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## GENERAL NOTICE

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### NOTICE 913 OF 2011

#### DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

#### NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK ACT, 2008 (ACT 67 OF 2008)

#### GENERAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALITY

#### ASSURANCE ACT, 2001 (ACT 58 OF 2001)

#### HIGHER EDUCATION ACT, 1997 (ACT 101 OF 1997)

#### SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT, 1998 (ACT 98 OF 1998)

### CALL FOR COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORKS FOR GENERAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING, HIGHER EDUCATION, AND TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS

I, Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education and Training, am required by section 8(2)(e) of the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No. 67 of 2008) ("the Act"), to determine the three sub-frameworks that comprise the National Qualifications Framework.

The NQF is essentially a system for bringing order and coherence into the complex arena of education and training, assisting learners and workers to progress in their educational and career paths, and ensuring that South African qualifications are both relevant and of high quality.

The Act (s. 35) recognises the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) promulgated by the Minister of Education in 2007 as the sub-framework for Higher Education. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) has revised aspects of the HEQF in the light of experience and submitted the revised sub-framework to me.

The proposed qualifications sub-framework for General and Further Education and Training has been developed by Umalusi, and the proposed qualifications sub-framework for Trades and Occupations has been developed by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), and both new sub-frameworks have been submitted to me.

All three sub-frameworks are published in the Schedules to this Notice.

I express my appreciation to the three Quality Councils and their executive staffs and technical advisers for their work over several years in preparing these vital documents, and I acknowledge the extensive advice that has been provided to them by many organisations, institutions and individuals over this time. The publication of the three draft sub-frameworks is indeed an important milestone.

The Act makes clear at many points (ss. 5(1)(a), (3)(a), 7 and 8(3)(b)) that the NQF is a single integrated, coherent framework, and accordingly that the three sub-frameworks must be coordinated. It is the responsibility of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)

to coordinate the sub-frameworks (s. 11(c)). The Minister is required to determine the sub-frameworks after considering SAQA's advice. SAQA has worked with the Quality Councils to help bring the sub-frameworks to this point, and will continue to do so when the public comments have been received.

It is clear that sufficient articulation of the proposed sub-frameworks has not yet been achieved although the need is recognised in all three draft documents. The public is especially requested to give advice on how articulation may be improved. Our integrated NQF must facilitate the greatest possible degree of mobility for learners and workers through our systems of learning, and in particular must lubricate the development of an integrated post-school system.

Careful readers of the documents will notice that some of the formulations in the sub-frameworks are not fully in line with existing law or policy. For instance, Umalusi's document anticipates that certain level 5 qualifications will fall within its sub-framework, although Umalusi's scope is currently restricted to levels 1-4 on the NQF. Also, the scope of the CHE's revised HEQF proposals seems to be confined to higher education institutions, whereas certain higher education programmes may be offered in appropriately equipped and staffed FET colleges. Such anomalies will be dealt with in the revision process.

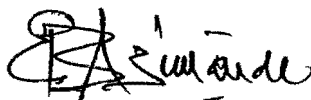
However, if laws must be changed in order to accommodate some requirements of the new sub-frameworks, once they have been revised and approved, that will be given careful consideration. The NQF must be a supple instrument in the service of a well-functioning and integrated education and training system.

All interested persons and organisations are invited to comment on the sub-frameworks, in writing or electronically, and to direct their comments to –

The Director-General, Department of Higher Education and Training, Private Bag X174, Pretoria, 0001, for attention: Ms L Tlou, e-mail [tlou.l@dhet.gov.za](mailto:tlou.l@dhet.gov.za).

Comments should reach the Department within 45 days after publication of this notice.

SIGNED:



DR B E NZIMANDE, MP

MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

DATE: 22/11/11

## **SCHEDULE A**

### **THE PROPOSED QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK FOR GENERAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

# **The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework**

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**Umalusi**

**Draft 11**

**February 2011**

## **Umalusi**

Umalusi House  
37 General Van Ryneveld Street  
Persequor Technopark  
Pretoria

Postnet Suite 104  
Private Bag X1  
Queenswood  
Pretoria  
South Africa

Tel: +27 12 349-1510  
Fax: +27 12 349- 1511

<http://umalusi.org.za>

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## The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework

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## 1. THE GENERAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK IN CONTEXT

### A single qualifications framework for a diverse system

1. In terms of the National Qualifications Framework Act, Act no 67 of 2009, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is an overarching framework of **ten levels encompassing three sub-frameworks**: a General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework, an Occupational Qualifications Framework, and a Higher Education Qualifications Framework.
2. In 2001 Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, was mandated by parliament, in its founding Act, *The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, 2001* (Act 58 of 2001) as the quality assurance body for Levels 1 – 4 of the National Qualifications Framework<sup>1</sup>. Its responsibility is to quality assure programmes; exit point assessments and provision in schools, FET colleges and for adult basic education and training centres, as provided for under the-
  - South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996)
  - Further Education & Training Colleges Act, 2006 (Act 16 of 2006 amended 2010), and
  - Adult Basic Education & Training Act, 2000 (Act 52 of 2000 amended 2010).
3. The promulgation of the *NQF Act*, Act 67 of 2008, constitutes Umalusi as the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training, as provided for in the amended GENFETQA Act of 2008. It serves as one of three Quality Councils, alongside the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), required to collaborate with the South African Qualifications Authority and the other Quality Councils (QCs), subject to the *National Education Policy Act* (Act No 27 of 1996), the *NQF Act*, and its founding Act. In addition to the

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<sup>1</sup> The South African education system is now divided into the Basic-, and Further- as well as Higher Education and Training. Umalusi's responsibilities lie currently with all twelve years of Basic Education (which subsumes General Education and a portion of Further Education) and Further Education. The legal redefinition of the various sectors within education must precede the final naming of this framework which is responsible for institutional learning across these sectors.

responsibilities outlined in its founding Act, and which are set out in subsequent paragraphs, the Council is responsible for the sub-framework of qualifications for general and further education and training. In terms of Paragraph 27 of the NQF Act, Umalusi as a QC must, in respect of its sub-framework:

- 3.1 Develop and manage its sub-framework of qualifications;
- 3.2 Advise and make recommendations related to the sub-framework to the relevant Minister;
- 3.3 Consider and agree to level descriptors, and ensure that they remain current and appropriate;
- 3.4 Propose policy for the development, registration, and publication of qualifications for its sub-framework in accordance with requirements outlined in the NQF Act, as well as;
- 3.5 Ensure the development of such qualifications—and part-qualifications—as are necessary for the sector, including indication of appropriate measures for the delivery and assessment of learning achievement, and recommend them to SAQA for registration;
- 3.6 Propose policy for quality assurance within the sub-framework;
- 3.7 Ensure the autonomy, integrity, and credibility of quality assurance for qualifications registered on its sub-framework;
- 3.8 Maintain a database of learner achievement and related matters;
- 3.9 Conduct or commission and publish research on issues relevant to the development and implementation of the sub-framework;
- 3.10 Provide information regarding the sub-framework to the public; and
- 3.11 Perform any other functions required by the NQF Act, or functions consistent with this Act which the relevant Minister may determine.

4. In terms of *The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, Act 58 of 2001*, as amended in 2008, Umalusi is also required—in terms of its quality assurance of assessment responsibilities—to:

- 4.1 Ensure the necessary quality assurance work is undertaken by the QC itself or by a body to which such powers have been delegated, and that the outcomes of such work are reported;

- 4.2 Develop policy for assessment, including internal assessment where such contributes to the final marks, and standardization;
  - 4.3 Ensure and verify the implementation of such policy by the assessment bodies responsible;
  - 4.4 Report irregularities which may jeopardize the integrity of an assessment or its outcome to the relevant Director-General; and
  - 4.5 Issue certificates to learners who have achieved qualifications or part-qualifications.
5. Also in terms of its founding act, as amended in 2008, Umalusi is required to undertake the following quality assurance of provision responsibilities:
- 5.1 Develop policy, which must be regulated by the Minister, for the accreditation of assessment bodies, other than departments of education, and accredit assessment bodies accordingly;
  - 5.2 Develop policy and criteria for the quality assurance of private education institutions, including independent schools, private colleges and private adult education and training centres;
  - 5.3 Ensure that any institution required to register as a private school, FET college, or AET centre complies with the quality assurance policy and criteria determined by Umalusi; and affirm or withdraw the accreditation status of the private institution concerned.
6. Umalusi undertakes the statutory responsibilities in respect of quality assurance, accreditation, research and the development of its sub-framework and the qualifications registered on that framework in terms of the position explicated in this policy.
7. This policy framework needs to be read in conjunction with the following legislation:
- a) Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
  - b) The National Education Policy Act, Act no 27 of 1996
  - c) The National Qualifications Act, Act no 67 of 2008
  - d) The General and Further Education and Training Act. Act no 58 of 2001 and as amended in 2008 and 2010
  - e) Skills Development Act, Act no 97 of 1998 and as amended in 2008
  - f) Adult Basic Education and Training Act, Act no 52 of 2000 and as amended in 2010

- g) Further Education and Training Colleges Act, act no 16 of 2006 and as amended in 2010
  - h) The South African Schools Act, Act no 84 of 1996 and as amended in 2010
  - i) Higher Education Act, 1997 and as amended in 2008 and 2010
  - j) The Higher Education Qualifications Framework, 2007.
8. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework, a sub-framework of the National Qualifications Framework, coordinates with the two sub-frameworks developed and managed by the Quality Council for Higher Education and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations.
9. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework is a register of general educational qualifications. These qualifications may be academic, in nature, as is the case with the *National Senior Certificate* and the *National Senior Certificate for Adults*, or they may be general vocational in nature, as is the case with the *National Certificate (Vocational)* and the *National Independent Certificate*.
10. All these qualifications are hallmarked by the fact that they are discipline-based and include foundational learning designed to support further learning. Foundational learning is intended to provide learning opportunities for proficiency in one or more languages as well as proficiency in some form of mathematics or mathematical literacy, and in some cases, this is extended to general vocationally oriented subjects e.g. technical drawing that is applied across contexts, for example, the National Technical Certificates (N-courses)
11. The qualifications registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework cater for two distinct learner groups: children and adolescents, involved in the acquisition of a basic education, and adolescents and adults who may be involved in learning that ranges from adult basic education and training (ABET) to making a new attempt to achieve a school-leaving certificate. The groups overlap substantially and yet have distinct needs.
12. Umalusi is responsible for quality assuring basic schooling, from Grades R – 12. Basic schooling thus combines General and Further Education. There is currently no qualification which marks the transition from General to Further Education, but provision is made on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework for such an eventuality. Further Education has, since 2007, included two distinct but complementary pathways for adolescent learners: a general academic pathway, represented by the

*National Senior Certificate*, and a general vocational pathway, represented by the *National Certificate (Vocational)*. Both pathways are specifically designed for adolescents in the 16 – 19 year age group, and provide differentiated quality learning for that age group both in schools and FET Colleges.

13. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework also caters for the general academic and general vocational needs of adults, as well as for their basic literacy needs. The framework is designed to build a post-compulsory, post-schooling Further Education and Training environment that supports a wide range of adult needs which complements the occupational qualifications which are the responsibility of the QCTO.
14. The qualifications for adults on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework are not occupational in nature and are offered at institutions such as public and private adult learning centres as well as public and private FET colleges: the *National Senior Certificate for Adults* represents a general academic option for adults while the *National Independent Certificate* fulfills the need for a general vocational learning opportunity for adults wishing to learn, but who may not be in a workplace.
15. This policy provides the basis for integrating existing disciplinary-based qualifications offered at institutions—schools, FET colleges and adult education and training centres—both public and private—into the National Qualifications Framework, as well as a means for developing and integrating such new qualifications as may be required by emerging learning needs into the National Qualifications Framework. Furthermore this policy, read in conjunction with Umalusi Council policy entitled *Standard Setting and Quality Assurance for General Further Education and Training* (June 2008, revised November 2010), explicates its approach to standard setting and quality assurance. It improves the coherence within a more unified education system for General and Further Education and Training, and facilitates the articulation between qualifications, thus allowing for greater ease of access and the possibility of credit transfer for learners.
16. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework assists in a common understanding of the achievements represented by qualifications on the sub-framework, and their relationship to one another, and has been designed to be readily understood and to ensure a consistent use of qualification titles. The framework establishes parameters and criteria for the design of qualifications. Through these parameters and criteria, it facilitates general comparability of qualifications across the

system. Actual comparability is established through more rigorous evaluative processes.

17. The purpose of this policy is to provide a coherent framework for the development and provision of general and further education qualifications. Such a framework fosters the development of a single yet diverse general and further education and training sector that serves the needs of the individual, South African society and the economy.
18. The policy is intended to strengthen the grounds for articulation with qualifications residing on the two other sub-frameworks which comprise the NQF namely the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) and the Occupational Qualifications Framework (OQF).
19. This policy is intended to provide information that enables public understanding of the achievements represented by the qualifications in general and further education and training. Such understanding is a prerequisite for confidence in the academic standards of the sector.
20. This qualifications framework provides the rationale for the development and use of qualification titles in the sub-framework by describing common parameters and criteria for the development of qualifications. These common parameters allow for innovation and variety while retaining a small number of highly identifiable qualification types.
21. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework is constituted as a register of qualification types. Qualification types allow for the registration and/or the development of designated variants and/or part-qualifications. Qualification variants are designed to share a common structure while allowing some flexibility for learner interest and preference. All qualifications are underpinned by a curriculum for the subjects within the qualifications. The subjects are quality-assured through external assessment.
22. Through qualification development and through setting standards for the intended, enacted and examined curricula of qualifications on the sub-framework, and the careful monitoring of these, Umalusi discharges its statutory standard setting and quality assurance responsibilities for the sub-framework.
23. The policy applies to all general and further education and training offerings leading to a qualification, or part-qualification, offered in both public and private educational institutions in South Africa.

## The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework and the National Qualifications Framework

24. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework forms an integral part of the NQF, as it is defined in the NQF Act, Act no 67 of 2009.
25. In terms of the proclamation, *Transfer of administration and powers and functions entrusted by legislation to certain cabinet members in terms of Section 97 of the constitution*, (Government Gazette 32367, 1 July 2009), the Minister of Higher Education and Training has overall responsibility for National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No. 27 of 2008) and so for the regulation of the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework, including the responsibility of approval of qualifications in further education and training colleges, and qualifications designed for adults.
26. The Ministry of Basic Education has overall responsibility for qualifications relating to schooling.
27. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework consists of a hierarchy of qualification types, located upon an identified level of the NQF. The qualification **types** specify broad requirements for qualifications and create the basis for the development of specific qualifications (**designated variants**). Designated variants will be described with a qualifier. The National Certificate (Vocational) is a designated variant of the National Certificate at Level 4 on the NQF. Designated variants may, in turn, have identifiable programmes. Thus, the National Certificate (Vocational): Civil Engineering and Building Construction is a programme under the NC(V).
28. All qualifications are further specified at least at the level of curriculum. Qualifications and part-qualifications may both be registered on the sub-framework.
29. Qualifications are regulated by the Minister, and are submitted, on approval, to SAQA for registration on the National Qualifications Framework.
30. The NQF Act of 2008 requires Umalusi to be the Quality Council for the General and Further Education and Training sector, in terms of learning

which takes place in institutions, as identified in the Acts referred to in Paragraph 2 of this document.

31. The word 'qualification' denotes the formal recognition, through certification, of learning achievement, and is awarded by an appropriate quality assurance body. A qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework is defined as the broad specifications and combinations of units of learning which must be achieved by learners, but which can also reflect individual learners' preferred learning needs, as expressed within those specifications. In the South African context, the word signifies, too, that an individual learner has successfully completed a coherent and purposeful programme of learning (at a particular level on the NQF) (Section 8(1) of the *Regulations under the South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995* (Act no. 58 of 1995), and that the learner has been assessed—in terms of the exit-level outcomes—as qualified.
32. A part-qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework means that a substantive unit<sup>2</sup> or units of learning are registered as part of a qualification. Candidates may be assessed against such a unit or units of learning and have their achievement formally recognized.
33. A programme is defined as a meaningful combination of subjects, organized in terms of one of the Organising Fields Identified by SAQA, which conform to the requirements of a particular qualification. Programmes generally identify an area of specialization. So, for example, the vocational field, Information Technology and Computer Science, is determined as a programme in the NC(V).
34. A curriculum is the necessary underpinning documentation provided for a qualification to facilitate a more general understanding of its implementation in an educational system. The curriculum for a qualification provides a more detailed description in terms of the depth, breadth and level of difficulty and cognitive demand of what is required for the purpose of the qualification to be fulfilled through its enactment. Syllabi for the necessary subjects form an integral part of the curriculum. The standard of a qualification is determined through the enactment of and an examination of its associated curricula. The curriculum and its syllabi provide the information necessary for the development of learning programmes and the necessary framework for assessment.

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<sup>2</sup> A substantive unit of learning would be one that was assigned a minimum of 20 credits, and constitutes a minimum of 200 notional hours of learning.

35. A programme of learning is defined as a structured and purposeful set of learning experiences, based on a curriculum. Such a programme of learning is organized to assist learners to achieve a qualification. The nature of a particular programme of learning is determined by the qualification it serves. Programmes of learning, while serving the ends of the qualification, do not form a part of the qualification itself. Programmes of learning are nevertheless subject to their own quality assurance processes through the accreditation process, and are informed by the curriculum and assessment associated with the qualification. Programmes of learning are distinct from qualification programmes, as defined in paragraph 34 (above).
36. This policy determines the qualifications structure for General and Further Education qualifications which are not occupational qualifications. It is recognized that professional bodies have a distinct role, derived from legislation or undertaken in terms international professional conventions or agreements, to set requirements for professional registration, membership or licensing, and to regulate professional conduct. Professional bodies may be consulted to determine whether a particular qualification—current or proposed—meets the requirements for professional registration, membership or licensing. Such matters, which fall outside the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education and Training and Umalusi Council, are not dealt with in this policy.
37. Traditionally Umalusi has quality assured (but not certificated) certain NQF Level 5 qualifications that are extensions of NQF 4 qualifications that were in the education system prior to the advent of the NQF. Where such qualifications continue to exist and where similar new theory-based qualifications are required at this level, Umalusi develops and quality assures such. In this manner Umalusi plays a meaningful connective function between the respective frameworks.

