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## GOVERNMENT NOTICE

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### SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

No. 947

28 November 2014



# National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa

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## Foreword

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act (Act 67 of 2008) mandates the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to develop policy and criteria, after consultation with the Quality Councils (QCs), for assessment. The attached Policy and Criteria have been developed by SAQA after consultation with all the Quality Councils and in collaboration with an Assessment Reference Group (please see a list of Reference Group members at the end of the document), and it took into account comments made by a wide range of stakeholders obtained in the extended period during which the document was available in gazette form for public comment.

There are a number of national assessment policies in existence<sup>1</sup>. The present Policy and Criteria speak to all existing national assessment policies, and all future assessment policies relating to NQF qualifications and part-qualifications, and professional designations in South Africa. The purpose of the National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa (hereafter referred to as the National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment or the Policy) is to set minimum criteria and provide guidance for effective, valid, reliable and consistent, fair and transparent, and appropriate assessment in the context of the NQF. The specific context of each QC and its Sub-Framework must be considered in the interpretation of this Policy.

SAQA initially developed policy, criteria and guidelines for assessment in 2001 and 2005. These documents have been used widely but a need arose for them to be updated for alignment with the NQF Act 67 of 2008 that replaced the SAQA Act 58 of 1995. The Policy achieves the revision needed and takes into account the roles of the Department of Higher Education and Training, the Department of Basic Education, SAQA, the QCs, recognised professional bodies, providers at all levels in the system, and learners.

It is the intention of this Policy to contribute to the quality of learning and assessment for all learners and educators. The Policy has been developed in line with the principles of lifelong learning which involve development of the whole learner, and an approach in which assessment is seen as a dynamic part of learning. Assessment is sought which enables learning and which can measure changes in learning.


We trust that through this Policy it will be possible for the key NQF organisations and stakeholders in the system to work collectively and demonstrably better the lives of learners of all ages and in all fields of learning.

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<sup>1</sup> National assessment policies include all assessment-related policies and related documents issued by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), Umalusi, and others.

SAQA looks forward to working with the QCs and a broad range of stakeholders to implement this Policy.

This National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa comes into effect on the date of its publication in the Government Gazette.



Joe Samuels,  
Chief Executive Officer

## Glossary of Terms

The following list of terms is elaborated in an attempt to clarify concepts used in this document, towards wide implementation of the Policy.

“Accountability” means that all relevant role-players must be able to provide evidence of the development and moderation of assessment tasks and processes, and that these tasks and processes are aligned with National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment as well as sectoral policies derived from the National Policy.

“Assessment body” means a department of education or an entity accredited/ delegated by a Quality Council to conduct external summative assessment and moderate site-based assessment for specified qualifications, part-qualifications, professional designations, or prior learning.

“Assessment criteria” means the standards used to guide learning and assess learner achievement and/ or evaluate and certify competence.

“Assessment” means the process used to identify, gather and interpret information and evidence against the required competencies in a qualification, part-qualification, or professional designation in order to make a judgement about a learner’s achievement. Assessment can be formal, non-formal or informal; assessment can be of learning already done, or towards learning to inform and shape teaching and learning still to be done.

“Assessor” means a person able to conduct high-quality internal and external assessment for specific qualifications, part-qualifications, or professional designations. Appropriately qualified lecturers, teachers, educators, trainers, examiners, moderators, chief markers, markers, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) specialists, and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) officials are all examples of assessors.

“Bias” means assessment practices that hinder or advantage particular learners or groups of learners. An absence of bias is sought, where all learners and educators are treated with equal respect and consideration regardless of social, economic, cultural, faith-based, ethnic, gender or other differences, and where disabled learners and educators are given appropriate support.

“Blended learning” means learning and assessment based on a variety of modes, types, sites, outputs, contexts, platforms and other aspects including contact and technology-mediated learning.

“Credibility” means a respected process or product which results from a fair, valid, and reliable validation process designed to enhance the quality of a qualification, part-qualification, or professional designation.

“Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) system” means an arrangement whereby the diverse features of both credit accumulation and credit transfer are combined to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace.

“Credit accumulation” means the totalling of credits required to complete a qualification or part-qualification.

“Credit transfer” means the vertical, horizontal or diagonal relocation of credits towards a qualification or part-qualification on the same or different level, usually between different programmes, departments or institutions.

