GOVERNMENT NOTICE

SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

No. 648 30 August 2013

SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SAQA)

As directed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in terms of Section 27 (k)(iv) of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, Act 67 of 2008, and as coordinated by SAQA, the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), as amended by the Council on Higher Education, and the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF), as amended by Umalusi, are hereby published as policy.

The Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) will be published as soon as it is amended by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations.

The HEQSF and GFETQSF are effective from the date of publication in the Government Gazette.

JOE SAMUELS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

25 JULY 2013

SAQA

Publication of the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework and Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework of the National Qualifications Framework

AUGUST 2013

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Introduction

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a single integrated system for the "classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications", as indicated in Section 4 of the NQF Act, 2008 (Act 67 of 2008). It comprises, as specified in Section 7 of the NQF Act, three co-ordinated qualifications sub-frameworks for:

- General and Further Education and Training, contemplated in the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, 2001 (Act 58 of 2001) overseen by Umalusi.

- Higher Education, contemplated in the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act 101 of 1997) overseen by the Council on Higher Education.

- Trades and Occupations, contemplated in the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of1998) overseen by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations.

The objectives of the NQF, as outlined in Section 5 of the NQF Act, are to:

(a)   create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;

(b)   facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education and training career paths;

(c)   enhance the quality of education and training;

(d)   accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.

The objectives of the NQF are designed to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.

SAQA and the QCs must seek to achieve the objectives of the NQF by:

(a)   Developing, fostering and maintaining an integrated and transparent national framework for the recognition of learning achievements;

(b)   Ensuring that South African qualifications meet appropriate criteria, determined by the Minister as contemplated in Section 8 [of the NQF Act], and are internationally comparable; and

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(c) Ensuring that South African qualifications are of an acceptable quality.

It is against this background that the Minister of Education and Training, in terms of Section 8 (2) (e) of the NQF Act, has determined as policy the three sub-frameworks that comprise the NQF. The Minister's determination (Notice No 1040 of 2012; Government Gazette No. 36003, 14 December 2012) is outlined in the table below.

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NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK	
LEVEL	SUB-FRAMEWORK AND QUALIFICATION TYPES
10	DOCTORAL DEGREE DOCTORAL DEGREE (PROFESSIONAL) *
9	MASTER'S DEGREE MASTER'S DEGREE (PROFESSIONAL) *
8	BACHELOR HONOURS DEGREE POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA BACHELOR'S DEGREE *
7	BACHELOR'S DEGREE ADVANCED DIPLOMA *
6	DIPLOMA ADVANCED CERTIFICATE OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATE (LEVEL 6)
5	HIGHER CERTIFICATE OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATE (LEVEL 5)
4	NATIONAL CERTIFICATE OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATE (LEVEL 4)
3	INTERMEDIATE CERTIFICATE OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATE (LEVEL 3)
2	ELEMENTARY CERTIFICATE OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATE (LEVEL 2)
1	GENERAL CERTIFICATE OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATE (LEVEL 1)

*Qualification types beyond level 6 on the OQSF have not been determined pending further advice.

Key to sub-frameworks

Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework

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The development of the sub-frameworks by the Quality Councils (QCs) and the advice provided by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which is responsible for advancing the objectives and for co-ordinating the development and implementation of the NQF, took into account the following:

- The need for the distinct nomenclature and approach to quality assurance of each sub-framework not to lead to incoherence across the sub-frameworks.

- The need to foreground articulation, understood as relationships and linkages between and within the sub-frameworks in order to facilitate access to learning and to avoid duplication of learning already covered.

- The need for consistent definitions of common concepts and terminology across the sub-frameworks, with specific nomenclature as required by the NQF Act [Section 13(h) (bb)]. To be clearly explained and justified to ensure compatibility with the overall principles of the NQF.

- The need to ensure purposeful collaboration and co-operation with the recognised professional bodies in the development of the professional qualifications in the sub-frameworks.

SAQA and the QCs recognise that while the determination of the sub-frameworks provides stability and legal certainty, there is further development work required to address the ongoing challenges relating to the implementation of the NQF, including the issues highlighted by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, namely:

- The principles and framework that should underpin the development of articulation pathways, including RPL and CAT.

- The relationship between professional designations registered by SAQA and the sub-frameworks given that professional designations are not "qualification types".

- The inclusion of level 5 qualifications on the General and Further Education Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF).

- The appropriateness of developing occupational (i.e. workplace-based qualifications beyond level 6 of the NQF on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF).

SAQA and the QCs are committed to working together to develop and promote the objectives of the NQF, including addressing the challenges outlined above within the timeframes determined by the Minister of Higher Education and Training.