### **Standard setting in General and Further Education and Training**

38. Umalusi is responsible for the standards in General and Further Education and Training insofar as this relates to qualifications, which are not occupational, and which are offered at registered, and Umalusi-accredited, institutions in terms of the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, as amended.
39. More specifically Umalusi is responsible for the setting of standards for all qualifications registered on the General and Further Education and Training

Qualifications Framework, and for ensuring that such qualifications meet the necessary criteria for registration on the NQF in terms of Section 27 (h) (i) – (iv) of the NQF Act, 2008, (Act No 67 of 2008).

40. Standards for qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework must have a common, well-understood meaning to ensure credibility and legitimacy. To this end, Umalusi has developed policy for the development, evaluation, implementation and quality assurance of the curricula; criteria for the implementation of learning programmes and assessments leading to qualifications, and criteria for the accreditation of the institutions Umalusi quality assures. Further, the Council puts in place the necessary standards and procedures to ensure the integrity of standard setting and quality assurance. Through these measures, Umalusi safeguards the integrity of standards-development and quality assurance processes. In discharging these responsibilities, Umalusi may work in collaboration with the relevant statutory bodies, with the relevant professional bodies, where such is required, with the relevant public and private institutions of learning, and with interested stakeholders in General and Further Education and Training. The Council may also recommend further policy emanating from this policy to the Minister of Higher Education and Training and/or the Minister of Basic Education for approval.
41. Prescribed qualification specifications, evaluation of curriculum statements or syllabuses, the verification of the quality of external examinations, and monitoring of provision are all significant and relatively cost-effective ways of establishing standards, and measuring, and improving quality in the education and training system. Such considerations are critical when a Quality Council is responsible for maintaining the necessary standards in a large-scale educational system.
42. The NQF level forms the most generic specification of the qualification, taking into cognizance the level descriptors developed by SAQA. In addition, placement of qualifications on the sub-framework is in part determined by comparative evaluations with existing qualifications on the sub-framework. The level of qualifications is determined through research into the critical curricula underpinning the qualifications, and through an evaluation of the quality and depth of the concomitant assessment.
43. On the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework, a coherent standard is maintained by associating a single qualification type with each of the NQF levels. The type is determined by the educational, socio-political, cultural and economic imperatives that require fulfillment in the education system of the country. The qualification specifies the level of the qualification, its minimum credit rating and its

purpose and characteristics. A qualification is required to meet at least the generic competencies associated with the level at which the qualification has been pegged. The basic qualification types are used as points of reference for the development of specialized qualifications.

44. A qualification type may have one or more *designated variants*.
45. Certain designated variants may be further specified, producing a qualification specialization called a *programme*. This specialization is expressed in the *qualifier*. For example, the combination of subjects specified for the programme, National Certificate (Vocational): Finance, Economics and Accounting, meets the basic requirements for the NC(V), but also includes specialized learning in the field of Information Technology. Qualification specializations are expressed as a maximum of five words after the name of the qualification. The description of the programme—the *qualifier*—is separated from the qualification type by a colon.
46. Developing and monitoring standards and quality assurance for the framework also resides in ensuring that these qualifications are all accompanied by acceptable prescribed curricula. Development of the qualifications framework may include strengthening existing qualifications through recommendations to the relevant Minister of Education, developing new qualifications, as well as evaluating new qualifications which are proposed for inclusion on the framework. Umalusi may evaluate, develop, or assist in the development of one or more qualifications and the associated curricula should a need for a new qualification be identified. The maintenance and development of the qualifications and their curricula for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework is a significant means of improving quality in South African education.
47. Qualification descriptions must specify at least the following information:
  - 47.1 a rationale explaining the function of the qualification in education and training, and the kind of need it is intended to address
  - 47.2 a broadly-stated purpose, explaining in general terms the knowledge and skills the learner will have mastered on completion, that fits within the general purpose of the qualification type;
  - 47.3 the rules of combination for the qualification;
  - 47.4 a description of how the qualification articulates horizontally and vertically with other specific qualifications;

- 47.5 wherever relevant, the duration of the qualification (length of time in which the qualification must be completed, if appropriate);
  - 47.6 supporting curriculum statements or syllabuses which clearly specify the content and skills to be mastered in the qualification; and
  - 47.7 core skills as captured in the critical cross-field outcomes
  - 47.8 assessment requirements for the award of the qualification
  - 47.9 accreditation requirements to be met for the provision and certification of the qualification
48. The qualification specifications prescribe the learning to be attained, and which combinations accord with the qualification structure. Each qualification must identify a number of possible units of learning (such as subjects or learning areas). Some units are compulsory for some qualifications; other units of learning are selected from lists associated with the qualification itself.
49. The relevant Ministry of Education determines the inception date of qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework, on advice from Umalusi. Should a qualification no longer be servicing a need in the system, the relevant Ministry of Education, together with Umalusi, likewise determines a termination date for a qualification on the sub-framework, and puts into effect transitional arrangements. Furthermore, Umalusi may recommend to the relevant Ministry the extension of a qualification or part-qualification for which transitional arrangements were previously made. A qualification should not be terminated until such time as an alternative is available for persons wishing to study.
50. Both qualifications and the associated curriculum may be reviewed and revised from time to time should there be a need to do so. Umalusi may advise the relevant Minister for the need to review a qualification and/or its curricula. Conversely, a Ministry of Education may approach Umalusi recommending a review. Reviews of qualifications and/or curricula are subject to Umalusi policy governing these activities.
51. Certificates are issued for qualifications that have at least a 50% component of suitably quality-assured external assessments, based on approved syllabuses or curriculum statements: the monitoring of provision (and the accreditation) of educational institutions is based on quality assurance of the enacted curriculum and internal assessment, as well as their participation in properly conducted and monitored external assessments.

52. The standard of the qualification is determined—and maintained—through the design specifications of the qualification; and the quality of the assessment, which in turn is designed to assure the standard of the enacted curriculum, as evidenced in the accreditation processes.
53. The standard associated with the qualification also depends on the quality of the learning, teaching and assessment that happens in institutions of learning. The necessary regime of quality assurance processes and procedures upholds and strengthens these standards; the value of the final certificate is seen to depend on maintaining high ethical standards in the final, high-stakes, and high-security processes of setting and marking exams, standardizing marks and processing them for certification. The value of the qualification is equally seen to depend on the foundation documents which underpin the required learning. Both the qualification itself and the curricula underpin the necessary quality assurance processes which ensure quality teaching and learning.
54. The successful achievement of a qualification or part-qualification on the sub-framework is formally recognized and certified by Umalusi.
55. Establishing and using new and innovative ways to set and strengthen educational standards forms part of Umalusi's responsibility in setting standards for the sub-framework and are actively researched and pursued.

### **Qualifications, volumes of learning and achievement of credits**

56. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework consists of the NQF levels, as determined by SAQA; the main qualification types, their descriptors and qualifiers; the units of learning (subjects or learning areas), and their associated curricula.
57. The framework recognizes credits as a general measure of volume of learning required for a qualification, quantified as the number of notional study hours required for achieving the learning required by the qualification. The credit rating is independent of the mode of delivery of learning, and the attainment of the expected learning is established through the appropriate assessment of the learning outcomes.
58. The credit rating system rates 10 notional study hours as equivalent to 1 credit. Credit ratings specified on the framework are currently expressed as minima, but qualifications on the sub-framework also require a maximum specification to minimize overload.

59. The volume of learning required for a qualification is specified in terms of the total number of credits required. On the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework, the standard number of credits associated with a unit of learning, expressed in terms of a curriculum, is 20 credits, and qualifications range between 80 and 120 credits or more. Part-qualification credit values depend on the number of units of learning to be included.
60. Each unit of learning is associated with a curriculum statement, or syllabus, which outlines the selection, sequencing, and pacing of key knowledge areas as well as skills and abilities to be mastered in each of the units of learning that make up the qualification, and prescribes how the curriculum will be assessed. In other words, in order to be registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework, qualifications are to be considered with their accompanying curriculum standards or curriculum statements as necessary for *all* units of learning that can count towards the qualification at hand, as well as the specification for external assessment for all units of learning. For new qualifications where there has been no history of external examinations, exemplars of proposed external assessment form a part of the extended curriculum description.
61. To obtain a qualification or unit-of-learning/subject statement, a learner *must* be examined by a public examination body or an accredited private assessment body. The assessment policy for each qualification must include a measure or set of measures that allows the generation of a report on a learner's achievement, as achievement is necessarily taken into account in progression decisions.

### **Accumulation of credits towards qualifications**

62. Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) is the process whereby a learner's achievements are recognized and may provide access to further learning. Furthermore, credits previously obtained may be recognized as meeting the requirements for a different qualification, and where, subject to limits, the credits achieved towards one qualification may be recognized as meeting part of the requirements for another qualification.
63. Umalusi certification processes recognize partial achievement of qualifications, through the issue of subject statements, and, under the

prerequisite conditions, allow the combination of partial achievements to result in a full qualification.

64. Umalusi Council has policy regarding credit recognition, accumulation and transfer and the recognition of prior learning, as these are practised in a large-scale, massified education system.

## **2. THE GENERAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK**

### **Characteristics**

65. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework is designed to:

- 65.1 be sufficiently flexible to accommodate different types of general and further education needs and to enable a variety of public and private institutions to pursue their teaching and learning obligations responsibly;
- 65.2 facilitate the education of learners, whether they are of school-going age or beyond, so that they will ultimately contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of South Africa;
- 65.3 provide qualifications that can be benchmarked credibly against similar qualifications internationally;
- 65.4 allow for the development of new qualification variants or programmes as the need arises;
- 65.5 be simple, clear, easy to understand and user-friendly; and
- 65.6 facilitate as far as possible the articulation between qualifications within the framework and across the NQF to qualifications developed and managed by the other Quality Councils.

### **Scope and application**

66. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework applies to all general and further education institutions, both public and private. These include schools, FET colleges and adult learning centres. This policy complements other policies of the Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training.

67. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework regulates and specifies all general and further education qualification types in general and further education and training, and the manner in which the qualifications are designed and relate to one another.

### **Number of levels and level descriptors**

68. The National Qualifications Framework has ten levels.
69. In terms of the definition offered in the GENFET Amendment Act, General Education and Training 'means all learning and training programmes leading to a qualification on Level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework'. The definition offered in the same Act for Further Education reads 'all learning and training programmes leading to qualifications on Levels 2, 3 and 4 of the National Qualifications Framework.'
70. Level 1 of General Education and Training as well Levels 2 – 4 of Further Education and Training are subsumed in the term Basic Education. The term 'Basic Education' refers to that portion of the system pertaining to schooling. It also refers to the alternative general vocational qualifications, the National Certificate (Vocational), which is a meaningful alternative to the National Senior Certificate, available to adolescents in the 16 – 19 age group. Although this qualification, being in Further Education and Training, is formally lodged with the Department of Higher Education and Training, the NC(V) conceptually forms one of the options for the completion of the Basic Education phase, and has been quality-assured from its inception by Umalusi.
71. The term, 'Further Education and Training', also—and primarily—refers to that portion of the education system which deals with the needs of young people not in employment, education or training (sometimes called the NEET youth) and adults. Further Education and Training is a post-schooling system, which has as its focus those people whose schooling opportunities were curtailed or unsuccessful. As a learning sector, Further Education and Training extends from Level 1 through to Level 5, a learning space that includes post-school education which is not tertiary in nature: the so-called 'post-matric' year being a case in point. Further Education and Training is a critical sector providing connections between the foundation (offered by schooling and FET colleges, in the case of the NC(V)), and learning beyond and outside-of school: an extended FET environment that caters for a wide variety of adult learning needs. Learning in Further Education and Training also creates additional opportunities for accessing skills and knowledge which help prepare learners in a general way for the workplace. Further Education and Training is an opportunity for learners to acquire additional knowledge, skills and experience which may prepare them for access into certain streams of Higher Education. All of these functions are distinct from the purpose served by Higher Education in the national system of education

and training, and qualitatively different to those of the more purely occupational nature.

### **Qualification types**

72. The framework of qualifications for General and Further Education is summarized in the table on page 22. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework covers five levels of the NQF, in order to allow for the quality assurance of certain qualifications associated with post-school and further education rather than with higher education. The qualifications on the sub-framework serve children, adolescents, and adults. The qualifications on the other two frameworks primarily service the learning needs of adults.
73. The General and Further Education and Training sub-framework has five qualification types:

#### **General and Further Education and Training**

- 73.1 Level 1: General Certificate
  - 73.2 Level 2: Elementary Certificate
  - 73.3 Level 3: Intermediate Certificate
  - 73.4 Level 4: National Certificate
  - 73.5 Level 5: Further Certificate
74. These qualification types operate as a broad framework to regulate teaching, learning, and assessment at the various levels. Although there are just 5 types of qualifications, they are expected to be sufficient to accommodate a diverse range of needs. Umalusi may review the Qualifications Framework and introduce a new qualification type should a proven need arise as a result of developments in knowledge production or acknowledged international practice.
75. Existing designated variants are listed below each qualification type on the table. Proposed designated variants, which Umalusi proposes to develop, are likewise listed.
76. In the event of the need to formulate a new qualification type, Umalusi consults with the other QCs and SAQA before the development of such a qualification begins, particularly in the event that such a qualification

potentially impacts upon the sphere of responsibility of one of the other QCs.

### **Qualification descriptors**

77. Each qualification type has a unique descriptor stating its purpose and how it relates to other qualification types. Qualification descriptors include the specifications such as:

- 76.1 the NQF exit level
- 76.2 the qualification credit rating
- 76.3 the purpose and characteristics of the qualification types recognized by the framework.

78. Each descriptor serves as an initial point of reference which enables comparisons with other qualifications, and provides a basis for designing, evaluating, approving and reviewing qualifications and their associated curricula.

79. All qualifications using the same qualification type (and where appropriate, the designated variant) in their titles must be consistent with the descriptor for each qualification type as defined in this policy.

80. Descriptors for the qualification types recognized by the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework are provided in Annexure 1.

### **Naming of qualifications**

81. The *qualification type* is the name given to a qualification. Existing qualifications, while belonging to the type, may already have names which differ from the type name. Umalusi determines the name given to any future qualifications in accordance with the qualification type.

82. The *designator* is the second name given to a qualification to indicate its broad area of study or discipline. Umalusi determines the designator for qualifications.

83. The third name given to the qualification is the *qualifier*. Qualifiers may be used to indicate a field of specialization. A colon appears between the qualification type or its designator and the programme (or specialization). In order to use a qualifier, at least 50% of the total credits for the

qualification must be in the field of specialization denoted by the qualifier. Umalusi determines the qualifier for a qualification type or variant.

84. In registering qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework, SAQA ensures that the naming of qualifications in the Framework is consistent with this policy.

**Table 1: The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework**

NQF level	Qualification types and qualifications					Certificates for units of learning
Level 1: Qualification type	General Certificate (GC)					Subject (LA) certificates for adult learners
Designated variants	General Education Certificate (GEC)		GETC:ABET (Level4)	General Education and Training Certificate for Adults		
Level 2: Qualification type	Elementary Certificate (EC)					Subject certificates towards one or more qualification designated variants
Designated variants		National Certificate (Vocational) 2)	Elementary Certificate			
Level 3: Qualification	Intermediate Certificate (IC)					Subject certificates towards one or more qualification designated variants
Designated variants		National Certificate (Vocational) 3)	Intermediate Certificate			
Level 4: Qualification	National Certificate (NC)					Subject certificates towards one or more qualification designated variants N1 - N3
Designated variants	Senior Certificate and National Senior Certificate (Colleges)	National Senior Certificate (NSC)	National Certificate (Vocational) 4	National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA)	National Independent Certificate (NIC)	
Level 5: Qualification	Further Certificate (FC)					Subject certificates
Designated variants				National Certificate (Vocational) 5	Further Independent Certificate	

**Note:** Certain qualifications, viz. the GETC: ABET Level 4, the Senior Certificate and the National Senior Certificate (Colleges) will be phased out as new qualifications take their place. However, they retain their place on the framework since Umalusi will continue to certify (re-issue) and verify these qualifications. Certain qualifications, such as the GEC (schools), the Elementary and Intermediate certificates indicate qualifications identified for development. Umalusi proposes

selected qualifications at Level 5 in the knowledge that the current legislative mandate would need changing to accommodate such a proposal.

### **Qualifications and subject or learning area statements, and verification**

85. A qualification is awarded to mark the achievement of the necessary learning stipulated in the qualification and its associated curriculum.
86. Certification is thus the formal recognition of learner's having successfully completed a qualification, part-qualification or unit of learning. Umalusi is mandated to issue such certificates at exit points in General and Further Education and Training. It also undertakes the quality assurance and certification of non-exit level qualifications, where necessary.
87. A subject- or learning area statement (that is, 'a subject statement') is issued by Umalusi if a candidate has not met with the full certification requirements for the qualification. It provides a record of what the candidate has achieved at a particular date. Umalusi may issue several subject statements as records of learner achievement. A candidate may request, through an assessment body, for a combination of the subject statements, should these now fulfil the requirements for the qualification. A subject statement, as a record of learning, may be the vehicle for credit accumulation and transfer.
88. Umalusi is obligated to ensure that the certificates it issues are credible both nationally and internationally.
89. In order to issue certificates, Umalusi has the capacity to:
- a) develop and maintain policies and directives for certification;
  - b) maintain acceptable standards for awarding certificates; and
  - c) maintain a certification system and infrastructure including appropriate security arrangements.
90. Part of Umalusi's function as the body responsible for awarding certificates to successful candidates is also to be responsible for verifying the authenticity of certificates, and for issuing replacement certificates under certain conditions.
91. Qualification certificates and subject statements within General and Further Education and Training are issued in English.