“Credits” means the amount of learning contained in a qualification or part-qualification whereby one credit is equal to ten (10) notional learning hours.

“Curriculum” for the purposes of this Policy means requirements for learner achievement of a qualification or part-qualification in terms of knowledge, skills, and where relevant, work experience.

“Diagnostic assessment” means assessment conducted before teaching or training starts, for the purposes of identifying learners’ strengths and weaknesses, in order to use the associated information for the purposes of creating suitable learning environments.

“Dynamic assessment” means assessment practices in which mediation, learning, testing, frequent feedback to learners and systematic monitoring of changes in learning are explicit parts of the learning context. The goal of dynamic assessment is to see whether, by how much and in what ways those being assessed change as a result of being presented with opportunities to learn.

“Educator” is an inclusive term referring to teachers, lecturers, facilitators, assessors, moderators, and others teaching, educating, training, facilitating, assessing, or enabling learning in learning contexts across the board.

“e-learning” means a mode of teaching and learning that makes use of technology-mediated features.

“Evaluation of learning” means a process involving gathering evidence and making informed judgements about a learning programme, or module or component of a learning programme; or its curriculum, learning materials or assessment; or its impact on learners or society. Evaluation involves making a judgement about the worth, merit or impact of learning or a programme of learning.

“Examiner” means a qualified and competent person appointed to develop, administer, and oversee a formal assessment, including a person appointed to develop assessment instruments (such as exam papers, marking guidelines, etcetera). An examiner may be an educator.

“External assessment” means assessment developed by a qualified and competent person or body not directly involved in the development and/or delivery of the learning being assessed.

“Fairness” in assessment means that learners are assessed on what they know and have been taught; where questions are set in relation to the cognitive and affective curriculum covered in the teaching and learning; in the case of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), there has been preparation for the competent mediation of the required knowledge and other competencies; and that there is no bias towards any learners on the basis of social class, ethnicity, gender, or disability.

“Feedback” means specific reporting from the teacher to the learner or between learners, on how they have performed in an assessment activity, regardless of the level of formality of the assessment activity. Feedback specifies what was done well, and why, and provides clear guidance regarding what is missing or still needs development in learners’ texts, performances or demonstrations, in order to enhance learning.

“Formal assessment” means assessment for which assessment processes, tools, and results are recorded towards achievement of a qualification, part-qualification or professional designation.

“Formal learning” means learning that occurs in an organised and structured education and training environment and that is explicitly designated as such. Formal learning leads to the awarding of a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF.

“Formative assessment” means a range of formal, non-formal, and informal ongoing assessment procedures used to focus teaching and learning activities to improve learner attainment.

“Guidance” for the purposes of this Policy means information provided to steer sectoral, organisational and individual assessment policy and practice, towards alignment of these policies and practices with the National Policy.

“Informal assessment” for the purposes of this Policy means any judgements made or feedback given in the course of teaching and learning activities. Informal assessments may be in written form but are not usually recorded.

“Informal learning” means learning that results from daily activities related to paid or unpaid work, family or community life, or leisure, including incidental learning.

“Integrated assessment” means assessment which involves all the differing types of assessment tasks required for a particular qualification, part-qualification, or professional designation, such as written assessment of theory and practical demonstration of competence.

“Integrity” for the purposes of this Policy means honesty and transparency in every part of the assessment process, including that assessment questions must be based on work actually covered; learners must at all times be honest about what they offer to be assessed; markers must strive to understand what is offered by learners for assessment, and to grade it fairly at all times; and moderators must moderate a fair sample of examples against a fair range of cases.

“Internal assessment” means any assessment conducted internally by a provider of learning. It is assessment conducted by a person, institution or body directly involved in the development and/or delivery of the learning being assessed<sup>2</sup>.

“Learner” is an inclusive term referring to anyone learning, including pupils, students, apprentices, interns, learners in learnerships, people doing training, and people learning non-formally and informally as well as people enrolled for particular qualifications or part-qualifications, and people learning in contact, distance, and self-study contexts at all levels in the system.

“Learning outcomes” mean the contextually demonstrated end-products of specific learning processes, which include knowledge, skills and values.