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The Sub-Frameworks

As directed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in terms of Section 27 (k)(iv) of the NQF Act, each QC, is publishing its sub-framework as a policy document, as amended by the Minister and coordinated by SAQA.

In terms of the transitional arrangements, it is important to emphasise that existing qualifications registered on the NQF remain in place until they expire or are replaced by other qualifications developed specifically for one of the sub-frameworks. The timelines for the replacing of existing qualifications will be determined by each of the QCs, in consultation with SAQA, for their respective sub-frameworks.

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Council for Quality Assurance in
General and Further Education and Training

The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework

As approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training (Notice 1040 of 2012; Government Gazette No. 36003 of 14 December 2012) in terms of the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act 67 of 2008) and as contemplated in the General and Further Education and Training Act, 2001 (Act 58 of 2001).

THE GENERAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK IN CONTEXT

A single qualifications framework for a diverse system

1. In terms of the National Qualifications Framework Act, Act 67 of 2008, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a framework of ten levels encompassing three sub-frameworks: a General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework, an Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework, and a Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework.

2. The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-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. It serves as a register of general educational qualification at NQF Levels 1 – 4.

3. The sub-framework is intended to provide the grounds for articulation with qualifications residing on the two other sub-frameworks.

4. This policy provides the 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. It thus serves the needs of the individual, South African society and the economy.

Legislative framework

5. 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[1]. Its responsibility was to monitor and report on the adequacy and suitability of qualifications and standards; quality assure exit point assessments and certify learner achievements, and accredit private schools, FET colleges and adult basic education and training centres, as provided for under the-

    - South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996)

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[1] 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.

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- Further Education and Training Colleges Act, 2006 (Act 16 of 2006 amended 2010), and

- Adult Basic Education and Training Act, 2000 (Act 52 of 2000 amended 2010).

6. The promulgation of the *National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, 2008*, (Act 67 of 2008), constituted Umalusi as the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training, as provided for in the amended General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act (GENFETQA) Act of 2001. Umalusi now 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). In terms of Paragraph 27 (a) – (k) of the NQF Act, each QC is responsible for the development and management of its sub-framework. These responsibilities are confirmed in paragraph 16 of *The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, Act 58 of 2001,* as amended in 2008.

7. In terms of the 2008 amendment of the *General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, 2001* (Act 58 of 2001), and further explicated in Council Policy, Umalusi's responsibilities are identified as the development and management a sub-framework of qualifications, quality assurance of assessment (both internal and external) at exit points, certification, the accreditation of private assessment bodies and monitoring of public assessment bodies, as well as the quality assurance of education institutions that offer qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework.

8. This policy framework needs to be read in conjunction with the following legislation:

   8.1   Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

   8.2   The National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27 of 1996)

   8.3   The National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act 67 of 2008)

   8.4   The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, 2001 (Act 58 of 2001) and as amended in 2008 and 2010

   8.5   Skills Development Act, 1997 (Act 97 of 1998) and as amended in 2008

   8.6   Adult Education and Training Act, 2000 (Act 52 of 2000) and as amended in 2010

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8.7   Further Education and Training Colleges Act, 2006 (Act 16 of 2006) and as amended in 2010

8.8   The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) and as amended in 2010

8.9   Higher Education Act, 1997 and as amended in 2008 and 2010.

9. The present policy must be read in conjunction with Umalusi Council policy entitled *Standards and Quality Assurance for General Further Education and Training* (June 2008, revised February 2013),   which explains Umalusi's approach to quality assurance and the setting of standards in education.

10. This policy outlines the nature and extent of the qualifications on the Sub-framework for General and Further Education and Training. The sub-framework allows the public to understand and have confidence in the achievements represented by the qualifications in general and further education and training.   It supports a common understanding of the relationship of one qualification to another. Through related policy, the framework establishes parameters for the design of qualifications. These parameters facilitate general comparability of qualifications across the system thus allowing for greater ease of access and the possibility of credit transfer for learners.

THE GENERAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK

The character of the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework

11. The purpose of the qualifications on the sub-framework is to fulfill the state's constitutional responsibility to citizens' rights to a *basic* and *further* education.   The constitution specifically mentions adults' right to adult basic education. The constitution also makes provision for further education which is to be made progressively available and accessible.

12. The qualifications on the sub-framework are thus organised in two streams which cater for two distinct learner groups: a) children and adolescents, involved in the acquisition of a basic education in the schooling system; and b) adolescents and adults that are out of school. The latter group has diverse needs that range from adult basic education and training (ABET) to achieving a certificate that will give them access to higher education or

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to employment. The groups overlap substantially and yet have distinct needs.