## **Admission to General and Further Education and Training qualifications**

92. All qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework specify minimum admission requirements where applicable.

## **Admission to qualifications in Higher Education and on the Occupational Qualifications Framework**

93. The NQF is intended to facilitate articulation between general, further and higher education, and between qualifications registered by SAQA on behalf of Umalusi and those registered by other Quality Councils.
94. The National Senior Certificate, whose specifications are approved by the Minister of Education in national policy, constitutes the minimum requirement for admission to higher education.
95. Additional minima, declared by the Minister as policy in the *Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes requiring a National Senior Certificate*, published in the *Government Gazette*, Vol 482, No 27961, August 2005, must be met by all applicants in order to be considered for entry into higher education qualifications.
96. Additional minima, declared by the Minister as policy in the *Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes requiring a National Certificate (Vocational)*, published in the *Government Gazette*, No 32743, November 2009, must be met by NC(V) applicants in order to be considered for entry into higher education qualifications.

## **Progression within the framework**

97. The General and Further Education and Training framework is designed, where possible, to facilitate vertical, horizontal and diagonal progression within and across the National Qualifications Framework as a whole and the sub-framework in particular. Vertical progression is regarded as the default assumption, and the minimum requirements for progression between the qualification types are stipulated in the descriptors of the qualification type. Progression is also possible horizontally between qualifications if candidates meet the minimum requirements for admission to the target qualification.

Diagonal progression between qualifications is possible if candidates present a completed qualification or credits toward a related qualification as a means of meeting the admission requirements for the target qualification

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **Implementation date**

98. Certain qualifications may need to be phased out over time, so there will be a transition period to full compliance. The Minister of Education, advised by Umalusi, shall determine the date by notice in the Government Gazette.

#### **Qualifications and curricula**

##### **New qualifications and curricula**

99. A new qualification or curriculum is one which has not existed before, or one which has been so significantly changed that there is less than a 50% overlap between the former and the current forms. New qualifications submitted for registration on the General and Further Education Qualifications Framework must conform to the requirements of this policy.
100. A qualification or designated variant may be proposed for development by a number of agencies such as professional bodies, a single large national provider and/or a cluster of providers, or an assessment body, including the National Departments of Education or its provincial counterparts,
101. Several options for developing qualifications exist. Umalusi may undertake to develop the qualification under its own aegis, or Umalusi and another of the QCs may develop the qualification in partnership. Umalusi may also work in partnership with the proposers of the new qualification, or delegate the qualification development to the relevant proposers, subject to the provisions of the NQF Act.
102. Whatever the circumstances of a qualification's development, on its submission for evaluation and approval, it must contain *all* the elements discussed previously in this document and as well as information about the proposer of the qualification, the composition of the group that designed the qualification, and the process followed.
103. Umalusi, the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training, is required to approve a qualification with its associated documentation. On approval, the qualification is submitted for regulation

by the Minister and, on approval by the Minister, to SAQA for registration on the NQF.

104. Umalusi quality assures and certificates learner achievement only for qualifications and part-qualifications which are registered on the Framework.
105. Umalusi, examines the possibilities of developing and using new forms of standard-setting and quality assurance on an ongoing basis.
106. For any qualification to be recognized and certificated by Umalusi, the following must be demonstrated unequivocally:
  - 108.1 the qualification is in keeping with the purpose of respective qualification type on the Qualifications Framework;
  - 108.2 the qualification is fully described by a curriculum which will support implementation of the qualification;
  - 108.3 that the curriculum leads to successful assessment by an Umalusi-recognized/ accredited assessment body or process; and
  - 108.4 that the providers of the qualification and curriculum are registered with an assessment body approved or recognised by Umalusi and are themselves accredited by Umalusi as a provider.
107. Evaluation of both the intended as well as the examined curriculum of any qualification on the Framework is regarded as a necessary part of ensuring the required quality standards.

Such evaluations are supplemented by system-wide monitoring of provision through the accreditation process, which would provide verification of the standard of delivery of the enacted curriculum. Through making judgments on and supporting the development of all three of these aspects of the education system, Umalusi will determine the overall quality of the standards of education offerings provided to large numbers of learners. *A focus on national standards to ensure comparability of achievements across different providers* is seen as one of Umalusi's key responsibilities.

### **Full compliance**

108. All General and Further Education and Training qualifications and

curricula must comply with this policy by a date to be determined by the Minister by notice in a Government Gazette.

### **General and Further Education Management Information System**

109. Umalusi collaborates with SAQA in respect of maintaining a national learner's records database comprising registers of qualifications, part-qualifications, learner achievements for formal learning, and any other associated information.

## **ANNEXURE 1**

### **GENERAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALIFICATION DESCRIPTORS**

#### **General Certificate (GC)**

##### **Type specifications**

NQF Level 1

Grade 9 certificate (schooling), and

Exit level qualification for adults

Minimum total credits:	120 (schooling, GETC (Adults))
	80 (non-school usage, e.g. GEC for adults)
Minimum units of learning (Subjects):	6 (schooling; GETC (Adults))
	4 (GEC (Adults))

**Designated variants:** General Education Certificate; General Education and Training Certificate

Designated variants are named within the qualification type to indicate differences in educational intent

**Programmes:** General Education and Training Certificate: Adults

The word or words separated from the designated variants may indicate either the target group for whom a qualification is intended (e.g. *adults*), or may indicate an area of qualification specialization (e.g. a general vocational area such as *Education and Development*)

##### **Abbreviations**

For example: GEC; GETC: ABET (Level 4)

##### **Purpose and characteristics**

Level 1 (grade 9) theoretically serves to mark the end of general education for school-going learners. It could be used as an indicator of learner strengths at the end of Grade 9. The qualification will provide guidance regarding future study, that is, whether a general academic or a more vocational route ought to be followed for the final three years of schooling.

The goal of general education—whether marked by a formal record or achievement or not—is the development of literacy and numeracy, and a

sound basic understanding of important knowledge areas, including languages, mathematics, natural and social sciences, arts and culture, life orientation, economic and management sciences, and technology.

Supplementary goals are to produce learners who are confident, independent, multi-skilled, compassionate, environmentally respectful, and able to participate in society as critical and active citizens. These supplementary goals should also be achievable through the knowledge areas—and associated skills—listed above.

The broad social goals of adult education at level 1 are to develop literacy and numeracy and to provide an introduction to the natural and social sciences as the basis for further learning and informed citizenship. Additional subjects may enrich the curriculum. The acquisition of vocational skills as a supplement to a broad basic education can be incorporated into the structure of the qualification. The possession of this qualification indicates that an adult learner, through systematic study and engagement, has achieved foundation learning and is equipped to benefit from further education and training programmes.

The needs of adults and children are very different, which means that the curricula for the two variants are different, and provision must be organized and delivered appropriately.

#### **Minimum admission requirements**

Were the GEC for adolescents to be introduced, the typical entrance requirement would be a minimum of eight years of schooling and satisfactory progress in the achievement of the outcomes for grade 8, as defined in the relevant policy.

The minimum entry requirements for adults into a Level 1 qualification would be a record of satisfactory achievement in at least two learning areas at ABET level 3. Institutions may, however, make use of suitable diagnostic tests to satisfy themselves that a candidate has sufficient prior learning to embark meaningfully on a course of study at NQF Level 1.

#### **Progression**

Successful completion of the GC indicates that the candidate meets the minimum entry requirement for entrance into Grade 10, or certain Level 2 qualifications, provided that the candidate has the necessary requirements for admission into that qualification.

Accumulated credits may be presented for consideration of admission into a related qualification.

## Elementary Certificate (EC)

### Type specifications

NQF Level 2

Exit level qualification (college; post school)

Minimum total credits: 120 (schooling and colleges)

**Designated variants:** Elementary Certificate of Education; Elementary Certificate of Education and Training

Designated variants are named within the qualification type to indicate differences in educational intent

**Programmes:** Elementary Certificate of Education: Adults ;  
National Certificate (Vocational) (Level 2): Safety in Society

The word or words separated from the designated variants may indicate either the target group for whom a qualification is intended (e.g. *adults*), or may indicate an area of qualification specialization (e.g. a general vocational area such as *Safety in Society; Primary Agriculture*)

### Abbreviations

For example: ECE; ECET

Also for, example, NC(V) (Level 2): Mechatronics;

### Purpose and characteristics

The EC as a qualification type provides general foundational and vocational learning. Its purpose is to provide learners with certain discipline-related knowledge and applied theory skills in a number of subjects. In addition, this Level 2 qualification, the Elementary Certificate, contributes towards equipping learners for citizenship, and in a general sense, for the workplace by further developing literacy and numeracy as foundational learning.

In the NC(V), the teaching and learning, while providing a suitable theoretical grounding is intended also to teach basic vocational skills in a manner which integrates 'academic knowledge' with 'the practical skills and values that are specific to a particular vocational area'. This level 2 qualification signifies that the learner has attained 'the necessary knowledge, practical skills, applied

competence and understanding required for employment at an elementary level of a particular occupation or trade, or class of occupations or trades'.

In prospect, the Elementary Certificate, provides an alternative qualification for adults at this level, and is designed to fulfill needs similar to the NC(V) but provides greater flexibility to deal with divergent learning needs. This qualification specifically anticipates the need for articulation with artisan- and other occupational training in order to accommodate learners, already in employment who require formal additional skills.

**Minimum admission requirements**

For adolescents, the entrance requirement would be a minimum of nine years of schooling, and record of satisfactory performance in Grade 9, which would indicate successful progress in the achievement of the outcomes as defined in relevant policy.

The minimum entry requirements for adults into the EC would be satisfactory achievement in the GETC:ABET; and, in prospect, the GCE(Adults) or the GCET (Adults).

However, institutions may make use of suitable diagnostic tests to satisfy themselves that a candidate has sufficient prior learning to embark meaningfully on a course of study at NQF Level 2.

**Progression**

Successful completion of the EC indicates that the candidate meets the minimum entry requirement for entrance into some form of Level 3 qualification, provided that the candidate has the necessary requirements for admission into that qualification

Accumulated credits may be presented for consideration of admission into a related qualification.

## Intermediate Certificate (IC)

### Type specifications

NQF Level 3

Qualification (college learners/adults)

Minimum total credits: 120

**Designated variants:** Intermediate Certificate of Education; Intermediate Certificate of Education and Training

Designated variants are named within the qualification type to indicate differences in educational intent

**Programmes:** Intermediate Certificate of Education: Adults  
National Certificate (Vocational) (Level 3): Tourism

The word or words separated from the designated variants may indicate either the target group for whom a qualification is intended (e.g. *adults*), or may indicate an area of qualification specialization (e.g. a general vocational area such as *Hospitality*)

### Abbreviations

For example: ICE; ICET; ICE: Adults

Also, for example, NC(V) (Level 3): Office Administration

### Purpose and characteristics

The Intermediate Certificate as a qualification type provides general foundational and vocational learning. Its purpose is to provide learners with certain discipline-related knowledge and applied theory skills in a number of subjects. In addition, this Level 3 qualification, the Intermediate Certificate, contributes towards equipping learners for citizenship, and in a general sense, for the workplace by further developing literacy and numeracy as foundational learning.

In the NC(V) at Level 3 on the NQF, the teaching and learning, while providing a suitable theoretical grounding is intended also to teach basic vocational skills in a manner which integrates 'academic knowledge' with 'the practical skills and

values specific to each vocational area'. This level 3 qualification signifies that the learner has attained 'the necessary knowledge, practical skills, applied competence and understanding required for employment at an intermediate level of a particular occupation or trade, or class of occupations or trades'. In addition, the Intermediate Certificate contributes towards equipping learners for citizenship, and for the workplace.

The IC, the Intermediate Certificate, as a proposed qualification for adults, provides an alternative qualification at this level designed to fulfill needs for adults similar to those served by the NC(V) Level 3 but provides greater flexibility to deal with divergent learning needs. This qualification specifically anticipates the need for articulation with artisan- and other occupational training in order to accommodate learners, already in employment who require formal additional skills.

#### **Minimum admission requirements**

For adolescents, the entrance requirement would be a minimum of ten years of schooling, and satisfactory performance in Grade 10, which would indicate progress in the achievement of the outcomes for grade 10, as defined in the relevant NSC or NC(V) documentation.

The minimum entry requirements for adults would be satisfactory achievement in the EC.

However, institutions may make use of suitable diagnostic tests to satisfy themselves that a candidate has sufficient prior learning to embark meaningfully on a course of study at NQF Level 3.

#### **Progression**

Successful completion of the NC(V) Level 3 indicates that the candidate meets the minimum entry requirement for entrance into NC(V) Level 4, or some form of Level 4 qualification, provided that the candidate has the necessary requirements for admission into that qualification.

Similarly, the completion of the adult IC would allow access to some form of Level 4 qualification, provided that the candidate has the necessary requirements for admission into that qualification.

Accumulated credits may be presented for consideration of admission into a related qualification.

## National Certificate (NC)

### Type specifications

NQF Level 4

Exit level qualification

Minimum total credits: 120 (6 units of learning of 20 credits each)

**Designated variants:** National Senior Certificate; National Senior Certificate for Adults; National Certificate (Vocational) (Level 4); National Independent Certificate

Designated variants are named within the qualification type to indicate differences in educational intent

**Programmes:** National Certificate (Vocational) (Level 4): Management  
National Independent Certificate: Business Studies (Financial Practice)

The word or words separated from the designated variants may indicate either the target group for whom a qualification is intended (e.g. *adults*), or may indicate an area of qualification specialization (e.g. a general vocational area such as *Education and Development*). It is also possible for a programme to be additionally specified by means of up to five words in brackets after the programme name, for example National Independent Certificate: Business Studies (Human Resource Management).

### Abbreviations

For example: NSC; NASCA; NIC; NC(V); SC; NSC (Colleges)

Also, for example: NC(V) (Level 4): Electrical Infrastructure Construction;

NIC: Hospitality (Lodging Management)

### Purpose and characteristics

The National Certificate is the exit level qualification for schooling as well as for the NC(V) at FET Colleges.

The National Senior Certificate (NSC) is primarily a discipline-based qualification where all subjects are determined through curricula expressed in the relevant policy. Its purpose is to allow for progression from General Education and Training and to provide learners a school-leaving certificate with the possibility of access to Higher Education. The qualification expresses 'what South Africans regard as

knowledge skills and values worth learning' during the final three years of education.

The NSC thus provides an opportunity for learners to focus on more specific skills and knowledge in a smaller number of more academically oriented subjects than in general education. Within the NSC, the teaching and learning is overtly intended to be more academic in nature, and has the potential to provide access to higher education or other forms of post- secondary education.

The NC(V) at Level 4 on the NQF enables students to acquire the necessary knowledge, practical skills, applied competence and understanding required for employment in a particular occupation or trade, or class of occupations or trades, or, given the necessary achievement levels, entrance into Higher Education. Its purpose is thus to foster a suitable theoretical grounding in a vocational area, and to provide more advanced vocational skills. As an exit level qualification, it provides access to occupational qualifications on the OQF and also provides the possibility of access to certain qualifications in Higher Education. This qualification signifies that the learner has attained more extensive knowledge, cognitive and conceptual tools and (practical) skills for progression in further education. It provides progression into artisan-education and training.

The Senior Certificate will remain on the General and further Education and Training Qualifications Framework until the NASCA and the NIC have taken their respective roles in the FET learning environment. Only selected SC subjects are being examined during the phase out period. The final phasing out of the Senior Certificate will relate to the transitional arrangements for the NASCA.

The NASCA, the National Senior Certificate for Adults, is designed as a comparable qualification to the NSC but offered and delivered in ways that will suit the needs of adults and young, out-of-school people who cannot return to the school environment.

The NIC, the National Independent Certificate, is designed to provide greater flexibility to deal with divergent learning needs. This qualification is designed specifically for adults and enables people wishing to acquire some basic knowledge and skill in a broad vocational area to do so. This general vocational learning will assist in making learners potentially more employable than they would be if they had no knowledge at all in that general area of work. The NIC could also enrich the person, already in employment, who requires formal additional knowledge to enhance their contribution in the workplace.

In addition, all forms of the NC contribute towards equipping learners for citizenship.

Certain of the N1 – N3 certificates (NATED 190/191)<sup>3</sup> have been reinstated and require revision. The N3 is regarded as a part-qualification at NQF 4. Four N3 subjects may be combined with the Business Languages (at Home or FAL level) in order to be awarded the National Senior Certificate (Colleges). However, access to higher education has required the completion of the N4 certificate. The N4 plus the necessary language is thus akin to the NSC with university admission.

### **Minimum admission requirements**

For adolescents, the entrance requirement for entrance into the final year of the NSC or into NC(V) Level 4 would be a minimum of 11 years of schooling, and satisfactory performance in the achievement of the outcomes for grade 11, as defined in the NSC or NC(V) policies.

However, institutions may make use of suitable diagnostic tests to satisfy themselves that a candidate has sufficient prior learning to embark meaningfully on a course of study at NQF Level 4.

Entry into the Senior Certificate, which is currently being phased out, is previous registration for one or more SC subjects.

In the case of candidates selecting to register for the examinations associated with the NASCA, no minimum admission requirements will be enforced. There are, however, advisory guidelines which indicate the likelihood of readiness.

### **Progression**

Successful completion of any of the forms of the National Certificate indicates that the candidate has achieved the qualification outcomes specified. For the NSC and the NC(V), prescribed levels of achievement are able to indicate that candidates have met the entry requirements for admission to various forms of study in further and higher education. Details are provided in the Minister of Education's policy on *Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes requiring a National Senior Certificate (2005)*. The entry requirements to Higher Education for candidates who have achieved the NC(V) are contained in the Minister of Higher Education and Training's policy on *Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes requiring a National Certificate*

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<sup>3</sup> The N1 – N3 (Engineering Studies) has been granted an extension period before being phased out. (Gazettes 28677, 29 March 2006; and 33793, 23 November 2010 refer). A fuller discussion of the N3 certificate occurs as an endnote to this description of Level 4 qualifications.