“Learning pathway” means sequencing of qualifications that allows learners to move vertically, diagonally, and in some cases horizontally, through NQF levels giving learners recognition for full or partially completed qualifications or part-qualifications. Learning pathways can also lead to professional designations, when learning pathways include periods of structured work experience over and above qualifications.

“Learning programme” means a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification.

“Lifelong learning” means learning that takes place in all contexts in life from a life-wide, life-deep and lifelong perspective. It includes learning behaviours and obtaining knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values and competencies for personal growth, social and economic well-being, democratic citizenship, cultural identity and employability.

“Mixed-mode or multi-modal learning” means learning that makes use of different learning sites and different forms of delivery including but not limited to face-to-face, distance and e-learning, and full-time, part-time, and block-release study.

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<sup>2</sup> Assessment can be internal within public and private Higher Education Institutions; public and private Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges and other institutions offering education and/or training at FET level; public and private schools, and Community Education and Training Colleges (CETCS) of all kinds.



“Moderation” in assessment means internal and external verification that an assessment system is credible and that assessors and learners behave in an ethical way; and that assessments are fair, valid, reliable and practicable.

“National assessment policy” for the purposes of this Policy means all policies that are addressed to all organisations of a particular type in South Africa.

“National Learners’ Records Database (NLRD)” means the electronic management information system of the NQF under the authority of SAQA, which contains records of qualifications, part-qualifications, learner achievements, recognised professional bodies, professional designations, and all related information such as registrations and accreditations.

“National Qualifications Framework (NQF)” is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications.

“Non-formal learning” means planned educational interventions that are not intended to lead to the awarding of qualifications or part-qualifications.

“Notional hours of learning” comprise the total amount of time it would take the average learner to meet the outcomes defined in a learning experience and include *inter alia*, face to face contact time, time spent in structured learning in the workplace, time for completing assignments and research, and time spent in assessment processes.

“NQF Act” means the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act No. 67 of 2008.

“Occupational qualification” means a qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession, resulting in learning in and for the workplace.

“Outcomes” means the contextually demonstrated end-products of specific learning processes which include knowledge, skills and values. Outcomes could be generic in that they could apply across many fields of learning (generic outcomes include aspects such as “ability to problem solve” or “understanding the world as a set of inter-related systems”).

“Part-qualification” means an assessed unit of learning that is registered as part of a qualification.

“Portfolio development” means an accumulation of the collection of multiple forms of evidence that is seen to represent a candidate’s learning. This collection is often referred to as a Portfolio of Evidence.

“Professional Body” means any body of expert practitioners in an occupational field, and includes an occupational body.

“Professional designation” means a title or status conferred by a professional body in recognition of a person’s expertise and/ or right to practise in an occupational field.

“Progression” is the means by which individuals are permitted to move through NQF levels by accumulating appropriate combinations of credit.

“Provider” means a body that offers any education programme or trade and occupational learning programme that leads to a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF.

“Qualification” means a registered national qualification.

“Quality Council” means one of the three councils tasked with developing and managing the Sub-Frameworks of the NQF in order to ensure that agreed quality standards are met, namely the Council on Higher Education (CHE) for the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF); Umalusi for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF); and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) for the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF).

“Quality” means meeting the requirements of nationally agreed outcomes and performance/ assessment criteria, thus facilitating both provision and monitoring.

“Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)” means the principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated and assessed for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development.

“Recognition of Professional Bodies” means the status assigned by SAQA to a statutory or non-statutory professional body for the purposes of the NQF Act 67 of 2008 when it fulfils set criteria, including the registration of its professional designations on the NQF.

“Registered assessment centre” or “registered examinations centre” means a site recognised as having the capacity in terms of human and physical resources and systems to conduct assessments after having gone through a registration process undertaken by a recognised assessment body.

“Registered professional designation” means a professional designation linked to the relevant professional body and underlying qualification, and approved by SAQA for inclusion on the NQF.

“Registration of a qualification or part-qualification” means formal inclusion of a qualification or part-qualification on the NQF, with an identification of the relevant Sub-Framework, when a qualification or part-qualification meets the set criteria as recommended by the Quality Council concerned.

“Reliability” is the overall consistency of a measure. A measure is said to have high reliability if it produces similar results under consistent conditions. In assessment, reliability refers to the extent to which, in similar contexts, the same assessment-related judgements can be made.