13. The qualifications on the framework consequently may be academic or vocational in nature, that is, they prepare learners in a broad, general way for further learning and for becoming educated South African citizens with some readiness to enter the world of work. To this end, all the qualifications are discipline-based and include foundational learning, so providing opportunities for proficiency in one or more languages as well as in some form of mathematics or mathematical literacy.

14. The sub-framework caters for adults' basic literacy needs as well as their general academic and general vocational requirements. The sub-framework is designed to build a post-compulsory, post-schooling Further Education and Training environment supportive of a wide range of adult needs.

15. The sub-framework 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. It also allows for the development of new qualifications needed to respond to emerging learning needs.

16. This policy determines the structure for General and Further Education qualifications which are not occupational qualifications. It is recognised that professional bodies have a distinct role, derived from legislation or undertaken in terms of 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.

17. Prescribed qualification specifications; evaluation of curriculum statements or syllabuses; the verification of the quality of external examinations, and the 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 measures are particularly critical since Umalusi is responsible for maintaining the necessary standards in a large-scale educational system.

18. 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

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their participation in properly conducted and monitored external assessments.

19. In summary, the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework is designed to:

19.1 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;

19.2 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;

19.3 provide qualifications that can be benchmarked credibly against similar qualifications internationally;

19.4 allow for the development of new qualification variants or programmes as the need arises;

19.5 be simple, clear, easy to understand and user-friendly; and

19.6 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.

The structure of the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework

20. A qualification on the sub-framework is defined as the broad specifications and combinations of subjects which must be achieved by learners, but which can also reflect individual learners' preferred learning needs, as expressed within those specifications.

21. 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 58 of 1995), and that the learner has been assessed—in terms of the exit-level outcomes—as qualified.

22. The word 'qualification' also denotes the formal recognition, through certification, of learning achievement, and is awarded by an appropriate quality assurance body.

23. The sub-framework, however, defines a number of qualification *types*. The qualification types specify broad requirements for qualifications and create the basis for the development of specific qualifications

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(*designated variants*). Qualification types allow for the registration of designated variants and/or part-qualifications.

24. A coherent standard is maintained by the identification of a single qualification type with each of the NQF levels on the sub-framework. The type is determined by the educational, socio-political, cultural and economic imperatives that require fulfilment in the education system of the country.

25. Qualification variants are designed to share a common structure while allowing some flexibility for learner interest and preference.

26. Part-qualifications generally refer to the achievement and acknowledgement of some part of a qualification on the sub-framework without having fulfilled the complete requirements for the full qualification. However, the possibility of formally registering part-qualifications is recognised.

27. All qualifications are further specified at the level of a curriculum for the subjects within the qualifications. Performance in the subjects is assessed through external examinations.

28. The word, '*qualifier*' is used to identify an area of specialisation. So, for example, the vocational field, Information Technology and Computer Science, is determined as a *qualifier* in the NC(V).

Scope and application

29. The requirements addressed in this sub-framework apply to all general and further education and training offerings leading to a qualification, or part-qualification, offered in both the public and private educational institutions in South Africa identified in paragraph 5.

30. Further, the GENFETQA Act, 2001 (Act 58 of 2001), as amended in 2008, requires Umalusi to be the Quality Council for the General and Further Education and Training, in terms of learning which takes place in independent schools, private FET Colleges and Adult Education and Training Centres as identified in paragraph 2 of this document.

Roles and responsibilities

31. 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:

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31.1   The Minister of Higher Education and Training has overall responsibility for the NQF and for determining the qualifications structure for the higher education system.

31.2   The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is responsible for the development of policy and criteria, after consultation with the Quality Councils, for the development, registration and publication of qualifications and part-qualifications.

31.3   Umalusi is responsible for:

31.3.1   The development and management of the GFETQSF

31.3.2   Advising the Minister of Higher Education and Training on matters relating to the GFETQSF

31.3.3   Determining and implementing policy and criteria, taking into account the policy and criteria developed by SAQA, for the development and registration of qualifications in the sub-framework for General and Further Education and Training, including the development of the naming conventions for qualifications

31.3.4   Quality assurance in general and further education and training.

Standards for qualifications in General and Further Education and Training

32. In addition to the responsibilities outlined in paragraph 31 above, the Minister of Higher Education and Training has overall responsibility for setting minimum outcomes and standards for qualifications in Further Education and Training colleges, and qualifications designed for adults.

33. The Ministry of Basic Education is responsible for setting the minimum outcomes and standards for qualifications developed for schooling.

34. The South African Qualifications Authority is furthermore responsible for registering qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Sub-framework.