*Vocational(2009)*. The minimum admission policy for higher education programmes does not at present refer to the NASCA.

In addition, the NC may provide access into certain other qualifications on the NQF. The NIC however, may not on its own provide access for learners to higher education, but may be supplemented through credit accumulation from the NSC or NC(V) or through the Further Certificate at NQF level 5.

Accumulated credits may also be presented for consideration of admission into a related qualification.

**Endnote:**

**The National Certificate: N3: Engineering Studies**

The N3 is a certificate which is offered in FET colleges. Learners are required to offer:

- a. A trade theory, or a technological instructional offering (Category A subjects)
- b. A mathematics category subject (Category B)
- c. A science category subject (Category C); and
- d. A drawing category subject (Category D).

Non-apprenticed learners are required to pass any *three* of the subjects offered.

The N3 programme is envisaged to be completed in a trimester of full-time tuition in a college.

The certificate thus allows learners access to subjects in three general subject categories—mathematics, science and drawing—which were originally contextualized to draw on the workplace experience of indentured apprentices. So, for example, learners enroll for a science module that was tailored to their needs: Industrial Chemistry, Building Science, Engineering Science. These four applied discipline-based subjects service almost 50 Category A subjects, while N3 Mathematics appears to be a generic prerequisite except for the Water Treatment programme. Similarly, 5 more-or-less generic drawing programmes service the 50 Category A subjects. The only subjects that are directly occupationally focused are the Category A subjects which form a quarter of the entire institutional offering.

The function of the college-based N courses is to provide a modest theoretical base for people training to become artisans. The reason for their institutional location is that the knowledge to be acquired is not the sort that can be readily acquired 'on the job'. The purpose of the N-courses is precisely to offer

apprentices an opportunity to engage with the disciplinary discourses that underpin the work they do in order to provide a different sort of insight than that achieved in work. Decisions about *what* mathematics or *what* science needs to be learned may be influenced by the nature of the work the apprentice-learner is acquiring, but it is determined by the discipline itself. It is the disciplinary focus that determines the nature of the learning, and its location in a formal institution.

In the past, each of these subjects, briefly taught in a college environment, would have been supplemented by 9 months of practical experience, which would have made these subjects something more akin the amount of learning associated with year-long qualifications. The N3 certificate has, however, once more been made available to people without their being enrolled as apprentices, which means the N-courses stand alone as rather modest, dated offerings.

Umalusi standardizes the N1 – N3 on behalf of the Department of Higher Education and Training. It certifies N3 in order to allow for its combination with two languages in order to allow candidates to receive the National Senior Certificate (Colleges) (Report 191).

The end of the extension for the N1 – N3: Engineering studies requires consultation with Umalusi.

**Further Certificate (FC)****Type specifications**

NQF Level 5

Exit level qualification

Minimum total credits: 120

**Designated variants:** Further Independent Certificate;

**Programmes:** Further Independent Certificate: Business Studies (Human Resource Management) ;

The word or words separated from the designated variant indicates an area of qualification specialization (eg a general vocational area such as *Education and Development*). It is also possible for a programme to be additionally specified by means of up to five words in brackets after the programme name, for example Further Independent Certificate: Business Studies (Human Resource Management).

**Abbreviations**

For example: FIC: Business Studies (HRM)

**Purpose and characteristics**

The Further Certificate (FC) is primarily a post-schooling, further education qualification. The FC is vocational and/or workplace-oriented, and is intended to build on vocational skills already acquired in the NC(V) Level 4 and NIC.

The Further Independent Certificate will relate closely to a NIC developed at Level 4, providing the possibility of specialization in certain learning areas. The FIC is designed to help locate certain provider qualifications in Further Education and Training and to facilitate articulation with qualifications on the OQF that require a workplace component.

Achievement of this qualification signifies that a student has attained the equivalent of a basic level of higher education knowledge and competence in a particular field and is capable of applying such knowledge and skill in the workplace. The FC includes an integrated workplace learning (WL) component and/or simulated work experience.

**Minimum admission requirements**

The minimum entrance requirement may be a NC—the NSC, or NC(V)—with appropriate subject combinations and levels of achievement, or a NIC with appropriate subject combinations.

Institutions may make use of suitable diagnostic tests to satisfy themselves that a candidate has sufficient prior learning to embark meaningfully on a course of study at NQF Level 5.

**Progression**

Completion of the FC indicates that the candidate has successfully achieved the qualification outcomes. In addition, the FC may provide access into certain other qualifications on the NQF.

The successful completion of a FC may contribute credits to a qualification on the HEQF. Such accumulated credits may be presented to an institution of Higher Education for consideration of admission into a related higher education qualification.

**SCHEDULE B**

**THE PROPOSED REVISED HIGHER EDUCATION  
QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK**

# **The Higher Education Qualifications Framework**

**As Revised**

September 2011

Submitted by the CHE to the Minister of Higher Education and Training in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997) and the National Qualifications Act, 2008 (Act No. 67 of 2008)

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## THE REVISED FRAMEWORK IN CONTEXT

### A single qualifications framework for a diverse system

The Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF), which was promulgated in October 2007 (Government Gazette No 30353 of 5 October 2007) provides for the establishment a single qualifications framework for higher education to facilitate the development of a a single national co-ordinated higher education system, as envisaged in Education White Paper 3, *A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (1997). Its key objective was to enable the articulation of programmes and the transfer of students between programmes and higher education institutions, which the then separate and parallel qualifications structures for universities and the erstwhile technikons (now Universities of Technology) were perceived to preclude.

The implementation of the HEQF – since 1 January 2009 all new programmes submitted to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) for accreditation have had to be HEQF compliant – confirmed that despite the robust nature of the design of the HEQF, there remained, as the CHE advised the then Minister of Education in April 2007, “unresolved concerns about the number, nature and purposes of the qualification types” set out in the HEQF. In addition, the accreditation process also revealed a number of inconsistencies and gaps in the HEQF, which had an adverse impact on meeting national policy goals and objectives. The concerns and inconsistencies included the following:

- The appropriateness of the nine qualification types, including the designated variants, in the light of different institutional missions and labour market expectations, in particular, the lack of a degree variant unique to the Universities of Technology.
- The coherence and consistency in the designation, credit value and pegging of some qualifications in the context of the needs of different professions, in particular, the lack of 240-credit diplomas which may be required, for example, in a range of auxiliary health professions.
- The articulation pathways between undergraduate diploma and postgraduate programmes in terms of the time required to complete a Master’s degree; for example, a student with an undergraduate Diploma would require two additional years of study prior to being considered for entry into a Master’s programme.
- The appropriateness of a number of postgraduate qualifications in different professional fields and their international comparability such as the MMed,
- The extent to which the range of qualifications available, in particular, at levels 5 and 6 are appropriate to support the goal of expanded access.

In the light of this and given the CHE’s expanded mandate as the Quality Council for Higher Education in terms of the National Qualifications Framework Act of 2008 (Act No 67 of 2008), the CHE initiated a review of the HEQF in October 2010

Communique 1, 12 October 2010). In terms of section 27 of the NQF Act, the CHE's expanded mandate, includes amongst others:

- The development and management of its sub-framework, i.e. the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) and advising the Minister of Higher Education and Training on matters relating to the HEQF.
- The development and implementation of policy and criteria for the development, registration and publication of qualifications, i.e. standards setting, including the development of naming conventions for qualifications.
- Ensuring the development of qualifications as are required for the higher education system.

The purpose of the review, as Communique 1 emphasised, was not to revise the HEQF fundamentally, but to consider the need for new qualification types to facilitate access, including ensuring the responsiveness of the HEQF to address to emerging skills and knowledge needs, and to enhance the coherence of the higher education system.

The submissions received from a range of higher education stakeholders, including public and private institutions, higher education associations and professional bodies, affirmed the intent and design of the HEQF and did not seek a fundamental revision but rather greater flexibility, in particular, in relation to the pathways for vocational and professional qualifications, including the introduction of additional qualification types and variants of existing types. A detailed analysis of the issues raised in the submissions and the CHE's response, which informs the proposals for the revision of the HEQF, is contained in the CHE's *Discussion Document on the HEQF Review*, which is available on the CHE's website.

### **The revised HEQF:**

- Recognises three broad qualification progression routes with permeable boundaries, namely, vocational, professional and general routes and provides greater clarity on the articulation possibilities between these qualification routes.
- Introduces two additional qualification types to the existing nine, and includes additional variants of particular qualification types.
- Clarifies the interpretation of some existing qualification types, namely, the Bachelor's degree, as having two potential orientations – professional and general academic.
- Provides for greater flexibility and options with respect to professionally-oriented qualifications.
- Facilitates the potential convergence of diploma and degree study routes at the Honours level instead of at the Master's level as was previously the case.

- Simplifies some of the parameters of qualification types such as credit specification within a qualification.

The revised HEQF, in line with the previous framework, provides the basis for integrating all higher education qualifications into the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). It provides a basis for standards development and quality assurance. It provides a mechanism for improving the coherence of the higher education system and indicates the articulation routes between qualifications, thereby enhancing the flexibility of the system and enabling students to move more efficiently over time from one programme to another as they pursue their academic or professional careers.

Public confidence in academic standards requires public understanding of the achievements represented by higher education qualifications. The HEQF framework is thus designed to ensure a consistent use of qualification titles and their designators and qualifiers.

The HEQF establishes common parameters and criteria for qualifications design and facilitates the comparability of qualifications across the system. Within such common parameters programme diversity and innovation are encouraged. Higher education institutions have a broad scope within which to design educational offerings to realise their different visions, missions and plans and to meet the varying needs of the stakeholders and communities they serve.

The HEQF thus operates within the context of a single but diverse and differentiated higher education system. It applies to all higher education programmes and qualifications offered in South Africa by public and private institutions.

## **Structure of the revised HEQF**

In the light of the limited changes proposed, the structure of the revised HEQF is based on and maintains the structure of the previous framework. The proposed changes are incorporated into the structure of the previous framework and are not specifically highlighted. The underlying rationale for the proposed changes are, as indicated above, contained in the CHE's *Discussion Document on the HEQF Review*, which should be read in conjunction with this revised framework.

## **The framework and the NQF**

The HEQF is an integral part of the NQF. The terms used in this framework are therefore consistent with NQF practice.

A *qualification* is the formal recognition and certification of learning achievement awarded by an accredited institution. The HEQF sets out the range of qualification types in higher education that may be awarded to mark the achievement of learning outcomes that have been appropriately assessed. The qualification type descriptors include the specifications in terms of total minimum credits required, naming

conventions related to designators, qualifiers and abbreviations, the purpose and characteristics of a qualification type, minimum admissions requirements, and the rules of progression to other qualification types. A higher education qualification must conform to one of the qualification types or its variants described in the HEQF.

A *programme* is a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification. Programmes may be discipline based, professional, career-focused, trans-, inter- or multi-disciplinary in nature. A programme has recognised entry and exit points. All higher education programmes and qualifications must have a core component and may have a fundamental and or elective component depending on the purpose of the programme or the qualification. The credit allocation for core, fundamental and elective learning will depend on the purpose of the programme or qualification. The internal organisation of programmes is otherwise not prescribed by this document.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The NQF Act, which was promulgated in 2008, has introduced changes in the roles and responsibilities of the different bodies that are responsible for ensuring the achievement of the objectives of the NQF. In this regard, the following is highlighted:

- The Minister of Higher Education and Training has overall responsibility for the NQF and for determining the qualifications structure for the higher education system.
- The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is responsible for the development of policy and criteria for registering standards and qualifications on the NQF on the recommendation of the CHE.
- The CHE is responsible for the development and management of the HEQF and for advising the Minister of Higher Education and Training on matters relating to the HEQF; for quality assurance in higher education through its permanent sub-committee, the HEQC; and for the development of standards for higher education qualifications, including the development of naming conventions for qualifications.

## **Qualification standards in higher education**

The development of standards is an important element in contributing to the successful implementation of the HEQF, as standards provide benchmarks to guide the development, implementation and quality assurance of programmes leading to qualifications. Standards registered for higher education qualifications must have legitimacy, credibility and a common, well-understood meaning. The development of standards is in the early stages of conceptualisation and the CHE will ensure that there are appropriate safeguards to ensure the integrity of standards development and quality assurance processes respectively.

The HEQF incorporates a *nested approach* to qualifications design. Within a nested approach to standards development, qualification specification requires a movement from generic to specific outcomes. The most generic standards are found in the level descriptors. The most specific standards are found in the programmes that lead to qualifications. Specific standards always meet the requirements of the generic standards within which they are nested or framed. Within this broader context, the focus of the HEQF is on qualification type descriptors - the second layer of a nested approach.

The *nested approach* also allows for the appropriate allocation of roles and responsibilities and can potentially minimise the volume of national standards development required for higher education.

Within the nested approach, the outer layer provides the context for qualification specification. The NQF level and its level descriptor form the outer and most generic layer in terms of the knowledge and skills that learners are required to acquire, integrate and demonstrate (applied competence) at each level of cognitive complexity on the HEQF. SAQA is responsible for the development of the content of the level descriptors for each level of the NQF in consultation with the three Quality Councils: CHE, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi) and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO).

The level descriptors provide generic standards for qualifications on the HEQF in terms of predictable levels of complexity of knowledge and skills at each NQF level. However, they do not provide a basis for distinguishing between the different purposes of qualifications in terms of their orientation towards conceptual and contextual knowledge. Implicit in the HEQF are three broad qualification routes, namely the vocational, professional and general. Though qualifications within each route contain some proportion of contextual and conceptual knowledge, the routes differ in terms of the extent to which they are orientated towards specific contexts of application or towards conceptual understanding in terms of general theoretical principles. The appropriate route (or routes) for each qualification should be derived from the purpose and outcomes of the qualification, and not be imposed on the basis of any other criterion. Characteristics of the routes are neither exclusive nor impermeable.

At the second layer, the HEQF recognises a range of *qualification types* such as a certificate, a diploma or a degree that are pegged to specific NQF levels. A *qualification descriptor* specifies the exit level of the qualification type, its minimum credit rating and its purpose and characteristics in terms of the types of knowledge and skills that it is intended to develop. A qualification type must meet the generic competences described in the level descriptor for the level concerned and be guided by the characteristics of the three qualification routes. The basic qualification types, namely certificates, diplomas and degrees, are used as points of reference for the design of specialised qualifications and the programmes that deliver them.

The qualification types within the HEQF cut across the progression routes, though certain qualification types are more characteristic of certain routes. More specifically, undergraduate certificates and diplomas are typically found within the vocational route, while professional Bachelor and Master's degrees epitomise the professional route, which culminates in the professional doctorate. The general route has a strong orientation towards theoretical knowledge with a qualification trajectory culminating in the PhD, as the characteristic requirement for an academic and research career.

The next layer of qualification specialisation nested within the qualification type is the *designator*. For example, a Bachelor of *Science* degree is a designator of the generic Bachelor's degree. Such designators apply only to degrees and not to certificates or diplomas. A degree designator describes a generic field of study and is stated in the qualification nomenclature and described through statements of desired educational training and outcomes and their associated assessment criteria. A designator meets the generic specifications laid down for the qualification type of which it is a variant. For example, a Bachelor of *Science* (BSc) complies with the generic requirements for a Bachelor's degree.

The last and most specific layer of qualification specification in the nest, on which most programmes are based, is the *qualification specialisation*. This is reflected in the qualification's *qualifier*. For example, the learning outcomes and specifications for a BSc (Hons) in *Geology* meet the learning demands and specifications laid down for a BSc (Hons) and include specialised learning outcomes related to the field of Geology.

## **Qualifications, volumes of learning and credits**

The HEQF as a qualifications framework consists of level descriptors, the qualification routes, the main qualification types and their descriptors, qualification standards and designators for designated variants and qualifiers for qualifications specialisations.

Level descriptors and qualification descriptors are expressed in terms of learning outcomes. The design of programmes makes assumptions about the volume of learning that is likely to be necessary to achieve the intended outcomes. In the past, and for qualifications developed before 2009 when the HEQF came into effect, this measure of volume may have been expressed in terms of study time, for example the number of academic years of study required.

The HEQF, however, recognises credits as a measure of the volume of learning required for a qualification, quantified as the number of notional study hours required for achieving the learning outcomes specified for the qualification, and not in terms of academic years of study. The credit rating of a qualification is

independent of the mode of delivery of learning. The attainment of the expected learning outcomes is demonstrated through appropriate assessment. It is also important to emphasise that while credits at particular NQF levels represent learning of the relevant cognitive difficulty, credits are not necessarily directly exchangeable within a particular level, as they are also related to the purpose of a particular qualification. Thus, for example, credits for a Higher Certificate at Level 5 are not necessarily interchangeable with Level 5 credits in a degree programme.

The volume of learning required for a qualification can be specified in terms of the *total minimum number of credits* required, and in terms of the *minimum number of credits required at its specified exit level* on the qualifications framework. In general, the number of credits required at the exit level of a qualification is 120.

The credit-rating system rates 10 *notional* study hours as equivalent to one credit. Credits represent a measure of all the learning activities engaged in by the student and include, among others, contact time, self-study, WIL, assignments, projects and examinations. Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor's Degree and Bachelor (Honours) Degree qualification types assume a 30-week full-time academic year. Master's Degree and Doctoral qualification types assume a 45-week full-time academic year. An average full-time equivalent student is expected to study for a 40-hour week, thus requiring a minimum credit-load of 120 credits per academic year for Certificates, Diplomas and Bachelor's Degrees and 180 credits per academic year for Master's Degrees and Doctorates.

Credit ratings specified on the framework are expressed as minima. Programmes may require credit loads above the minimum but these should not be unrealistic in terms of the relationship of credits to actual study time, given the parameters specified above.

Study leading directly to a qualification will normally build upon assessed learning from earlier stages of a programme but it may also build on assessed prior learning achieved by private study, in the workplace or elsewhere.