“Replicability” means the extent to which assessment can be repeated and lead to comparable results in comparable settings.

“Site-based assessment” means assessment tasks developed and administered on-site by educators at the place at which tuition is offered.

“Statistical moderation” is a process of ensuring that the same assessment standards are applied to all learners doing particular studies. It includes the processes used to reduce sources of measurement error in assessment.

“Sub-Framework” means one of three qualifications Sub-Frameworks which make up the NQF as a single integrated system: the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF); the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF); and the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF).

“Summative assessment of learning” means assessment conducted at the end of sections of learning or at the end of a whole learning programme, to evaluate learning achievements related to a particular qualification, part-qualification, or professional designation.

“Transparency” in assessment means the extent to which the assessment criteria and processes are known, visible to, and understood by learners and the various role-players in the assessment process.

“Validation” in assessment means any assessment-related activity or practice which relates to the credibility of the assessment by confirming that the assessment is assessing what it is meant to assess.

“Validity” means the extent to which the assessment measures what it has been developed to measure. Validity is about the appropriateness, usefulness and meaningfulness of assessment procedures, methods, instruments, and materials. Assessment is valid when assessment tasks actually test the knowledge and skills required for defined competencies and learning outcomes.

## **National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa**

### **Context**

1. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in South Africa is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications and part-qualifications. The South African NQF is a single integrated system comprising three co-ordinated qualifications Sub-Frameworks<sup>3</sup>.
2. The objectives of the NQF are to:
  - a) Create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;
  - b) Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths;
  - c) Enhance the quality of education and training; and
  - 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.

3. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Quality Councils (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 (Act 67 of 2008), and are internationally comparable; and
  - c) Ensuring that South African qualifications are of an acceptable quality.
4. Assessment is integral to curriculum; curriculum together with assessment is integral to the quality of qualifications and the extent to which qualifications articulate with each other. The NQF Act 67 of 2008 mandates the SAQA to develop, after consultation with

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<sup>3</sup> The three co-ordinated Sub-Frameworks of the South African NQF are the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF), the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), and the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF).

the QCs, national policy for Assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT).

5. The National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications, Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa (hereafter referred to as National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment) replaces and builds on the strengths of the policy document *Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications* developed in 2001; and *Guidelines for Integrated Assessment* developed in 2005 by SAQA within the context of the SAQA Act 58 of 1995. It also builds on new insights gained from ongoing research and practice. It establishes the core principles for - and understandings of - assessment as part of the further development and implementation of the NQF in South Africa in accordance with NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008.
6. This Policy has been developed in a context in which there are already multiple assessment policies catering at national level for sub-sectors of the education and training system, where these policies vary in scope, clarity, comprehensiveness, fairness, and in the amount of guidance they provide.
7. The following policies are aligned to and need to be read in conjunction with the National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment:
  - a) National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level Descriptors developed by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA, 2012);
  - b) National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) developed by SAQA (2013);
  - c) National Policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) developed by SAQA (2014);
  - d) Assessment policies developed by the Department of Higher Education and Training; the Department of Basic Education; the Council on Higher Education; the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations; and Umalusi.
8. The national RPL, CAT and Assessment policies have been developed in an integrated manner to draw on a common conceptual basis and strengthen the inter-relationships between Assessment, RPL and CAT.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

9. The purpose of the National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment is to set minimum standards and provide guidance for effective, valid, reliable, fair and transparent, and appropriate assessment that has integrity and is aligned with the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008. The over-arching goal of Lifelong Learning is for holistic personal development as well as for successful participation in society and in the economy. An approach which focuses on assessment for learning, competencies gained by learners, and clear learning outcomes are key parts of this context.

10. The National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment seeks to:
- a) be enabling, to provide sufficient information, guidance and clarity that makes possible its implementation in the spirit intended; and
  - b) facilitate differing sectoral approaches in a way that is not restricting of innovation but that is aligned with NQF principles and international best practice.
11. The objectives of the National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment are to:
- a) stipulate assessment policy requirements for the three Sub-Frameworks of the NQF, ensuring that the specific context of each QC and its Sub-Framework is considered in the interpretation of the policy and criteria;
  - b) develop shared understanding of best practice principles to which assessment relating to NQF qualifications and part-qualifications, and all registered professional designations adhere;
  - c) provide the dimensions of a holistic approach to assessment for learning, and all key aspects of assessment to make visible the requirements;
  - d) clarify the assessment-related roles and functions of assessment bodies, the SAQA, the QCs, assessment bodies and assessment quality partners, education and training providers, recognised professional bodies, and all role-players involved in assessment, with respect to NQF qualifications and part-qualifications, and all registered professional designations; and
  - e) ensure alignment regarding the systemic monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance of assessment while taking the specific context of each QC and its Sub-Framework into account.