35. Umalusi is responsible for determining and implementing policy and criteria for the development and registration of qualifications on the sub-framework for General and Further Education and Training.

36. Further, it is responsible for ensuring that such qualifications meet the necessary criteria for registration on the NQF in terms of Section 27 (h) (i)

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– (iv) of the NQF Act, 2008 (Act 67 of 2008), and for requesting registration of such qualifications.

37. The standard of the qualification is determined through the design specifications of the qualification, its supporting curriculum, the quality of the assessment (site-based assessment and examinations), and evaluating and monitoring the manner in which the curriculum is implemented.

38. Standards are thus maintained and assured through processes developed by Umalusi to measure, evaluate, monitor and report against standards in the qualification, the curriculum / programme, the assessment, the implementation and delivery of the curriculum in the institution or assessment body.

39. In concert, all these activities are directed towards ensuring a quality assurance standard that can rightfully underpin the certification of the qualification. Certification is regarded as closing the quality assurance cycle that begins with the qualification, and is considered as its public commitment to the value of the qualification. It is a function that is not delegated.

40. 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, standardising 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 (i.e. the curriculum). Both the qualification itself and the curricula underpin the necessary quality assurance processes which ensure quality teaching and learning.

41. The maintenance and development of the qualifications and their curricula for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework is a significant means of improving quality in South African education.

42. Development of the qualifications sub-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.

43. 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.

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The registration of qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework

44. The NQF level forms the most generic specification of the qualification, and the level descriptors developed by SAQA have reference.

45. 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.

46. 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 specialised qualifications.

47. A qualification type may have one or more *designated variants*.

48. Certain designated variants may be further specified, producing a qualification specialisation called a *qualifier*. This specialisation is expressed in the *qualifier*. For example, the combination of subjects specified for the National Certificate (Vocational) Level 4: Public Administration, meets the basic requirements for the NC(V), but also includes specialised learning in the field of public administration (Organising field 3 – Business, Commerce and Management Studies). Qualification specialisations are expressed as a qualifier in a maximum of five words after the name of the qualification. The description of the qualifier is separated from the qualification type by a colon.

49. Developing and monitoring standards for quality assurance for the sub-framework requires that these qualifications are accompanied by acceptable prescribed curricula.

50. Qualification descriptions must specify at least the following information:

50.1   The full name of the qualification; the sub-framework to which the qualification belongs; its NQF Level and the minimum number of credits required for its award;

50.2   the legislative / policy framework to which the qualification belongs (viz. which Acts and regulations refer) ;

50.3   a rationale explaining the function of the qualification in the education and training system, and the kind of need it is intended to address;

50.4   a broadly-stated purpose, explaining in general terms the knowledge and skills the learner will have mastered on

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completion, that fits within the general purpose of the qualification type;

50.5   a set of exit-level outcomes related to the purpose described, and confirmed post-qualification articulation options;

50.6   the identity and size of the target group;

50.7   the qualification structure and design, including the rules of combination for the qualification;

50.8   the duration of the qualification;

50.9   certification requirements;

50.10   the critical cross-field outcomes;

50.11   assessment requirements;

50.12   the name of the accredited assessment body that will examine the qualification;

50.13   minimum accreditation requirements for institutions offering the qualification;

50.14   transitional arrangements, where such are required;

50.15   information indicating the preliminary identification of comparable international qualifications; and

50.16   information regarding the proposer of the qualification, the expertise used in the development of the qualification, and the process followed.

51. In addition, documentation submitted with the qualification must make reference to the curricula accompanying / to accompany the qualification. Such documentation provides framework guidance should the curricula still require development.

52. Qualifications, once registered on the sub-framework, are regarded as belonging to that framework permanently, although the qualification may be reviewed and revised, if the need arises. It may even no longer be offered.

53. The relevant Ministry of Education or private assessment body, in consultation with Umalusi, determines the inception date of qualification being offered from the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework.

54. SAQA is responsible for the registration of qualifications on the sub-frameworks of the NQF once the qualification is recommended for registration by the Council, provided that it conforms to the policy and criteria for the registration of qualifications. Once registered on the qualifications sub-framework, a qualification does not have an expiry date, and is retained on the sub-framework.

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Qualification types

55. The sub-framework of qualifications for General and Further Education is summarised in the table after paragraph 63. The sub-framework has two identifiable streams across four levels of the NQF.

56. The four qualification types are:

General and Further Education and Training

56.1 Level 1: General Certificate

56.2 Level 2: Elementary Certificate

56.3 Level 3: Intermediate Certificate

56.4 Level 4: National Certificate

57. These qualification types operate as a broad framework to regulate teaching, learning, and assessment at the various levels. Although there are just four types of qualifications, they are expected to be sufficient to accommodate a diverse range of needs.