### **Accumulation of credits towards qualifications**

Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) is the process whereby a student's achievements are recognised and contribute to further learning even if the student does not achieve a qualification. In terms of the CAT scheme any and 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. Furthermore, and subject to limits, credits for a completed qualification may be recognised by the same or another institution as meeting part of the requirements for another qualification.

In terms of Section 13 (h) (ii) of the NQF Act, SAQA is responsible for developing policy and criteria, after consultation with the QCs, for credit accumulation and

transfer. In the interim, a maximum of 50% of the credits of a completed qualification may be transferred to another qualification, provided also that no more than 50% of the credits required for the other qualification are credits that have been used for a completed qualification.

## **Work integrated Learning**

Some qualifications will be designed to integrate theory and practice through the incorporation of work-integrated learning (WIL) into the curriculum. WIL is characteristic of vocational and professionally-oriented qualifications, and may be incorporated into programmes at all levels of the HEQF. WIL may take various forms including simulated learning, work-directed theoretical learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and workplace learning. The selection of appropriate forms of work-integrated learning depends on the nature and purpose of the qualification type, programme objectives and outcomes, the HEQF level at which the WIL component is pegged, institutional capacity to provide WIL opportunities, and the structures and systems that are in place within professional settings and sites of practice to support student learning. Where WIL is a structured part of a qualification the volume of learning allocated to WIL should be appropriate to the purpose of the qualification and to the cognitive demands of the learning outcome and assessment criteria contained in the appropriate level descriptors.

Where WIL takes the form of workplace learning, it is the responsibility of institutions that offer programmes requiring WIL credits to place students into WIL programmes. Such programmes must be appropriately structured, properly supervised and assessed.

## **THE FRAMEWORK**

### **Characteristics**

The HEQF is designed to:

- Be sufficiently flexible to accommodate different types of higher education institutions and enable institutions to pursue their own curriculum goals with creativity and innovation;
- Facilitate the education of graduates who will contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of South Africa and participate successfully in the global economy and knowledge society;
- Enhance the development of a vibrant, high quality research system;
- Be compatible with international qualifications frameworks in order to ensure international recognition and comparability of standards;
- Be suitably flexible to accommodate the development of new qualification types and specialisations as the need arises;
- Be simple, clear, easy to understand and user-friendly for the higher education system and its clients;
- Facilitate qualification articulation across the higher education system and assist learners to identify potential progression routes, particularly in the context of lifelong learning; and
- Articulate with the rest of the NQF.

### **Scope and application**

The HEQF applies to all higher education institutions, both public and private.

The HEQF regulates and specifies all higher education qualification types, including qualifications based on unit standards, in the higher education system and their designators and qualifiers, and the manner in which the qualifications are designed and relate to one another. It does not deal with nor does it prejudice the design and registration of unit standards to meet specific learning outcomes.

### **Number of levels and level descriptors**

The National Qualifications Framework has ten levels. Higher education qualifications occupy six levels of the NQF, namely, levels 5 to 10. Levels 5 to 7 comprise undergraduate qualifications (with the exception of the professional Bachelor's degree at Level 8) and levels 8 to 10 accommodate postgraduate qualifications.

Each NQF level has a level descriptor. Level descriptors provide guidelines for differentiating the varying levels of complexity of qualifications on the framework.

The level descriptors are the outermost layer of qualification specification. At each level they describe the generic nature of learning achievements and their complexity. Level descriptors are thus broad qualitative statements against which more specific learning outcomes can be compared and located. The positioning of two or more qualifications on the same NQF level indicates only that the qualifications are broadly comparable in terms of the general level of learning achievements. It does not indicate that they have the same purpose, content or outcomes, nor does it necessarily demonstrate equivalence of qualifications or credits.

## **Qualification types**

The framework has eleven qualification types mapped onto the six levels of the NQF occupied by higher education qualifications. Some levels have more than one qualification type. Some qualification types have specific variants. The framework comprises the following qualification types:

### ***Undergraduate***

- Higher Certificate
- Advanced Certificate
- Diploma
- Advanced Diploma
- Bachelor's Degree

### ***Postgraduate***

- Postgraduate Diploma
- Bachelor Honours Degree
- Master's Degree
- Professional Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Professional Doctorate

The eleven qualification types and their designated variants are expected to accommodate present requirements but the list is not immutable. The Minister of Higher Education and Training, on the advice of the CHE, may approve a new qualification type and its unique descriptor when a proven need arises as a result of developments in knowledge production or acknowledged international practice. The Minister may also on the advice of the CHE, and where appropriate, approve the relocation of certain qualification types to other sub-frameworks of the NQF. The use of qualification types is regulated by this policy. A qualification type may only be used if the qualification fulfils the specifications for the type.

## Qualification descriptors

Each qualification type has a unique descriptor stating its purpose and how it relates to other qualification types.

Qualification descriptors designate the specifications such as the NQF exit level and credit-rating, purpose and characteristics of qualification types recognised by the framework. Each descriptor is a point of reference, which enables comparisons with other qualifications and provides a basis for designing, approving and reviewing programmes. All qualifications using the same qualification type (and where appropriate, designated variant) in their titles must be consistent with the descriptor for each qualification type as defined in this policy.

## Exceptions to the qualification types and descriptors

The HEQF accommodates a number of qualifications which, owing to their national and international currency or specific vocational or professional training requirements, constitute exceptions to the framework. The current list of exceptions is found in Appendix 1. The Minister of Higher Education and Training, may, on the advice of the CHE, amend this list from time to time.

## Naming of qualifications

The *qualification type* is the first name given to a qualification.

The *designator* is the second name given to a qualification, to indicate its broad area of study, discipline or profession. All degrees (Bachelor, Master and Doctor) have designators, but designators are not used for certificates and diplomas. The linking word between the qualification type and the designator is *of* (e.g. Bachelor *of* Social Science), and when abbreviated the 'of' is omitted (e.g. BSocSci).

The CHE is responsible in terms of section 27 of the NQF Act to develop, based on the policy and criteria of SAQA, "a distinct nomenclature for its qualification types which is appropriate to the relevant sub-framework and consistent with international practice". The CHE as part of its standards development process will determine and publish the criteria to be applied in adopting degree designators and qualifiers, including exceptions as appropriate. No designator or qualifiers may be used in a qualification unless it is consistent with the criteria determined by the CHE in terms of this policy. In registering standards for higher education qualifications, SAQA will ensure that the naming of higher education qualifications, including degree designators, is consistent with this policy, to ensure that the nomenclature of higher education qualifications is applied consistently.

The third name given to a qualification type is the *qualifier*. Qualifiers may be used in all qualification types in order to indicate a field of specialisation. The linking word between the qualification type or its designator and the qualifier is always *in* (e.g.

Bachelor of Arts *in Linguistics*, Bachelor of Engineering *in Electronics*). When abbreviated, the *in* is dropped and the qualifier is placed in brackets (e.g. BA (*Linguistics*), BEng (*Electronics*)). Bachelor degrees may include a second qualifier. The second *qualifier* qualifies the first. An example would be a Bachelor of Science in Engineering in Electronics. When abbreviated, the *in* is dropped and the qualifiers are placed in brackets, e.g. BSc (*Eng*) (*Electronics*). The CHE will determine all primary qualifiers for bachelor's degrees, honours and masters degrees, and institutions may add secondary qualifiers.

In the case of qualifications where there is no designator, the qualifier follows immediately after the qualification type (e.g. Postgraduate Diploma *in Drama*, abbreviated to PG Dip (*Drama*)).

A further area of specialisation for a qualification may be indicated as above; *in* being the linking word to the *second qualifier* (e.g. Postgraduate Diploma in Drama in *Performance*, abbreviated to PG Dip (*Drama*) (*Performance*)).

In order to use a qualifier, at least 50% of the minimum total credits for the qualification and at least 50% of the minimum credits at the qualification's exit level must be in the field of specialisation denoted by the qualifier. The same applies to the use of a second qualifier. Qualifiers and second qualifiers are attached to a qualification type and designators are subject to the criteria set by the CHE.

## **Qualifications and academic transcripts**

### ***Award of qualifications***

Qualifications are awarded to mark the achievement of defined outcomes. No qualification may be awarded as compensation for a student's failure at a higher level, or by default.

### ***Issue of transcripts***

An academic transcript is not a qualification but a document issued by an institution to provide a descriptive record of the learning a student has achieved at that institution, whether or not a qualification has been awarded.

If a student is unable to complete a qualification and must exit the institution, an academic transcript of the student's record will assist the admitting authorities if the student wishes to complete the qualification later or register for a different qualification. A transcript issued by a higher education institution must be a full academic record of the student concerned at that institution. A full academic record would generally include the following information:

- The name of the issuing institution
- The registration number of the provider (in the case of private providers)
- The graduate who is entitled to receive the qualification
- The full title of the qualification including designator and qualifiers
- The qualification ID number from the NQF

- The NQF exit level and total credits of the qualification
- The NQF level and credit value of each module (unless included in the supplement)
- The academic achievement of the graduate
- The person in the institution authorised to issue the documentation.

### ***Transcript supplement***

In order to improve the portability and transparency of qualifications each transcript issued by a higher education institution to a current or former student must have attached to it an official supplement. The supplement must provide a description of the nature, level, content and where appropriate the context of the studies pursued by a student and assessed by the institution.

### ***Language of qualification certificates and academic transcripts***

The language of each qualification certificate and transcript issued to a student in line with the approved language policy of the issuing institution must be consistent with the Ministry of Higher Education and Training's *Language Policy for Higher Education* (Pretoria, November 2002). The CHE supports the promotion of multilingualism as contained in the Minister's policy.

To enable employers, academic institutions, parents and others (including international academic institutions or employers) to understand the achievements and attributes represented by a qualification title, a certificate or transcript must be issued in English in addition to any other official language.

The use of Latin in certificates and transcripts has been practised by some South African institutions as an historical legacy. Its continued use for this purpose is not encouraged but is left to the discretion of individual institutions. A certificate in Latin must also be in English in addition to any other official language.

## **Admission to higher education**

The HEQF is intended to facilitate articulation between further and higher education and within higher education. However, the possession of a qualification does not guarantee a student's progression and admission to a programme of study.

In terms of section 37 (i) of the Higher Education Act, 1997 the decision to admit a student to higher education study is the right and responsibility of the higher education institution concerned. A higher education institution's admissions policy and practice is expected to advance the objectives of the Act and the NQF and must be consistent with this policy.

The minimum requirement for admission to a higher education institution from 1 January 2010 is the National Senior Certificate or the National Certificate (Vocational) as determined by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in the

*Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes requiring a National Senior Certificate (Government Gazette No. 32131 of May 2008 and the Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes requiring a National Certificate (Vocational) (Government Gazette No. 32743, of November 2009).* These minima must be met by all applicants to entry level higher education qualifications. Applicants with different qualifications may only be admitted if they are judged equivalent by the designated equivalence-setting bodies.

## **Progression within the framework**

The framework is designed to facilitate vertical, horizontal and diagonal progression. Vertical progression is the norm and the minimum requirements for such progression between qualification types are stipulated in the qualification type descriptors. Students may progress horizontally between qualifications if they meet the minimum requirement for admission to the target qualification. Students may progress diagonally between qualifications by presenting a completed qualification or credits towards a qualification in a cognate study area, and must meet the minimum requirements for admission to the target qualification, which they may do by virtue of the credits obtained towards a cognate qualification.

The general principle must be that the admitting institution is satisfied that the applicant has competence in the appropriate field of intended study at the appropriate entry level of the target qualification.

The point of entry in the target programme must be such that candidates complete at least all the required credits at the exit level of the target qualification. For example, a student may present a Higher Certificate for admission to the second year of a cognate Diploma programme or a student may be admitted to the second year of a cognate Bachelor's degree programme after completing the first year of study of a Diploma programme, or a student who has completed academic credits towards one qualification may be exempted from certain requirements in a cognate qualification, or a Master's student's candidature may be upgraded to a Doctoral programme. In all cases, the admitting institution must be satisfied that the applicant has the necessary competence, and that the 50/50 rule applies.

With due regard to the policies, requirements and guidelines of the HEQC, institutions may recognise other forms of prior learning as equivalent to the prescribed minimum admission requirements, and may recognise other forms of prior learning for entry to or granting advanced standing in given programmes. In this regard, advanced standing may be granted where a person possesses a given qualification that exceeds the normal admission requirements for a specific higher qualification type. In all cases, the admitting institution must be satisfied that the applicant has the necessary competence.

In the interest of transparency, each higher education institution must clearly stipulate the requirements that must be satisfied for admission and make these requirements publicly accessible.

With regard to a student who fails to complete the requirements for a qualification, the general principle is that this student may not be awarded an early-exit qualification. For example, a student who fails to meet the requirements for a Master's degree may not be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in lieu of the Master's degree.

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Implementation date**

The implementation date for the revised HEQF policy will be determined by the Minister of Higher Education and Training. Higher education institutions will need some time to phase out their existing qualifications in terms of this policy, so there will be a transition period to full compliance. The Minister of Higher Education and Training shall determine the date by which all existing qualifications not aligned with the HEQF will need to cease being offered to new students by notice in the Government Gazette.

### **Programmes and qualifications**

#### ***New programmes and qualifications***

A new programme or qualification is one which has not existed before or has been significantly changed, such as when its purpose, outcomes, field of study, mode or site of delivery has been changed to a considerable extent.

New higher education qualifications submitted for registration on the NQF have been required to conform to the requirements of this policy from the date of implementation, 1 January 2009.

Institutions must ensure that all new programmes meet the requirements of this policy.

#### ***Existing programmes and qualifications***

Existing qualifications are those that have been registered or registered in the interim on the NQF prior to the promulgation of this policy. Existing programmes are those that lead to such qualifications and have been accredited by the HEQC or the former Universities and Technikons Advisory Council (AUT), or its predecessors.

Existing qualifications and programmes that are currently offered by higher education institutions must conform over time with the requirements of this policy or must be-registered and withdrawn. The Minister of Higher Education and Training will determine appropriate transitional arrangements after consultation with the CHE, SAQA and higher education institutions. Data pertaining to the alignment of existing

programmes must be supplied to the CHE according to its HEQF Implementation Plan in order to ensure continued accreditation.

## **Admission to higher education**

### ***New programmes***

The minimum admission requirements for entry to new programmes are as set out in Gazette notice number 32131 of May 2008 for candidates with a National Senior Certificate, and Government notice number 32743 of November 2009 for candidates with a National Certificate (Vocational).

### ***Existing programmes***

From 1 January 2009 and until the date determined by the Minister in terms of this section the following will apply:

- The minimum admission requirements for the *Higher Certificate* will be used for admission to the *National Certificate* as defined in NATED Report 150
- The minimum admission requirements for *Diploma* will be used for admission to the *National Diploma* and the *University Diploma* as defined in NATED Report 150 and 116 respectively.
- The minimum admission requirements for a *Bachelor's Degree* will be used for admission to the *Bachelor's Degree* as defined in NATED Report 116.

### ***Full compliance***

All higher education programmes and qualifications and all higher education admission policies must comply with this policy by a date determined by the Minister of Higher Education and Training by notice in the Government Gazette.

## **Higher Education Management Information System**

### ***Public Higher Education Institutions***

Details of qualifications approved and accredited in terms of this policy for public higher education institutions will be recorded on the national higher education database, in accordance with the rules of the Department of Higher Education and Training's Higher Education Information Management System (HEMIS).

The fields in the HEMIS qualifications file will be amended to ensure consistency with this policy.

In HEMIS, the properties of a qualification determine the total number of units of state subsidy approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for that qualification. The record of subsidy units per qualification is an essential part of the determination of full-time equivalent student totals. In turn these enable the Department of Higher Education and Training to calculate the annual subsidy grant for each public higher education institution. Subsidy units are at present described for each qualification in terms of "approved total years", "approved formal years", and "approved experiential years". The Department will ensure consistency between this policy and the Higher Education Management Information System.

Recording minimum study hours as sets of credits will not conflict with other properties of qualifications in the HEMIS national database.

### ***Private Higher Education Institutions***

Details of qualifications approved and accredited in terms of this policy for private higher education institutions, including learner achievement, will be recorded on the Higher Education Quality Committee Information System (HEQCIS) database for submission to the National Learner Records Database (NLRD).

## HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATION DESCRIPTORS

### Higher Certificate

#### Type specifications

NQF Exit Level 5

Minimum total credits: 120

Minimum credits at Level 5: 120

#### Designators

Not applicable

#### Qualifiers

Specific, maximum two

Example: Higher Certificate in Tourism in Eco-Tourism

#### Abbreviations

H. Cert. (Tourism), H. Cert. (Tourism) (Eco-tourism)

#### Purpose and characteristics

This is an entry-level higher education qualification. The qualification is primarily vocational, with a strong industry-oriented focus. The qualification also serves to provide students with the basic introductory knowledge, cognitive and conceptual tools and practical techniques for higher education studies in their chosen field of study. The knowledge thus emphasises selected general principles together with more specific procedures and their application. This qualification signifies that the student has attained a basic level of higher education knowledge and competence in a particular field or occupation and is capable of applying such knowledge and competence in an occupation or role in the workplace. The Higher Certificate typically includes a simulated work experience or work integrated learning (WIL) component.

#### Minimum admission requirements

The minimum entry requirement is the National Senior Certificate or the National Certificate Vocational with appropriate subject combinations and levels of achievement as defined in the Minister's policies: *Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes Requiring a National Senior Certificate*, Government Gazette, Vol 751, No 32131 of 11 July 2008 and *Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes requiring a National Certificate (Vocational)*, published in the *Government Gazette*, Vol. 533, No. 32743, November 2009.

#### Progression

Completion of the Higher Certificate meets the minimum entry requirement for admission to an appropriate Advanced Certificate. Accumulated credits may also be presented for admission into a cognate Diploma. A Higher Certificate may also allow

access to an appropriate Bachelor's degree. A qualification may not be awarded for early exit from a Higher Certificate programme.

