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**GOVERNMENT NOTICES**

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**SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY**

No. 1028

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**SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SAQA)**

The South African Qualifications Authority hereby publishes for public comment the following Draft Level Descriptors for the proposed 10 – level National Qualifications Framework (NQF). These Level Descriptors are for Levels 5 to 10.

The Draft Level Descriptors can be accessed via the SAQA web-site at [www.saqqa.org.za](http://www.saqqa.org.za). Copies may also be obtained from the Directorate of Standards Setting and Development at the SAQA offices, Hatfield Forum West, 1067 Arcadia Street, Hatfield, Pretoria.

Comment on the Draft Level Descriptors should reach SAQA at the address *below and no later than 20 November 2005*. All correspondence should be marked **Draft Level Descriptors** and addressed to

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ACTING DIRECTOR: STANDARDS SETTING AND DEVELOPMENT

## DRAFT LEVEL DESCRIPTORS FOR A 10 - LEVEL NQF

### Definitions

1. In these level descriptors any word or expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 (Act No. 58 of 1995) shall have such meaning and, unless the context indicates otherwise –

“applied competence” means the ability to put into practice in the relevant context the learning outcomes acquired in obtaining a qualification;

“autonomy of learning” means the capacity of a learner for lifelong learning and includes the extent to which a learner can undertake action for learning independently, the extent to which a learner takes responsibility for his or her own learning and the extent to which a learner is self-reflexive about and can evaluate the quality of his or her learning and eventually that of others;

“field” means a particular area of learning used as an organising mechanism for the NQF;

“level descriptor” means that statement describing achievement at a particular level of the NQF:

“NQF” means the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as already in the Act;

“operational literacy” means an ability to use basic procedures and operations to complete complex tasks;

“unit standards” means registered statements of desired education and training outcomes and their associated assessment criteria together with administrative and other information as specified in the National Standards Bodies Regulations, 1998.

### Purpose

2. Level descriptors for the proposed levels 5 to 10 of the **NQF** shall ensure coherence across learning in the allocation of qualifications and standards to particular levels, and shall facilitate the assessment of the international comparability of standards and qualifications.

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## Descriptor categories

3. Each set of level descriptors consists of two categories:

- Applied Competence
  - Fundamental knowledge
  - Understanding of organisation or operating environment
  - Application of essential methods
  - Interpretation, conversion and evaluation of text
  - Problem solving and changing context
  - Information gathering
  - Presentation skills
  
- Autonomy of learning
  - Responsibility for own learning
  - Decision taking
  - Evaluation of own or others performance
  - Manage learning tasks
  - Research leadership

## 5. Level Descriptors

NQF level	Applied competence	Autonomy of learning
<b>standards at this level should develop learners who demonstrate:</b>		
5	<p>a. a fundamental knowledge base of the main areas of one or more fields or disciplines<sup>1</sup>;  an informed understanding of the important terms, rules, concepts, principles and theories in one or more fields or disciplines  an understanding of the organisation or operating environment as a system within a wider context and in relation to the society  an ability to effectively apply essential methods, procedures and techniques of the field or discipline;  an ability to interpret, convert and evaluate text<sup>2</sup> and operational symbols or representations  an ability to use their knowledge to solve well-defined problems both routine and unfamiliar within a familiar context;  an ability to adjust an application of a solution within relevant parameters to meet the needs of changes in the problem or operating context;  an ability to evaluate the change using relevant evidence<sup>3</sup>  efficient information-gathering, analysis and synthesis, and evaluation skills  presentation skills using appropriate technological skills;  an ability to communicate information coherently using basic conventions of an academic / professional<sup>4</sup> discourse reliably in writing and verbally</p>	<p>a. a capacity to take responsibility for their own learning within a supervised environment  b. take decisions about and responsibility for actions  c. evaluate their own performance against given criteria</p>

<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the qualification will determine whether one or more fields is covered

<sup>2</sup> Text will include operation manuals, written instructions etc.

<sup>3</sup> This could include health and safety requirements, operation procedures etc.

<sup>4</sup> Professional incorporates what has traditionally been known as vocational

NQF level	Applied competence	Autonomy of learning
Typically, a learning programme leading to the award of a qualification or unit standard at this level aims to develop learners who demonstrate:		
<b>6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a</b> a sound knowledge in at least one discipline/field</li> <li><b>b</b> a sound understanding of one or more discipline/field's key terms, rules, concepts, established principles and theories; some awareness of how the discipline/field relates to cognate areas</li> <li><b>c</b> effective selection and application of the central procedures operations and techniques of a discipline/field</li> <li><b>d</b> an ability to solve well-defined but unfamiliar problems using correct procedures and appropriate evidence</li> <li><b>e</b> a critical analysis and synthesis of information; presentation of information using basic information technology</li> <li><b>f</b> an ability to present and communicate information reliably and coherently, using academic/professional discourse conventions and formats appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a.</b> a capacity to evaluate their own learning and identify their learning needs within a structured learning environment</li> <li><b>b.</b> a capacity to take the initiative to address these needs</li> <li><b>c.</b> a capacity to assist others with identifying learning needs</li> </ul>