58. Umalusi may review the sub-framework and introduce a new qualification type should a proven need arise as a result of developments in knowledge production or acknowledged international practice.

59. In the event of the need to formulate a new qualification type, Umalusi consults with the other Quality Councils (QCs) and South African Qualifications Authority (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

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

61. 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.

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62. 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.

63. Descriptors for the qualification types recognised by the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework are provided in Annexure 1.

Naming of qualifications

64. 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.

65. 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.

66. The third name given to the qualification is the *qualifier*. Qualifiers may be used to indicate a field of specialisation. A colon appears between the qualification type or its designator and the qualifier (or specialisation). In order to use a qualifier, at least 50% of the total credits for the qualification must be in the field of specialisation denoted by the qualifier. Umalusi determines the qualifier for a qualification type or variant.

67. In registering qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework, SAQA ensures that the naming of qualifications in the sub-framework is consistent with this policy.

The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework

NQF level	Qualification types and qualifications					Certificates for units of learning
Level 4	National Certificate (NC)					Subject certificates towards one or more qualification designated variants
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 3	Intermediate Certificate (IC)					Subject certificates towards one or more qualification designated variants
Designated variants	[NSC – Gr 11]	National Certificate (Vocational) 3	Intermediate Certificate of Education			
Level 2	Elementary Certificate (EC)					Subject certificates towards one or more qualification designated variants
Designated variants	[NSC – Gr 10]	National Certificate (Vocational) 2	Elementary Certificate of Education			
Level 1	General Certificate (GC)					Subject (LA) certificates for adult learners
Designated variants	General Certificate of Education (GCE)		General Education and Training Certificate: ABET	General Education and Training Certificate for Adults (GETCA)		

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Volumes of learning and achievement of credits

68. The sub-framework recognises 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.

69. The credit rating system rates ten notional study hours as equivalent to one credit. Credit ratings specified on the framework are expressed as minima.

70. The volume of learning required for a qualification is specified in terms of the total number of credits required. On the sub-framework, the number of credits associated with a subject, expressed in terms of a curriculum, may range between 20 and 30 credits, and qualifications range between 80 and 120 credits or more.

71. Each subject 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, and prescribes how the curriculum will be assessed. 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.

72. To obtain a qualification, 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

73. Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) is the process whereby a learner's achievements are recognised. Credits previously obtained may be recognised as meeting the requirements for a different qualification, and, subject to limits, the credits achieved towards one qualification may be recognised as meeting part of the requirements for another qualification. Decisions regarding the transfer of credit are made by the Quality Council(s) responsible for the qualifications in question. The Departments of Education will be advised regarding the permissibility of credit transfer: such decisions in respect of qualifications offered by the Departments of Education need to be regulated before being implemented.

74. Umalusi certification processes recognise partial achievement of qualifications, through the issue of subject statements and under the prerequisite conditions, allowing the combination of partial achievements to result in a full qualification.

75. 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.

Certification

76. The award of a qualification marks the achievement of the necessary learning stipulated in the qualification and its associated curriculum.

77. Certification is thus the formal recognition of a learner having successfully completed a qualification or part-qualification. 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.

78. 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. A subject statement, as a record of learning, may be used as the vehicle for credit accumulation and transfer.

79. Umalusi may issue several subject statements as records of learner achievement. A combination of the subject statements may be requested through an accredited private assessment body or the state should the requirements for the qualification now be fulfilled.

80. Umalusi is obligated to ensure that the certificates it issues are credible both nationally and internationally.

81. In order to issue certificates, Umalusi maintains the capacity to:

　　81.1　develop and maintain policies and directives for certification;

　　81.2　maintain acceptable standards for awarding certificates; and

　　81.3　maintain a certification system and infrastructure including

　　　　　appropriate security arrangements.

82. Umalusi is also responsible for verifying the authenticity of the certificates on the sub-framework, and for issuing replacement certificates under specified conditions as determined by policy.

83. 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

84. All qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework specify minimum admission requirements where applicable.

Admission to qualifications in Higher Education and on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework

85. 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 on behalf of other Quality Councils.

86. The National Senior Certificate and the National Certificate (Vocational) Level 4, whose minimum outcomes and standards are determined by the Ministers of Education in national policy, constitute the minimum requirement for admission to higher education.

87. 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 applicants in order to be considered for entry into higher education qualifications.

88. 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

89. The General and Further Education and Training Sub-framework is designed, where possible, to facilitate vertical, horizontal and diagonal progression within and across the National Qualifications Framework and within the sub-framework in particular. The minimum requirements for vertical progression between qualifications are stipulated. Progression is

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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.