## **Advanced Certificate**

### **Type specifications**

NQF Exit Level: 6

Minimum total credits: 120

Minimum credits at Level 6: 120

### **Designators**

Not applicable

### **Qualifiers**

Specific, maximum two

Example: Advanced Certificate in Real Estate in Property Marketing

### **Abbreviations**

Adv. Cert. (Real Estate), Adv. Cert. (Real Estate) (Property Marketing)

### **Purpose and characteristics**

This qualification is primarily vocational or industry-oriented. The knowledge emphasises selected general principles together with more specific procedures and their application and/or technology transfer. The qualification provides students with a sound knowledge base in a particular field or discipline and the ability to apply their knowledge and skills to particular career or professional contexts, while equipping them to undertake more specialised and intensive learning. Programmes leading to this qualification tend to have a strong vocational professional or career focus and students and holders of this qualification are normally prepared to enter a specific niche in the labour market. Advanced Certificate programmes typically include a work- integrated learning (WIL) component.

### **Minimum admission requirements**

The minimum entry requirement is a Higher Certificate in the appropriate field.

### **Progression**

Completion of the Advanced Certificate meets the minimum entry requirement into a cognate Diploma programme or Bachelor's degree. Accumulated credits may also be presented for admission into cognate Diploma or Bachelor's degree programmes. A qualification may not be awarded for early exit from an Advanced Certificate programme.

## Diploma

### Type specifications

NQF Exit Level: 6

Minimum total credits: 240

Minimum credits at level 6:120

or

NQF Exit Level: 6

Minimum total credits: 360

Minimum credits at level 6:120

### Designators

Not applicable

### Qualifiers

Specific, maximum two

Example: Diploma in Management in Finance

### Abbreviations

Dip. (Management), Dip. (Management) (Finance)

### Purpose and characteristics

This qualification primarily has a vocational orientation, which includes professional, vocational, or industry specific knowledge that provides a sound understanding of general theoretical principles as well as a combination of general and specific procedures and their application. The purpose of the Diploma is to develop graduates who can demonstrate focused knowledge and skills in a particular field. Typically they will have gained experience in applying such knowledge and skills in a workplace context. A depth and specialisation of knowledge, together with practical skills and experience in the workplace, enables successful learners to enter a number of career paths and to apply their learning to particular employment contexts from the outset. Diploma programmes typically include an appropriate work-integrated learning (WIL) component.

There are two key distinctions between the 240- and 360-credit Diploma variants. The latter may provide for up to 120 credits of workplace-based learning, while the 240-credit variant does not, and the 240-credit variant may only be offered where it leads to a professional designation or occupational role as determined by a professional body.

### Minimum admission requirements

The minimum entry requirement is the National Senior Certificate with appropriate subject combinations and levels of achievement, as defined in the Minister's policy, *Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes Requiring a National Senior Certificate*, Government Gazette,

Vol 751, No 32131 of 11 July 2008, and *Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes requiring a National Certificate (Vocational)*, published in the *Government Gazette*, Vol. 533, No. 32743, November 2009. Alternatively a Higher Certificate or Advanced Certificate in a cognate field will satisfy the minimum requirement.

**Progression**

Completion of a 240- or 360-credit Diploma meets the minimum entry requirement for admission to a Bachelor's degree. Accumulated credits may also be presented for admission into a cognate Bachelor's Degree programme.

Completion of a 360-credit Diploma also meets the minimum entry requirement for admission to an Advanced Diploma. Candidates who complete the 240-credit Diploma may enter an Advanced Diploma upon successful completion of a work-integrated learning component or a combination of work-integrated learning and coursework equivalent to 120 credits that is approved and accredited by an education provider and/or a professional body and a QC. A qualification may not be awarded for early exit from a Diploma programme.

## **Advanced Diploma**

### **Type specifications**

NQF Exit Level: 7

Minimum total credits: 120

Minimum credits at Level 7: 120

### **Designators**

Not applicable

### **Qualifiers**

Specific, maximum two

Examples: Advanced Diploma in Taxation; Advanced Diploma in Communication, in Digital Media

### **Abbreviations**

Adv. Dip (Taxation), Adv. Dip (Communication) (Digital Media)

### **Purpose and characteristics**

This qualification has a number of different purposes, depending on a student's circumstances and the nature of the programme. It may provide entry-level vocational or professional preparation or specialisation for Bachelor's Degree graduates or diplomates by offering an intensive, focused and applied specialisation which meets the requirements of a specific niche in the labour market. For example a BSocSci graduate might register for an Advanced Diploma in Human Resource Management in order to enter the field of human resources; a BSc graduate might register for an Advanced Diploma in Education (or PGCE, see exceptions) in order to become a science teacher, or a BSc (Pharm) graduate might register for an Advanced Diploma in Marketing in order to become a marketing consultant in the pharmaceutical industry. Programmes offering this qualification are therefore particularly suitable for continuing professional development through the inculcation of a deep and systematic understanding of current thinking, practice, theory and methodology in an area of specialisation.

This qualification may also be designed to prepare students for postgraduate study through the deepening of their knowledge and understanding of theories, methodologies and practices in specific academic disciplines and fields, as well as the development of their ability to formulate, undertake and resolve more complex theoretical and practice-related problems and tasks through the selection and use of appropriate methods and techniques.

### **Minimum admission requirements**

An appropriate Diploma or Bachelor's Degree

### **Progression**

Completion of an Advanced Diploma may be presented for entry into a Postgraduate Diploma, a Bachelor Honours Degree or a Bachelor's Degree. Accumulated credits

may also be presented for entry into a cognate Bachelor's degree. A qualification may not be awarded for early exit from an Advanced Diploma.

## **Bachelor's Degree**

### **Type specifications**

NQF Exit Level: 7

Minimum total credits: 360

Minimum total credits at Level 7: 120

or

NQF Exit Level: 8

Minimum total credits: 480

Minimum total credits at Level 8: 120

### **Designators**

Bachelor's Degree designators are specific and indicate only broad and generic areas of study, disciplines or professions. Examples include: *Bachelor of Arts*, *Bachelor of Social Science*, *Bachelor of Science*, *Bachelor of Commerce*, *Bachelor of Engineering*, *Bachelor of Architecture*, *Bachelor of Agriculture*, *Bachelor of Law*, *Bachelor of Education*, *Bachelor of Nursing*, and *Bachelor of Business Science*.

### **Qualifiers**

Specific, maximum two

### **Abbreviations**

BA, BSc, BSocSci, BCom, LLB, BAgric, BEd, BBusSci, BSc (Life Sciences), BA (Applied Linguistics), BAgric (Animal Science), BCom (Human Resource Management), BBusSci (Actuarial Sciences)

### **Purpose and characteristics**

There are two types of Bachelor's Degrees, namely general and professionally-oriented Bachelor's Degrees. Both types of degree may be structured as a 360-credit qualification with an exit at level 7 or as a 480-credit qualification with an exit at level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework. (It is also possible to structure a 480-credit Bachelor's degree with an exit at NQF level 7). The 480-credit Bachelor's Degree at NQF level 8 has both a higher volume of learning and a greater cognitive demand than the 360-credit degree at Level 7 and should prepare students to be able to undertake Master's level study by providing them with research capacity in the methodology and research techniques of the discipline.

The primary purpose of both the general and the professional Bachelor's Degree is to provide a well-rounded, broad education that equips graduates with the knowledge base, theory and methodology of disciplines and fields of study, and to enable them to demonstrate initiative and responsibility in an academic or professional context. Both the 360 and 480-credit Bachelor's degrees may require students to undertake research in a manner that is appropriate to the discipline or field of study in order to prepare them for postgraduate study.

The general Bachelor's Degree emphasises general principles and theory as preparation for entry into general employment or for a postgraduate programme. The professional Bachelor's Degree prepares students for professional training, postgraduate studies or professional practice in a wide range of careers. Therefore it emphasises general principles and theory in conjunction with procedural knowledge in order to provide students with a thorough grounding in the knowledge, theory, principles and skills of the profession or career concerned and the ability to apply these to professional or career contexts. The degree programme may contain a component of work-integrated learning. Some professionally-oriented Bachelor's Degree programmes are designed in consultation with a professional body and recognised by a professional body as a requirement for a licence to practice that profession.

**Minimum admission requirements**

The minimum entry requirement is the National Senior Certificate or the National Certificate (Vocational) with appropriate subject combinations and levels of achievement, as defined in the *Minister's policies: Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes Requiring a National Senior Certificate*, Government Gazette, Vol 751, No 32131 of 11 July 2008, and *Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes requiring a National Certificate (Vocational)*, published in the *Government Gazette*, Vol. 533, No. 32743, November 2009. Alternatively, a Higher Certificate or an Advanced Certificate or Diploma in a cognate field may satisfy the minimum admission requirements.

**Progression**

A Bachelor's degree is the minimum entry requirement for admission to a Bachelor Honours Degree or Postgraduate Diploma. A Level 8 Bachelor's degree with 480 credits may also meet the minimum requirement for admission to a cognate Master's Degree. Entry into these qualifications is usually in the area of specialisation or in the discipline taken as a major in the Bachelor's degree. A qualification may not be awarded for early exit from a Bachelor's degree.

## **Bachelor Honours Degree**

### **Type specifications**

NQF Level: 8

Minimum total credits: 120

Minimum credits at Level 8: 120

### **Designators**

Bachelor Honours Degree designators are specific and limited to broad and generic areas of study, disciplines or professions. Examples include: Bachelor *of Arts* Honours, Bachelor *of Social Science* Honours, Bachelor *of Science* Honours, Bachelor *of Commerce* Honours.

### **Qualifiers**

Specific, maximum one

Examples: Bachelor of Science Honours in Microbiology or Bachelor of Arts Honours in Applied Linguistics.

### **Abbreviations**

BAHons, BScHons, BSocSciHons, BComHons, BScHons (Microbiology), BAHons (Applied Linguistics)

### **Purpose and characteristics**

The Bachelor Honours Degree is a postgraduate specialisation qualification, characterised by the fact that it prepares students for research-based postgraduate study. This qualification typically follows a Bachelor's Degree, and serves to consolidate and deepen the student's expertise in a particular discipline, and to develop research capacity in the methodology and techniques of that discipline. This qualification demands a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence. In some cases a Bachelor Honours Degree carries recognition by an appropriate professional or statutory body.

Bachelor Honours Degree programmes must include conducting and reporting research under supervision, worth at least 30 credits, in the form of a discrete research component that is appropriate to the discipline or field of study.

### **Minimum admission requirements**

The minimum admission requirement is an appropriate Bachelor's Degree or appropriate Advanced Diploma.

### **Progression**

Completion of a Bachelor Honours Degree meets the minimum entry requirement for admission to a cognate Master's Degree. Entry into a Master's Degree programme is usually in the area of specialisation of the Bachelor Honours Degree. A qualification may not be awarded for early exit from a Bachelor Honours degree.

## **Postgraduate Diploma**

### **Type specifications**

NQF Exit Level 8

Minimum total credits: 120

Minimum credits at Level 8: 120

### **Designators**

Not applicable

### **Qualifiers**

Specific, maximum two

Examples: Postgraduate Diploma in Organisational and Management Systems; Postgraduate Diploma in Gender Studies or Postgraduate Diploma in Agriculture in Rural Resource Management.

### **Abbreviations**

PG Dip (Organisational & Management Systems), PG Dip (Gender Studies), PG Dip (Agriculture) (Rural Resource Management)

### **Purpose and characteristics**

A Postgraduate Diploma is generally multi- or interdisciplinary in nature but may serve to strengthen and deepen the student's knowledge in a particular discipline or profession. The primary purpose of the qualification is to enable working professionals to undertake advanced reflection and development by means of a systematic survey of current thinking, practice and research methods in an area of specialisation. This qualification demands a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence, as well as the ability to relate knowledge to a range of contexts in order to undertake professional or highly-skilled work. A sustained research project is not required but the qualification may include conducting and reporting research under supervision. In some cases a Postgraduate Diploma carries recognition by an appropriate professional or statutory body.

### **Minimum admission requirements**

The minimum admission requirement is an appropriate Bachelor's degree or an appropriate Advanced Diploma.

### **Progression**

Completion of a Postgraduate Diploma meets the minimum entry requirement for admission to a cognate Master's Degree, usually in the area of specialisation of the Postgraduate Diploma. A qualification may not be awarded for early exit from a Postgraduate Diploma.

## **Master's Degree (General)**

### **Type specifications**

NQF Exit Level 9

Minimum total credits: 180

Minimum credits at Level 9: 120

### **Designators**

The designators for the Master's Degree describe the broad academic knowledge area of the qualification. Examples include: *Master of Arts*, *Master of Science*, *Master of Social Science*, *Master of Commerce*, *Master of Laws*, *Master of Education*. A Master's by dissertation with a strong theoretical base may be known as a Master of Philosophy.

### **Qualifiers**

Specific, maximum one.

### **Abbreviations**

MA, MA (Linguistics), MSc, MPhil, MSc (Astrophysics)

### **Purpose and characteristics**

The primary purpose of a general Master's Degree is to educate and train researchers who can contribute to the development of knowledge at an advanced level.

There are two variants of the general Master's Degree: A research Master's Degree by dissertation, or a research Master's Degree by coursework and dissertation. Both variants must include a significant research component in the form of a discrete research project.

The requirements for the successful completion of a general Master's Degree are as follows:

- Master's Degree by dissertation: A single advanced research project, culminating in the production and acceptance of a dissertation or other forms of research as indicated below
- Master's Degree by coursework and mini-dissertation: A coursework programme requiring a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence, and in some cases demonstration of the ability to relate knowledge to a range of contexts for professional practice. In addition, this variant of a general Master's degree must contain a research project comprising a minimum of 60 credits at level 9, culminating in the acceptance of a mini-dissertation or other forms of research as indicated below.

Master's Degree graduates in general must be able to reflect critically on theory and its application. They must be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, design and critically appraise research, make sound judgements using data and information at their disposal and communicate their conclusions

clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences, demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks with a theoretical underpinning and continue to advance their knowledge, understanding and skills.

The research component or components of a general Master's degree should be commensurate with the characteristics of the discipline and field as well as the purpose of the programme, and in addition to a dissertation or treatise may take the form of a technical report, one or more creative performances or works, or a series of peer-reviewed articles or other research-equivalent outputs.

**Minimum admission requirements**

The minimum admission requirement is a relevant Bachelor Honours Degree or a relevant Postgraduate Diploma. A Level 8 Bachelor's Degree may also be recognised as meeting the minimum entry requirement to a cognate Master's Degree programme.

**Progression**

Completion of a Master's Degree meets the minimum entry requirement for admission to a cognate Doctoral Degree, usually in the area of specialisation in the Master's Degree. A qualification may not be awarded for early exit from a Master's Degree.

## **Master's Degree (Professional)**

### **Type specifications**

NQF Exit Level 9

Minimum total credits: 180

Minimum credits at Level 9: 120

### **Designators**

The designators for the professional Master's Degree describe the broad field of the programme, just as for the general Master's. However, the designator may be modified to indicate the professional orientation of the programme which can be further specified by a qualifier. Examples include *Master of Health Sciences*, *Master of Applied Science*, *Master of Applied Arts*.

### **Qualifiers**

Specific, maximum one.

The qualifier indicates the professional orientation of the programme. Examples include *Master of Applied Commerce in Taxation*, *Master of Education in School Leadership*, *Master of Medicine in Paediatric Surgery*.

### **Abbreviations**

MAppCom (Taxation), MEd (School Leadership), MMed (Paediatric Surgery)

### **Purpose and characteristics**

The primary purposes of a professional Master's Degree are to educate and train graduates who can contribute to the development of knowledge at an advanced level such that they are prepared for advanced and specialised professional employment.

In some cases, a professional Master's degree may be designed in consultation with a professional body or fulfil all or part of the requirements for professional registration or recognition, and may include appropriate forms of work-integrated learning.

The requirements for the successful completion of the professional Master's Degree are as follows:

Successful completion of a coursework programme requiring a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence as well as demonstration of the ability to relate knowledge to the resolution of complex problems in appropriate areas of professional practice. In addition, a professional Master's degree must include an independent study component that comprises at least a quarter of the credits at NQF level 9, consisting of either a single research or technical project or a series of smaller projects demonstrating innovation or professional expertise.

Master's graduates must be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, design and critically appraise analytical writing, make sound judgements using data and information at their disposal and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences, demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks with a professional orientation, and continue to advance their knowledge, understanding and skills relevant to a particular profession.

**Minimum admission requirements**

The minimum admission requirement is a relevant Bachelor Honours Degree or a Postgraduate Diploma. A cognate Bachelor's Degree at Level 8 may also be recognised as meeting the minimum entry requirement to a cognate Master's Degree programme.

**Progression**

Completion of a Master's Degree meets the minimum entry requirement for admission to a cognate Doctoral Degree, usually in the area of specialisation in the Master's Degree. A qualification may not be awarded for early exit from a Master's Degree.

## **Doctoral Degree (general)**

### **Type specifications**

NQF Exit Level 10

Minimum total credits: 360

Minimum credits at Level 10: 360

### **Designators**

The designator *of Philosophy* is typically used for general doctoral degrees by thesis. However, other designators may be used to denote the area of study or the name of the discipline.

### **Qualifiers**

Specific, maximum one if required

### **Abbreviations**

- PhD, DPhil, DLitt

### **Purpose and characteristics**

The doctorate provides training for an academic career. It requires a candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic levels culminating in the submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis. However, candidates may also present peer-reviewed academic articles and papers, and, in certain fields, creative work such as artefacts, compositions, public performances and public exhibitions in partial fulfilment of the research requirements. Coursework may be required as preparation or value addition to the research, but does not contribute to the credit value of the qualification. The defining characteristic of this qualification is that the candidate is required to demonstrate high level research capability and to make a significant and original academic contribution at the frontiers of a discipline or field. The work must be of a quality to satisfy peer review and merit publication. The degree may be earned through pure discipline-based or multidisciplinary research or applied research. This degree requires a minimum of two years' full-time study, usually after completing a Master's Degree. A graduate should be able to supervise and evaluate the research of others in the area of specialisation concerned.