NQF level	Applied competence	Autonomy of learning
<b>Typically, a learning programme leading to the award of a qualification or unit standard at this level should develop learners who demonstrate:</b>		
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a well-rounded and systematic knowledge base in one or more disciplines/fields and a detailed knowledge of some specialist areas</li> <li>b. a coherent and critical understanding of one or more discipline/ field's terms, rules, concepts, principles and theories; an ability to map new knowledge onto a given body of theory; an acceptance of a multiplicity of 'right' answers</li> <li>c. effective selection and application of the essential procedures, operations and techniques of a discipline/ field; an understanding of the central methods of enquiry and research in a discipline/ field; a knowledge of at least one other discipline/ field's mode of enquiry</li> <li>d. an ability to deal with unfamiliar concrete and abstract problems and issues using evidence-based solutions and theory-driven arguments</li> <li>e. well-developed information retrieval skills; critical analysis and synthesis of quantitative and/ or qualitative data; presentation skills following prescribed formats, using IT skills appropriately</li> <li>f. an ability to present and communicate information and their own ideas and opinions in well-structured arguments, showing an awareness of audience and using academic/ professional discourse appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a capacity to operate in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts, requiring responsibility and initiative</li> <li>b. a capacity to accurately self-evaluate and identify and address own learning needs</li> <li>c. an ability to interact effectively in a learning group</li> </ul>

NQF level	Applied competence	Autonomy of learning
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a comprehensive and systematic knowledge base in a discipline / field and a depth of knowledge in some areas of specialisation</li> <li>b. a coherent and critical understanding of the principles and theories of a discipline/field; an ability to critique current research and advanced scholarship in an area of specialisation; an ability to make sound theoretical judgements based on evidence and an ability to think epistemologically</li> <li>c. an understanding of a range of research methods, techniques and technologies and an ability to select these appropriately for a particular research problem in an area of specialisation</li> <li>d. an ability to identify, analyse and deal with complex and/or real world problems and issues using evidence-based solutions and theory-driven arguments</li> <li>e. efficient and effective information retrieval and processing skills; the identification, critical analysis, synthesis and independent evaluation of quantitative and/or qualitative data; an ability to engage with current research and scholarly or professional literature in a discipline/ field</li> <li>f. an ability to present and communicate academic/ professional work effectively, catering for a range of audiences by using a range of different genres appropriate to the context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a capacity to operate effectively in complex, ill-defined contexts</li> <li>b. a capacity to self-evaluate exercising personal responsibility and initiative</li> <li>c. a capacity to manage learning tasks autonomously, professionally and ethically</li> <li>d. a capacity to continue to learn independently for continuing academic/ professional development</li> </ul>

NQF level	Applied competence	Autonomy of learning
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a comprehensive and systematic knowledge base in a discipline/ field with specialist knowledge in an area at the forefront of the discipline/field or area of professional practice</li> <li>b. a coherent and critical understanding of the theory, research methodologies and techniques relevant to a discipline/field; an ability to rigorously critique and evaluate current research and participate in scholarly debates in an area of specialisation; an ability to relate theory to practice and <i>vice versa</i> and to think epistemologically</li> <li>c. mastery of the application of research methods, techniques and technologies appropriate to an area of specialisation; an ability to undertake a research project and write up a research dissertation under supervision</li> <li>d. an ability to identify, analyse and deal with complex and/or real world problems and issues drawing systematically and creatively on the theory, research methods and literature of a discipline/field</li> <li>e. advanced information retrieval and processing skills; identification, critical analysis, synthesis and independent evaluation of quantitative and/or qualitative data; an ability to undertake a study of the literature and current research in an area of specialisation under supervision</li> <li>f. an ability to effectively present and communicate the results of research to specialist and non-specialist audiences using the resources of an academic/ professional discourse; the production of a dissertation or research report which meets the standards of scholarly/professional writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a capacity to operate effectively in complex, ill defined contexts</li> <li>b. a capacity to critically self-evaluate and continue to learn independently for continuing professional development</li> <li>c. a capacity to manage learning tasks autonomously professionally and ethically</li> <li>d. a capacity to critically evaluate own and others' work with justification</li> </ul>



NQF level	Applied competence	Autonomy of learning
10	<p>a. a comprehensive and systemic grasp of a discipline/field's body of knowledge with expertise and specialist knowledge in an area at the forefront of the discipline, field or professional practice (and ability to create new knowledge)</p> <p>b. a critical understanding of the most advanced research methodologies, techniques and technologies in a discipline/field; an ability to participate in scholarly debates at the cutting edge of an area of specialisation; an ability to apply knowledge, theory and research methods creatively to complex practical, theoretical and epistemological problems</p> <p>c. substantial, independent research and advanced scholarship resulting in the (re) interpretation and expansion of knowledge which is judged publishable by peers</p> <p>3. an ability to identify, conceptualise, design and implement research projects that address complex, ill-defined problems at the cutting edge of a discipline/-field</p> <p>3. advanced information retrieval and processing skills; an ability to independently undertake a study and evaluation of the literature and current research in an area of specialisation</p> <p>an ability to effectively present and communicate the results of research and opinion to specialist and non-specialist audiences using the full resources of an academic/professional discourse; the production of a thesis which meets international standards of scholarly/professional writing</p>	<p>a. a capacity to operate autonomously in specialised, complex, ill-defined and unpredictable contexts</p> <p>b. intellectual independence and research leadership through managing advanced research and development in a field professionally and ethically</p> <p>c. a capacity to critically evaluate own and others' work on the basis of independent criteria</p>