IMPLEMENTATION
Implementation date

90. Certain qualifications may need to be phased out over time, so there will be a transition period to full compliance. In respect of qualifications offered in the public system, the relevant Minister of Education, advised by Umalusi, shall determine the date by notice in the Government Gazette. In respect of other qualifications, implementation decisions will be communicated through notifications placed on the Umalusi and SAQA websites.

New qualifications and curricula

91. 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 Sub-framework must conform to the requirements of this policy.

92. 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.

93. 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 possible proposers of a new qualification, or delegate the qualification development to the relevant proposers, subject to the provisions of the NQF Act.

94. 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.

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95. Umalusi, the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training, is required to approve a qualification with its associated documentation. Approval of a qualification is dependent on its providing an educational opportunity distinct from those provided by existing qualifications on the sub-framework: such a distinction should be evident from the purpose, structure and design of the qualification and the curricula associated with the qualification. On approval, the qualification is submitted as advice and for regulation by the Minister and, on approval by the Minister, to SAQA for registration on the NQF.

96. Umalusi quality assures and certificates learner achievement only for qualifications and part-qualifications which are registered on the Framework.

97. 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

98. 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.

Management Information System

99. 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.

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Quality assurance

100.   This General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework formally demarcates Umalusi's quality assurance responsibilities, and to that end, Umalusi develops policy that express the standards used for quality assuring the qualifications on the sub-framework, their provision and assessment.

101.   In terms of both the GENFETQA and NQF Acts, Umalusi is responsible for quality assurance of assessment at exit points within the sub-framework.

102.   The assessed curriculum associated with each qualification is subject to a coherent set of quality assurance practices and processes that all contribute to a single end: Umalusi must be able to assure that the qualification has been credibly assessed, and achieved, at an identifiable standard through external examinations and internal assessments.

103.   External examinations set sound standards for educational attainment that are specified in very precise terms for a large system; and through implementing processes and procedures to manage the conduct and administration of examinations.

104.   The necessary national assessments are offered by the state and by private assessment bodies accredited to do so by Umalusi.

105.   Umalusi only approves the release of results if the Council has satisfied itself that the assessment body concerned has complied with all the quality assurance requirements prescribed by the Council for the conduct of assessment.

Articulation with other sub-frameworks

106.   Articulation is the process which formally creates recognisable (and recognised) connections between qualifications and part qualifications, whether within a sub-framework or across sub-frameworks. It is a practice which creates formal links between qualifications and/or part-qualifications. These links may allow for access to another qualification; the exemption of some part of the pre-requisites usually required for a qualification; or the acceptance of resulted learning from one qualification for the purposes of another qualification.

107.   For large scale, national qualifications such as those on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework, the regulation of articulation options between qualifications is possible, desirable and necessary. The regulation of articulation between a national qualification and others (such as a bachelor's degree, diploma or higher certificate on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework

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(HEQSF), for example) is possible because issues of qualification purpose, national curriculum, uniform quality assurance and assessment are considered to be sufficiently understood and adequately managed.

108. The processes which can be used to forge connections between qualifications included the identification of access possibilities within a qualification policy; the regulation of formal relationships between qualifications; research which highlights the extent and nature of the overlap which can be used for articulation purposes; the active re-working of curricula and assessment across qualifications in order to create a functional and recognised bridge between one qualification and another.

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

Abbreviations
For example: GCE; GETC: ABET (Level 4); GETCA

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 provides 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, the acquisition of the skills that underpin learning, 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 the basic skills that underpin further learning and informed citizenship. Additional subjects enrich the curriculum. The acquisition of vocational knowledge and 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 a foundation of learning and is equipped to benefit from further education and training.

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

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Elementary Certificate (EC)

Type specifications

NQF Level 2
Exit level qualification (post-school)
Minimum total credits: 120 (schooling and colleges)

Abbreviations

For example: ECE; ECET
Also for, example, NC(V) (Level 2): Mechatronics (Note: This NQF Level 2 qualification will retain its name for continuity purposes even after the sub-framework is regulated)

Purpose and characteristics

The EC as a qualification type provides general educational (and vocational) learning. Its purpose is to provide learners with certain discipline-related knowledge and applied theory and 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 the cognitive capacities associated with the study of language and mathematics/numerical literacy.

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 which would allow for the possibility of employment at an elementary level of a particular occupation or trade.

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 anticipates the need for articulation with artisan- and other occupational training in order to accommodate learners who require additional formal 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.

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The minimum entry requirements for adults into the EC would be satisfactory achievement in the GETC: ABET and the GETCA.

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.