An additional type of doctorate, the Higher Doctorate, may be awarded on the basis of a distinguished record of research in the form of published works, creative works and/or other scholarly contributions that are judged by leading international experts to make an exceptional and independent contribution to one or more disciplines or fields of study.

### **Minimum admission requirements**

The minimum admission requirement is an appropriate Master's degree.

**Progression**

A Doctoral Degree (including the Higher Doctorate) is the highest qualification type awarded within this framework. A qualification may not be awarded for early exit from a Doctoral Degree.

## **Doctoral Degree (professional)**

### **Type specifications**

NQF Exit Level 10

Minimum total credits: 360

Minimum credits at Level 10: 360

### **Designators**

This qualification type may be named a *Professional Doctorate* followed by a designator that indicates the area of study or name of the discipline. However, Professional doctorates may also make use of the name Doctor followed by the area study or the name of discipline. Examples include: *Doctor of Education*, *Doctor of Commerce*, *Doctor of Engineering*, *Doctor of Law*, *Doctor of Nursing*, *Doctor of Social Work*, *Doctor of Pharmacy*. The title *PhD* should not be used for a Professional Doctorate.

### **Qualifiers**

Specific, maximum one if required

### **Abbreviations**

DEd, DCom, DBA; DEng, LLD; DNursing; DSW; DPharm; DPsych.

### **Purpose and characteristics**

The professional doctorate provides education and training for a career in the professions and/or industry and is designed around the development of high level performance and innovation in a professional context. Candidates are required to undertake a combination of coursework and advanced research leading to the submission, assessment and acceptance of a research component comprising a mini-thesis or another form of research that is commensurate with the nature of the discipline or field and the specific area of enquiry. The research component should comprise at least 60% of the degree. Professional doctorates may also include appropriate forms of work-integrated learning. The defining characteristic of this qualification is that in addition to the demonstration of high level research capability it requires the ability to integrate theory with practice through the application of theoretical knowledge to highly complex problems in a wide range of professional contexts. Frequently a professional doctorate will be developed in collaboration with a professional or statutory body.

### **Minimum admission requirements**

The minimum admission requirement is an appropriate Master's degree.

### **Progression**

A Doctoral Degree (including the Higher Doctorate) is the highest qualification awarded within this framework. A qualification may not be awarded for early exit from a Doctoral Degree.

## APPENDIX 1 – PERMITTED EXCEPTIONS

- **BEd:** The Bachelor of Education is a 480-credit qualification at NQF level 7, and thus differs from most 480-credit Bachelor's degrees that are pegged at NQF level 8. The lower NQF exit level of the BEd recognises the fact that the qualification requires a substantial component of work-placed learning so that it cannot provide students with adequate theoretical preparation to undertake Master's level study. Therefore, students who graduate with a BEd would normally complete a BEd (Hons) or a Postgraduate Diploma in Education before they may enrol for a Master's Degree.
- **PGCE:** The Postgraduate Certificate in Education conforms to the specifications for an Advanced Diploma at NQF level 7, and the admission requirements, purpose and characteristics and progression opportunities for the PGCE are the same as those of the Advanced Diploma. However, due to the familiarity of the PGCE in international teacher education circles, the qualification will continue to be denoted by this title.
- **MBA:** The Master of Business Administration conforms to the requirements and characteristics for a Postgraduate Diploma at NQF level 8, though its admission requirements are more flexible. Thus students with a Diploma or a Bachelor's degree and a minimum period of work experience may register for an MBA. Though pegged at Level 8, the programme may use the formal title of Master of Business Administration.
- **Master's Degrees in Health Sciences:** In certain professions in the Health Sciences (Medicine, Chiropractic, Homeopathy) a specific type of Master's degree is required for registration as a professional (e.g. the MMed, MMedVet and MDent), that has a credit load far in excess of the indicative 180 credits that the HEQF requires for a Master's degree, with credits spread across various NQF levels. While such qualifications will continue to be classified together with the Master's Degree, consideration will be given to the formal time and levels of funding that is appropriate for these programme types.
- **Professional Bachelor's Degrees in the Health Sciences:** Qualifications such as the MBChB, BChD and BVSC, require a formal learning programme that considerably exceeds the specifications for a professional Bachelor's Degree on the HEQF in terms of their credit load. Consideration will be given to the formal time and levels of funding that are appropriate for these programmes.
- **Advanced Bachelor's Degrees:** In certain disciplines and fields an advanced Bachelor's Degree such as an LLB may follow on a first undergraduate degree. In such cases, the advanced Bachelor's Degree may be curricularised so that it consists of a minimum of 240 credits and provides the necessary preparation for Master's level study as well as the development of research capacity in the methodology and techniques of the discipline.

**SCHEDULE C**

**THE PROPOSED QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK FOR  
TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS**



# **Qualification Sub- framework for Trades and Occupations**

**29 July 2011**

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**Qualifications Sub-Framework for Trades and Occupations****Abbreviations**

ANZSCO	Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
GFETQF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
NOPF	National Occupational Pathways Framework
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OFO	Organising Framework for Occupations
QC	Quality Council
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
SASCO	South African Standard Classification of Occupations
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDA	Skills Development Act
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

**National Artisan Moderating Body:** the body to be established as specified in Section 26A of the Skills Development Act. This body is responsible for the external summative assessment of all listed trades;

**NQF Act:** the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No. 67 of 2008);

**National Occupational Pathways Framework (NOPF):** a management tool for the QCTO to ensure that qualifications are not developed in isolation, but in a manner to facilitate progression pathways for learners between related occupational qualifications at different levels on the NQF;

**Occupation:** a cluster of jobs or occupational specialisations whose main tasks and duties are characterised by such a high degree of similarity of skill (field of knowledge required, tools and machinery used, materials worked with and kinds of goods and services produced), that they are grouped together on the OFO as an occupation. Occupations include trades and professions as specific categories of occupations;

**Occupational qualification:** a qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession, resulting from work-based learning and consisting of knowledge unit standards, practical unit standards and work experience unit standards as contemplated in the Skills Development Act and has an external summative assessment.;

**Occupational specialisation:** a skills set related to an occupation and which may be more or less complex than that of the occupation to which it relates;

**Organising Framework for Occupations:** a coded classification system, which aims to encompass all occupations in South Africa, used as the Department of Higher Education and Training's key tool for identifying, reporting and monitoring skills demand and supply in the South African labour market.;

**QCTO:** the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations established in terms of section 26G of the Skills Development Act;

**SAQA:** the South African Qualifications Authority established in terms of section 10 of the NQF Act;

**SETA:** a Sector Education and Training Authority established in terms of section 9(1) of the Skills Development Act;

**Skills Development Act (SDA):** the Skills Development Act (Act No. 97 of 1998).

## Qualifications Sub-Framework for Trades and Occupations

**1. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTION AND THE QCTO**

- [1] The Freedom Charter, adopted at the Congress of the People in 1955, formed the policy platform that steered the fight against apartheid. Inter alia it proclaimed that: *'All people shall have equal rights to ... enter all trades, crafts and professions'*.
- [2] When democracy was won, this principle was enshrined in the country's constitution. Section 22 of the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution states, under the heading 'Freedom of trade, occupation and profession' that: *'Every citizen has the right to choose their trade, occupation or profession freely. The practice of a trade, occupation or profession may be regulated by law.'*
- [3] The right to choose a trade, occupation or profession is an empty right unless accompanied by the right to access the education and training required for its practice. And it is this consequential right that led to the establishment of the QCTO. As a Quality Council it cannot guarantee *provision* to all but it can and must ensure that the training that is provided is of sound quality and is accepted in the labour market where the qualifications are traded.
- [4] It follows that the core purpose of the QCTO is to oversee the design and maintain the quality of qualifications required for the practise of trades and occupations.

**2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

- [5] The National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act 67 of 2008) established the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) with three distinctive sub-frameworks that together functions as a single integrated system. These sub-frameworks are: General and Further Education and Training; Higher Education; and Trades and Occupations.
- [6] In terms of section 8(1) of the NQF Act, the Minister of Higher Education and Training has overall executive responsibility for the:
- NQF;
  - SAQA; and
  - the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training, the Quality Council for Higher Education and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations.
- [7] Section 27(e) of the NQF Act determines that each Quality Council (QC) must develop and manage its own sub-framework as determined through policy by the Minister in terms of section 9(c) of the NQF Act.
- [8] This Policy determines the Qualifications Sub-Framework for Trades and Occupations as an integral part of the National Qualifications Framework.
- [9] The QCTO is established in terms of the Skills Development Act. In terms of section 26H(3) of this Act the QCTO is responsible for the development, maintenance and quality assurance of occupational qualifications within its sub-framework.

### 3. OCCUPATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

#### 3.1 *Clarifying Terminology*

- [10] The term 'occupational qualification' is defined in the SDA as: 'a qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession, resulting from work-based learning and consisting of knowledge unit standards, practical unit standards and work experience unit standards'. All occupational qualifications are assessed externally through a nationally standardised integrated summative assessment.
- [11] The purpose of an occupational qualification is to qualify a learner to practice an occupation, reflected on the Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO) or an occupational specialisation related to an occupation that is reflected on the Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO).
- [12] In terms of the OFO, trades and professions are specific categories of occupations (see paragraphs 16 and 17).
- [13] The OFO reflects the structure of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08)<sup>1</sup>, developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The classification system groups occupations into a five level hierarchy where each level carries an additional digit to signal the classification level, i.e. Major (1 digit), Sub-Major (2 digits), Minor (3 digits), Unit (4 digits) and Occupations (6 digits). In the main, occupational qualifications are defined at the *occupation level* of the hierarchy i.e. at 6 digit level.
- [14] Both ISCO and the OFO distinguish between a '*job*' and an '*occupation*' where a "*job*" is seen as a *particular* set of tasks and duties performed, *or meant to be performed* by an individual for an employer (including self-employment), normally in return for profit or payment and an "*occupation*" is a cluster or group of similar jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterised by a *high* degree of similarity of skill (field of knowledge required, tools and machinery used, materials worked with and kinds of goods and services produced), that they can be grouped together for the purposes of the classification.
- [15] The OFO provides a useful base for the Qualifications Sub-Framework for Trades and Occupations because it standardises the language used to describe different occupations. The OFO is explained in more detail in Annexure 1.
- [16] The eight major groupings in the OFO are:
- 1 Managers
  - 2 Professionals
  - 3 Technicians and Associate Professionals
  - 4 Clerical Support Workers

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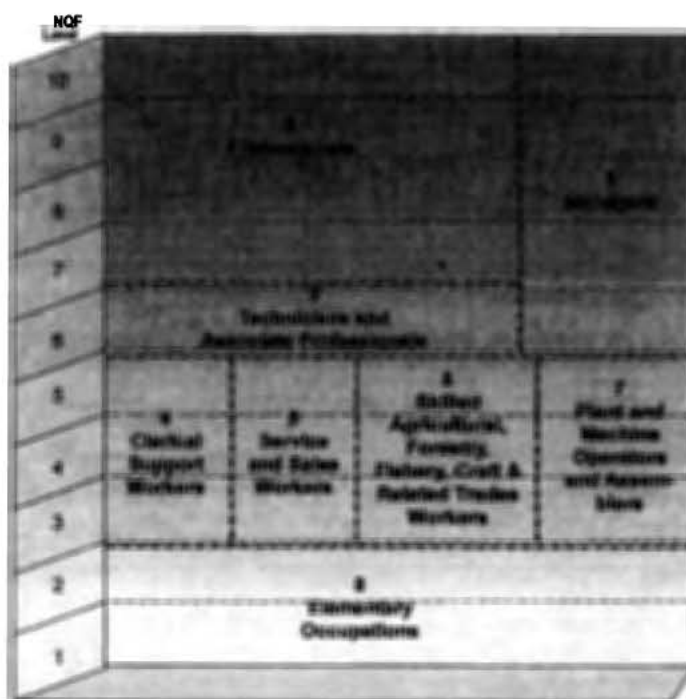
<sup>1</sup> Further detail on the ILO's ISCO system can be found on [www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco08/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco08/index.htm)

### Qualifications Sub-Framework for Trades and Occupations

- 5 Service and Sales Workers
- 6 Skilled Agricultural, Forestry, Fishery, Craft and Related Trades Workers
- 7 Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers
- 8 Elementary Occupations

- [17] Professionals are captured in Major Group 2 and Trades Workers are captured in Major Group 6 of the OFO as seen above.
- [18] The diagram below shows the Major Groups in the OFO broadly mapped against the ten NQF levels. As the diagram suggests, each Major Group embodies a range of individual occupations whose associated occupational qualifications are pegged at different NQF levels. Occupational qualifications are registered at the NQF level determined by the SAQA level descriptors.

**Diagram 1: Occupational qualifications within the Major Groups of the OFO broadly mapped against the NQF levels.**



### 3.2 Mobility and Progression

- [19] The grouping of similar jobs into occupations on the OFO limits the duplication of related qualifications, and enhances the mobility of those who attain them.

- [20] The National Occupational Pathways Framework (NOPF) reflects progression pathways across the different Major Groups of the OFO.
- [21] The NOPF clusters occupations and groups of related OFO occupations (Unit Groups) across different levels of the NQF and across different Major groups to inform learners of potential progression pathways and to assist occupational qualification developers to lay the foundation for vertical progression when developing individual qualifications.
- [22] The NOPF contains 9 high level occupational clusters, each with a constituent set of occupational fields, which in turn consist of families of occupations. The pathways link occupations (at various levels of complexity) that share related knowledge bases and which are commonly grouped together for career guidance purposes (because they are associated with similar working environments and relate to different learner aptitudes and interests).
- [23] The nine occupational clusters are listed below and a further explanation on the NOPF appears in Annexure 2.<sup>2</sup>:
- 1 Business Administration, Information Services, Human Resources and Teaching Related Occupations
  - 2 Finance, Insurance, Sales, Marketing, Retail and Logistics Related Occupations
  - 3 Accommodation, Food Preparation and Cleaning Services Related Occupations
  - 4 Farming, Forestry, Nature Conservation, Environment and Related Science Occupations
  - 5 Medical, Social Welfare, Sports and Personal Care Related Occupations
  - 6 Security and Law Related Occupations
  - 7 Arts, Design, Installation, Maintenance, and Construction Related Occupations
  - 8 Production and Processing Related Occupations
  - 9 Transportation, Materials Moving and Mobile Plant Operating Related Occupations.
- [24] The QCTO will develop and maintain the NOPF.

#### **4. TYPES, LEVELS AND TITLES OF OCCUPATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

- [25] Occupational qualifications are distinguished from one another on the basis of the occupational title and the occupational specialisation (if applicable) to which they relate, the NQF level on which they are registered and by their total credit value.

##### **4.1 Occupational Qualification Types**

- [26] The Occupational Qualifications Framework distinguishes between two types of qualification:
- National Occupational Qualification; and

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<sup>2</sup> An outline of the NOPF will be available on the QCTO's website

## Qualifications Sub-Framework for Trades and Occupations

- National Occupational Award

- [27] National Occupational Qualifications consist of 120 credits or more and National Occupational Awards consist of a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 119 credits.
- [28] The credit value of an occupational qualification is determined by the range, content and the complexity of the learning processes required to attain occupational competence. Included in the total credit calculation are the credits that have to be earned through workplace experience, a compulsory component of all occupational qualifications. As in the SAQA community as a whole one credit is equal to 10 notional hours of learning.

### 4.2 Occupational Qualification Level

- [29] Occupational qualification types may occur at all 10 levels of the NQF.
- [30] The SAQA level descriptors are used to determine the level of occupational qualifications.

### 4.3 Occupational Qualification Title

- [31] Names of occupational qualifications is structured as follows:
- First the type, i.e. National Occupational Qualification or National Occupational Award,
  - Second the exact occupational title, as per the OFO, as the designator,
  - Third the occupational specialisation area (if applicable), as the qualifier and
  - Fourth the NQF level on which the occupational qualification is registered.

For example "National Occupational Qualification: Chemistry Technician (Chemistry Laboratory Analyst) Level 5.

## 5. COMPONENTS OF OCCUPATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- [32] The development of occupational qualifications results in three distinct, but equally important documents. These are the occupational qualifications document, the occupational curriculum document and the occupational assessment specifications document.

### 5.1 The Occupational Qualifications Document

- [33] An occupational qualification defines the learning required to be competent to practice an occupation or an occupational specialisation.
- [34] As defined in the SDA an occupational qualification consists of "...knowledge unit standards, practical unit standards and work experience unit standards."

- [35] A minimum of 20% of an occupational qualification's total credits must be assigned to each of the three forms of unit standards. The balance of the credits (40%) can be allocated in a proportion appropriate to the needs of the particular occupation or occupational specialisation.
- [36] The QCTO is responsible for recommending occupational qualifications to SAQA (in a manner approved by SAQA) for registration on the NQF. It only submits qualifications that are developed in accordance with QCTO processes and procedures and in line with its set criteria.
- [37] Knowledge unit standards and practical unit standards are designed, and can be taught and assessed in an integrated way.

## **5.2 *The Occupational Curriculum Document***

- [38] The purpose of the occupational curriculum document is to enhance the quality and consistency of learning and of the internal assessment of each of the components of learning.
- [39] An occupational curriculum is based on an occupational profile that derives from the occupational purpose and the associated occupational tasks or outcomes.
- [40] Occupational curricula provide an outline of the following:
- learning components - knowledge subject specifications, practical skills module specifications and work experience module specifications.
  - internal assessment guidelines for the knowledge and practical skills components and requirements for the assessment of the work experience component
  - exemptions from or entry requirements to each component
  - skills development provider accreditation requirements for the knowledge and practical skills components and workplace approval requirements for the work experience component.
- [41] Foundational learning competence is a pre-requisite for the awarding of National Occupational Qualifications registered at NQF levels 3 – 4. Foundational learning is optional for National Occupational Qualifications registered at NQF level 1 and 2.

