.za)

Email: [saqainfo@saqa.org.za](mailto:saqainfo@saqa.org.za)