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Intermediate Certificate (IC)

Type specifications

NQF Level 3
Qualification (college learners/adults)
Minimum total credits: 120

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 (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 the cognitive capacities associated with the study of language and mathematics/numerical literacy.

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.

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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 such as the NASCA, 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.

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National Certificate (NC)

Type specifications

NQF Level 4
Exit level qualification (schools; colleges)
Minimum total credits: 120

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 entry into an (accelerated) apprenticeship for 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.

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The Senior Certificate will remain on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework.

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.

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.

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

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In addition, the NC may provide access into certain other qualifications on the NQF.

Accumulated credits may also be presented for consideration of admission into a related qualification.
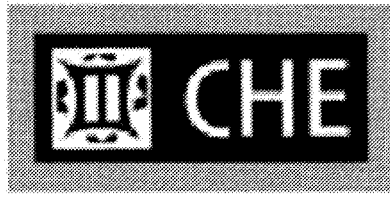
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The Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework

As approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training (Notice 1040 of 2012; Government Gazette No. 36003 of 14 December 2012) in terms of the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act 67 0f 2008) and as contemplated in the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act 101 of 1997).

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THE REVISED HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK IN CONTEXT

A single qualifications framework for a diverse system

1. The Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF), which was promulgated in October 2007 (Government Gazette No. 30353 of 5 October 2007), provided for the establishment a single qualifications framework for higher education to facilitate the development of 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.

2. 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 compliant with the HEQF – 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:

2.1 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.

2.2 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 The appropriateness of a number of postgraduate qualifications in different professional fields and their international comparability such as the MMed.

2.5 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.

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3. 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 67 of 2008), the CHE initiated a review of the HEQF in October 2010 Communiqué 1, 12 October 2010). In terms of section 27 of the NQF Act, the CHE's expanded mandate includes, amongst others:

3.1 The development and management of its sub-framework, i.e. the then Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) and advising the Minister of Higher Education and Training on matters relating to the HEQF.

3.2 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.

3.3 Ensuring the development of qualifications as are required for the higher education system.

4. The purpose of the review, as Communiqué 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 the emerging skills and knowledge needs, and to enhance the coherence of the higher education system.

5. 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 HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK (HEQSF)

6.1 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.

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6.2 Introduces two additional qualification types to the existing nine, and includes additional variants of particular qualification types.

6.3 Clarifies the interpretation of some existing qualification types, namely, the Bachelor's degree, as having two potential orientations – professional and general academic.

6.4 Provides for greater flexibility and options with respect to professionally-oriented qualifications.

6.5 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.

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

7. The revised HEQSF, 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.

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

9. The HEQSF 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.

10. The HEQSF 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 HEQSF

11. In the light of the limited changes proposed, the structure of the revised HEQSF 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

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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

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

13. A *qualification* is the formal recognition and certification of learning achievement awarded by an accredited institution. The HEQSF 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 admission 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 HEQSF. The HEQSF is concerned with the integrity of whole qualifications, understood to comprise at least 120 credits, and does not specify parameters for part-qualifications i.e. the modules or courses that make up an accredited qualification, as these are determined according to the logic of specific curricula and internal institutional academic structures. The purpose of the HEQSF is to define the relationships between qualification types; the movement of individuals within and between non-completed qualifications is guided by Recognition of Prior Learning processes (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer processes (CAT).

14. 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

15. 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:

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15.1   The Minister of Higher Education and Training has overall responsibility for the NQF and for determining the qualifications structure for the higher education system.

15.2   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.

15.3   The CHE is responsible for the development and management of the HEQSF and for advising the Minister of Higher Education and Training on matters relating to the HEQSF; 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.

15.4   Professional bodies have a role, derived from legislation or undertaken in terms of 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.

Qualification standards in higher education

16. The development of standards is an important element in contributing to the successful implementation of the HEQSF, 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.

17. The HEQSF 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 HEQSF is on qualification type descriptors - the second layer of a nested approach.

18. 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.

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19. 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 HEQSF. 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 can be found in *Level Descriptors for the South African Qualifications Framework* (SAQA, 2011).

20. The level descriptors provide generic standards for qualifications on the HEQSF 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 HEQSF 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.

21. At the second layer, the HEQSF 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.

22. The qualification types within the HEQSF 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.

23. The next layer of qualification specialisation nested within the qualification type is the *designator*. For example, a Bachelor *of Science* degree is a

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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.

24. 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

25. The HEQSF 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.

26. 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, this measure of volume may have been expressed in terms of study time, for example the number of academic years of study required.

27. The HEQSF, 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.

28. 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.

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29. 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.

30. 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.

31. 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

32. 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. Individual mobility between programmes and institutions is thus determined by curriculum requirements and is flexible.