## **5.3 *Occupational Assessment Specifications Document***

- [42] All occupational qualifications are assessed externally through an appropriate nationally standardised integrated summative assessment.
- [43] Each occupational qualification has an associated qualification assessment specifications document. The purpose of this document is to focus on occupational or occupational specialisation competence and thus to enhance the consistency and credibility of the external assessment process.

**Qualifications Sub-Framework for Trades and Occupations**

- [44] Qualification assessment specifications provide an outline of:
- external assessment strategy (method to be used)
  - key occupational outcomes to be assessed (linked to occupational tasks and the specified critical external assessment focus areas)
  - points at which assessment take place (e.g phase tests or points in production cycle)
  - critical elements of the internal assessments to be moderated (if any)
  - eligibility requirements for learners to access the external assessment (also list of equivalent achievements as affording exemption)
  - criteria for registration of assessors

**6. PART QUALIFICATIONS**

- [45] The three curriculum components outlined in paragraph 40 specify three learning components: the knowledge subject specifications, practical skills module specifications and work experience module specifications. Each National Occupational Qualification and National Occupational Award has a curriculum document that specifies all three components.
- [46] Any one, two or three of these curriculum components can be separately, nationally assessed and certificated, in which case they will be registered on the NQF as part-qualifications alongside the full qualification/s of which they are a part.
- [47] National N Certificates (N4-N6) as per Report 191 – commonly referred to as the NATED or N courses - are a special case in point and they too will be registered as part qualifications of the OQF alongside the occupational qualifications in which they are embedded.
- [48] The Foundational Learning Competence is another part-qualification of the OQF, as it is prescribed for all occupational qualifications at NQF Levels 3 and 4.

**7. CERTIFICATION**

- [49] The QCTO issues certificates for all external summative assessments of occupational qualifications.

**8. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THREE QUALITY COUNCILS**

- [50] Some occupations require the attainment of a stand-alone occupational qualification; however some depend on the initial attainment of a qualification drawn from the GFETQF or the HEQF. In such cases the attainment of the qualification of Umalusi or the CHE will be set as a pre-requisite for commencing the occupational qualification.
- [51] In other cases part qualifications from the GFETQF or HEQF sub-frameworks will be required for the completion of an occupational qualification. The National N Certificates (N1-N3 Engineering) as per Report 191 – commonly referred to as the NATED or N courses - are a special case in point. These commonly constitute the knowledge component of occupational

qualifications for the trades. Under current legislation these will be registered as part qualifications on the GFETQF sub-framework but QCTO and Umalusi will jointly work on their curriculum content.

- [52] Where standards and quality assurance of the “educational qualification” belongs to one of the other two quality councils, collaboration between the relevant quality councils is necessary to optimise complementarity and alignment. This is in line with the NQF Act which states that the NQF is a single integrated system which comprises of three coordinated qualifications sub-frameworks’ (NQF Act, 67 of 2008, section 7).

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- [53] The QCTO has a vital contribution to make to a co-ordinated and coherent qualification framework. It ensures that learners, be they educational graduates or not, can attain qualifications which signify to employers or the labour market that they are competent occupational practitioners – in a way which can be trusted by all. This facilitates smoother employment or contract transactions, enhance quality production of goods and services and promote mobility and decent work for the qualified.
- [54] The QCTO develops occupational qualifications in areas where there is strong social or economic demand. This contributes towards addressing skills shortages in the country and ensuring that the skills that are developed meet standards that can be trusted by all.

**ANNEXURE 1****ANNEXURE 1 : THE ORGANISING FRAMEWORK FOR OCCUPATIONS****1 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The agreements reached over what constitutes an occupation have not only been local. Over time international agreement has been reached on the definition of occupational groupings. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) consolidated these into what is known as the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO).
- 1.2 South Africa's Statistics South Africa has adapted this classification system for the purposes of conducting its national census data and to track the shifting occupational profile of the country's workforce<sup>3</sup>. It is known as South African Standard Classification of Occupations (SASCO).
- 1.3 During 2004 the Department of Labour (DoL) decided to better link demand and supply by using "occupations" as the common denominator for analysis. However, SASCO at that stage reflected ISCO-88 but while this has proven to be a powerful information tool, it did not provide the detail that South Africa requires for good skills development planning and project intervention.
- 1.4 A scan of international developments revealed that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Statistics New Zealand had initiated a wide ranging consultative and stakeholder-driven process in March 2001 to update ISCO 1988, finalised in July 2005.
- 1.5 As the content of ANZSCO 2005 reflected the then occupational environment more accurately and also included occupations and occupational descriptors, it was used as the basis for the Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO) to assist in the process of identifying scarce and critical skills within and across sectors in a way that is meaningful nationally. The OFO however extends ANZSCO to incorporate additional occupations and occupational categories identified through research and consultation.
- 1.6 The DoL adopted the use of the OFO in 2005 as a tool for identifying, reporting and monitoring scarce and critical skills and maintained it through an annual updating process. This process and responsibility was taken over by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2009.
- 1.7 During the annual updating process in 2010 the DHET decided that the annual updating of the OFO should also include adapting the OFO to better reflect the structure of ISCO-08.

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.statssa.gov.za/qifs/index.asp>.

- 1.8 In essence, the OFO is a coded occupational classification system. It is the Department of Higher Education and Training's key tool for identifying, reporting and monitoring skills demand and supply in the South African labour market. The OFO is constructed from the bottom-up by:
- Analysing jobs and identifying similarities in terms of a tasks and skills.
  - Categorising similar jobs into occupations.
  - Classifying these occupations into occupational groups at increasing levels of generality.
- 1.9 The OFO is updated annually, based on inputs received through SETA Sector Skills Planning processes as well as inputs received from the QCTO and NAMB.
- 1.10 Within the current OFO (2011 / version 10) there are 8 Major Groups, 39 Sub-Major Groups, 125 Minor Groups, 440 Unit Groups and 1353 Occupations.

## 2 FRAMEWORK OF THE OFO 2011

- 2.1 The framework used for the design and construction of ISCO-08 and therefore the OFO 2011 is based on two main concepts: the concept of the kind of work performed or job and the concept of skill. The classification units are therefore the **jobs** whilst the classification variable is the kind of work done (that is, the tasks and duties), and the classification criteria are the **skill level and skill specialisation**.

## 3 CONCEPTS OF THE OFO 2011

- 3.1 The classification criteria used by ISCO-08 for identifying Major, Sub Major, Minor and Unit Groups is **skill level and skill specialisation**. Skill level is applied at Major Group level (highest level of the organisational structure) only whilst skill specialisation is applied more rigorously at each lower level of the organisational structure.
- 3.2 Skill specialisation is considered in terms of four conceptual concepts:
- the field of knowledge required;
  - the tools and machinery used;
  - the materials worked on or with; and
  - the kinds of goods and services produced.
- 3.3 For the purposes of identifying the OFO occupations, the following definitions of ISCO--08 are applied<sup>4</sup> in terms of "job" and "occupation":
- A job is a set of tasks and duties carried out or meant to be carried out, by one person for a particular employer, including self employment.

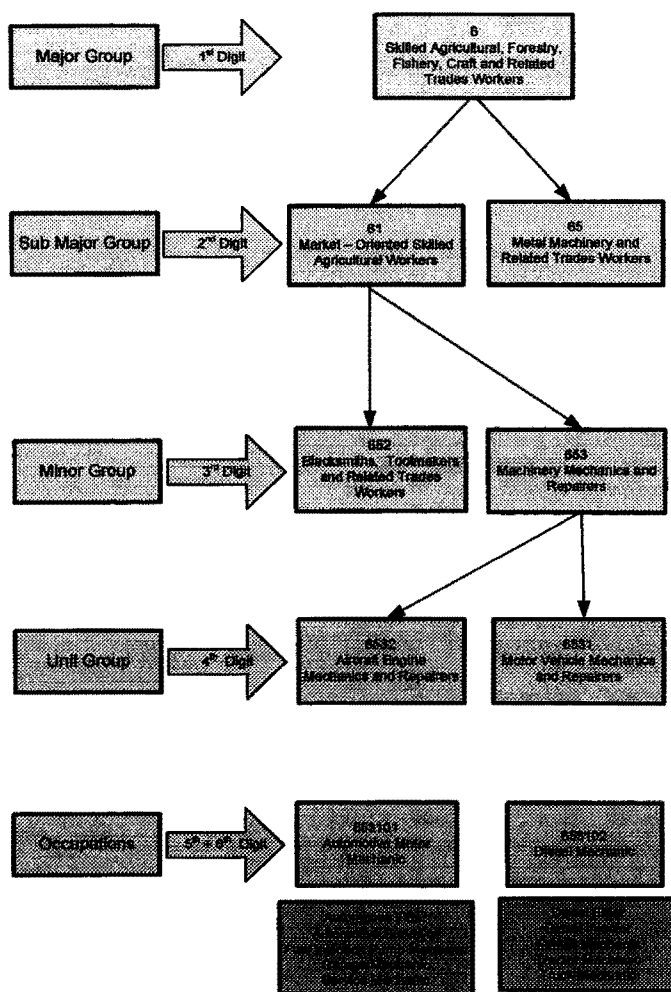
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<sup>4</sup> International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08) – Conceptual Framework , page 2 of ANNEX 1

## Qualifications Sub-Framework for Trades and Occupations

- An occupation is a set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterised by a high degree of similarity of skill specialisation (field of knowledge required, tools and machinery used, materials worked with and kinds of goods and services produced).

## 3.4 The structure of the OFO is outlined below.

**Major Groups are:**

- The broadest level of the classification
- Denoted by 1-digit codes
- Distinguished from each other on the basis of skill level and to a lesser degree, the broad concept of skill specialisation
- There are 9 Major Groups each containing a Descriptor and Tasks

**Sub Major Groups are:**

- Subdivisions of Major Groups
- Denoted by 2-digit codes (Major Group plus an additional digit)
- Distinguished from other Sub Major Groups on the basis of broadly stated skill specialisation (Except Sub Major Groups of Major Group 1 which are also distinguished on the basis of skill level)
- There are 39 Sub Major Groups each containing a Descriptor and Tasks

**Minor Groups are:**

- Subdivisions of Sub Major Groups
- Denoted by 3-digit codes (Sub Major Group plus an additional digit)
- Distinguished from other Minor Groups on the basis of less broadly stated skill specialisation
- There are 125 Minor Groups each containing a Descriptor and Tasks

**Unit Groups are:**

- Subdivisions of Minor Groups
- Denoted by 4-digit codes (Minor Group plus an additional digit)
- Distinguished from other Unit Groups on the basis of a finer degree of skill specialisation
- There are 440 Unit Groups each containing a Descriptor and Tasks

**Occupations are:**

- Subdivisions of Unit Groups
- Denoted by 6-digit codes (Unit Group plus two additional digits)
- Distinguished from other Occupations on the basis of a fine degree of skill specialisation
- There are 1353 Occupations each containing a Descriptor only

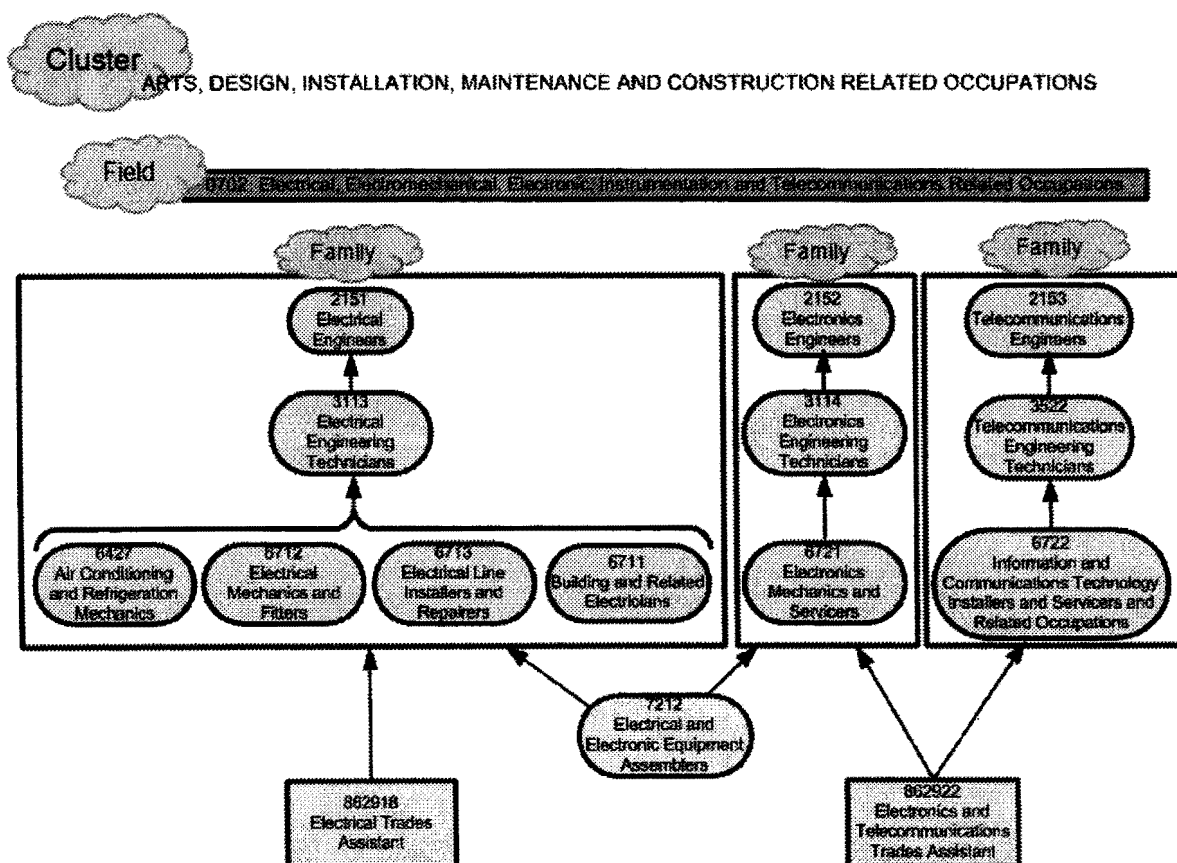
## ANNEXURE 2

## ANNEXURE 2: THE NOPF STRUCTURE

The NOPF<sup>5</sup> comprise 9 Occupational Clusters and each has a number of Occupational Fields. The Occupational Clusters and Occupational Fields were determined based on a combination of interest, aptitude and associated field of study.

Within each occupational field there are occupational families, linking unit groups of the OFO in such a way to show occupational progression. Occupational families are considered when developing occupational qualifications to ensure vertical progression.

The picture below presents an example of some occupational families within fields.



A summary of the 9 occupational clusters and associated occupational fields are reflected below.

<sup>5</sup> An outline of the NOPF will be available on the QCTO's website.

**Qualifications Sub-Framework for Trades and Occupations****OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTERS AND OCCUPATIONAL FIELDS****1. Business Administration, Information Services, Human Resources and Teaching Related Occupations**

- 0101 General and Business Administration Related Occupations
- 0102 Information Related Occupations
- 0103 Human Resources Related Occupations
- 0104 Teaching Related Occupations

**2. Finance, Insurance, Sales, Marketing, Retail and Logistics Related Occupations**

- 0201 Accounting Related Occupations
- 0202 Financial, Investment and Insurance Related Occupations
- 0203 Retail and Logistics Related Occupations
- 0204 Sales and Marketing Related Occupations
- 0205 Media Related Occupations

**3. Accommodation, Food Preparation and Cleaning Services Related Occupations**

- 0301 Food Preparation Related Occupations
- 0302 Event and Accommodation Related Occupations
- 0303 Cleaning Related Occupations

**4. Farming, Forestry, Nature Conservation, Environment and Related Science Related Occupations**

- 0401 Environmental and Environmental Sciences Related Occupations
- 0402 Plant and Crop Farming Related Occupations
- 0403 Animal and Livestock Related Occupations
- 0404 Mixed Livestock and Crop Farming Related Occupations
- 0405 Nursery, Forestry and Agricultural Produce Related Occupations

**5. Medical, Social, Welfare, Sports and Personal Care Related Occupations**

- 0501 Medical Practitioners
- 0502 Diagnostic and Health Promotion Related Occupations
- 0503 Midwifery, Nursing and Medical Support Related Occupations
- 0504 Health Therapy Related Occupations
- 0505 Laboratory, Medical Technical and Life Sciences Related Occupations
- 0506 Social and Welfare Related Occupations
- 0507 Personal Care, Beauty and Funeral Related Occupations
- 0508 Sport Related Occupations

**6. Security and Law Related Occupations**

0601 Security and Defence Related Occupations

0602 Law Related Occupations

**7. Arts, Design, Installation, Maintenance and Construction Related Occupations**

0701 ICT Related Occupations

0702 Electrical, Electromechanical, Electronic, Instrumentation and Telecommunications  
Related Occupations

0703 Mechanical Related Occupations

0704 Panel Beaters and Body Builders

0705 Architecture, Building, Construction, Surveying and Civil Engineering Related Occupations

0706 Tooling and Instrument Making Related Occupations

0707 Visual and Performing Arts Related Occupations

0708 Design and Decorating Related Occupations

**8. Production and Processing Related Occupations**

0801 General Production, Processing and Engineering Related Occupations

0802 Metal and Precious Metal Production and Processing Related Occupations

0803 Plastics, Rubber, Concrete Glass and Stone Production and Processing Related Occupations

0804 Textile, Apparel and Furnishing Production and Processing Related Occupations

0805 Chemical, Gas, Food and Beverages Production and Processing Related Occupations

0806 Wood Fabrication, Production and Processing Related Occupations

0807 Printing Related Occupations

0808 Demolition, Extraction, Mining, Metallurgical and Materials Related Occupations

0809 Miscellaneous Production, Fabrication, Assembly and Stationary Plant Operating Related Occupations

**9. Transportation and Mobile Plant Operating Related Occupations**

0901 Air and Water Transportation Related Occupations

0902 Rail and Road Transportation Related Occupations

0903 Miscellaneous Mobile Plant Operating Related Occupations

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