33. 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. The purpose of this provision is to avoid the awarding of multiple qualifications for the same work undertaken and to ensure that qualifications with different purposes are not embedded within each other. As exceptions, 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.

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Work integrated Learning

34. 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 HEQSF. In the HEQSF, WIL may take various forms including simulated learning, work-directed theoretical learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and workplace-based 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 NQF 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.

35. Where the entire WIL component or any part of it takes the form of workplace-based learning, it is the responsibility of institutions that offer programmes requiring credits for such learning to place students into appropriate workplaces. Such workplace-based learning must be appropriately structured, properly supervised and assessed.

THE FRAMEWORK

Characteristics

36. The HEQSF is designed to:

36.1 Be sufficiently flexible to accommodate different types of higher education institutions and enable institutions to pursue their own curriculum goals with creativity and innovation;

36.2 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;

36.3 Enhance the development of a vibrant, high quality research system;

36.4 Be compatible with international qualifications frameworks in order to ensure international recognition and comparability of standards;

36.5 Be suitably flexible to accommodate the development of new qualification types and specialisations as the need arises;

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36.6   Be simple, clear, easy to understand and user-friendly for the higher education system and its clients;

36.7   Facilitate qualification articulation across the higher education system and assist learners to identify potential progression routes, particularly in the context of lifelong learning; and

36.8   Articulate with the rest of the NQF.

Scope and application

37. The HEQSF applies to all higher education institutions, both public and private, and to all qualifications that purport to be higher education qualifications.

38. The HEQSF regulates and specifies all higher education qualification types, including whole 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

39. 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.

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

41. 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

42. The framework has eleven qualification types mapped onto the six levels of the NQF occupied by higher education qualifications. Some levels have

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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

43. 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

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

45. 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

46. The HEQSF accommodates a number of qualifications which, owing to their national and international currency or specific vocational or

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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

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

48. 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).

49. 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.

50. 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)*. 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)).

51. 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)*).

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52. 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

53. 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

54. 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.

55. 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

56. 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.

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Language of qualification certificates and academic transcripts

57. 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.

58. 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.

59. 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

60. The HEQSF is intended to facilitate articulation between further education, including workplace-based education and training, 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.

61. 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.

62. 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.

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Progression within the framework

63. 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.

64. 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.

65. 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 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.

Recognition of Prior Learning

66. 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.

67. 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.

68. 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

69. The implementation date for the revised HEQSF policy will be the date on which it is gazetted by the CHE as a policy document in the Government Gazette. However, as higher education institutions will need time to phase out their existing qualifications in terms of this policy, 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 HEQSF will need to cease being offered to new students by notice in the Government Gazette.

Programmes and qualifications

New programmes and qualifications

70. 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.

71. 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.

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

Existing programmes and qualifications

73. 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.

74. Existing qualifications and programmes that are currently offered by higher education institutions must conform over time with the requirements of this policy or must de-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 HEQSF Implementation Plan in order to ensure continued accreditation.

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Admission to higher education

New programmes

75. 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

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

76.1   The minimum admission requirements for the *Higher Certificate* will be used for admission to the *National Certificate* as defined in NATED Report 150.

76.2   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.

76.3   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

77. 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.

Articulation with other sub-frameworks

78. Articulation with qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) is governed by the legislation on admissions (Gazettes 32131 and 32743). Qualifications obtained on the Trades and Occupations Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) should be specified in the admission requirements of particular qualifications. This will require engagement between the QCTO and higher education institutions during the qualifications development process to reach agreement on the status of QCTO qualifications for admission purposes.

Higher Education Management Information System

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Public Higher Education Institutions

79. 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).

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

81. 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.

82. 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

83. 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).

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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
HCert (Tourism), HCert (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. It 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.

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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
AdvCert (Real Estate), AdvCert (Real Estate) (Property Marketing)

Purpose and characteristics
This qualification is primarily vocational or industry-oriented. It 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*

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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.

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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
AdvDip (Taxation), AdvDip (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

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Bachelor's degree. A qualification may not be awarded for early exit from an Advanced Diploma.

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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

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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 progamme. The professional Bachelor's Degree prepares students for professional training, post-graduate 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.

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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 Linquistics.

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.

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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
PGDip (Organisational & Management Systems), PGDip (Gender Studies), PGDip (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.

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Master's Degree

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

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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 relevant 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.

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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 total credits, which must be at NQF level 9, consisting of either a single research or technical project or a series of smaller projects demonstrating innovation or professional expertise.

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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

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.

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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 the 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 an original thesis or another form or 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.

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.
- **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 HEQSF 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 HEQSF 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 curriculated 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.

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