### **Scope and Application**

12. The National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment provides for assessment relating to all NQF qualifications and part-qualifications, and all registered professional designations.
13. The National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment applies to:
- a) assessment bodies and their providers; the three QCs and Sub-Frameworks of the NQF with their providers; statutory and non-statutory recognised professional bodies with their registered professional designations; employers, and all role-players involved in assessment across the board including learners;
  - b) all qualifications and part-qualifications registered on the South African NQF; and
  - c) all teaching and learning that leads to registered professional designations.
14. The specific context of each QC and its Sub-Framework must be considered in the interpretation of this Policy.

### Core Assumptions and Principles of Assessment

15. The form taken by any given assessment is related to its purpose and to the qualification of which it is part: assessment is also integral to the curriculum of which it is part.
16. The assumptions underlying any assessment, how assessment is going to be used as part of learning, and assessment criteria are established and documented before learning starts.
17. Adherence to the following assessment principles is key:
  - a) **validity**, where assessment measures what it sets out to measure; where procedures, methods, instruments and materials are appropriate, useful and meaningful; and where there is validation – activities to ensure validity. There must be a match between content to be assessed, learning outcomes, and purpose of assessment, where the assessment relates to its stated purpose, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria (content and construct validity);
  - b) **reliability**, where measures produce similar results under consistent conditions; where to a great extent, similar assessment-related judgements are made across similar contexts in consistent ways;
  - c) **integrity**, where there is honesty in every part of the assessment process;
  - d) **transparency**, where learners and educators have clear understanding of the relevant processes;
  - e) **accountability**, where all role-players in assessment processes acknowledge and account for their areas of responsibility;
  - f) **fairness**, where learners are assessed on what they know and have been taught, and the purpose of assessment is to enhance learning;
  - g) **absence of bias**, where assessment practices do not in any way advantage or disadvantage particular learners or groups of learners;
  - h) **sensitivity to language**, where care is taken to ensure that language does not become a barrier to learning;
  - i) **credibility in the form of supportive administration procedures**, where physical and other conditions under which assessment is conducted do not unfairly prejudice assessment activities and outcomes; and
  - j) **assessment range**, where the full range of relevant competencies needed for a qualification, part-qualification or professional designation is assessed.

## Content of Assessment

18. The content of assessment is informed by its purpose, as a systematic method of gathering information regarding the desired knowledge, skills, and values. When deciding the content of assessment, the following aspects need to be taken into account:

- a) in **deciding the scope** of any assessment, the following aspects *have been covered in the curriculum*: relevant knowledge, skills and values; relevant levels of cognitive challenge and complexity – and the curriculum has been benchmarked in appropriate ways;
- b) distinctions are made between **quantity (volume of learning) and quality (type of learning)** achieved – and the goal of assessment is to focus on both how much learning has taken place, and what kind of learning has occurred – and the extent to which all of this learning is successful;
- c) assessment requires a **range of competencies** such as the following, all of which are considered over time:
  - (i) the reproduction of knowledge, skills and values;
  - (ii) application of knowledge, skill and values in known settings;
  - (iii) application of knowledge, skills and values in new contexts; and
  - (iv) new ways of doing based on application and development of knowledge and skills, and evidence of deep analysis, synthesis and understanding that enables making new connections;
- d) distinctions are made between **capabilities that learners actually demonstrate in relation to curriculum, and the potential that learners have, to develop latent (hidden) capabilities in relation to curriculum** – should suitable opportunities exist. Where possible and appropriate, efforts are made to assess learners' latent abilities;
- e) assessment takes into account learners' **prior learning and experience**; and
- f) assessment is used to **facilitate learning**. This kind of assessment – assessment with instruction, engagement and feedback – is adopted wherever feasible and appropriate.

## Criteria and Guidelines for Implementation

### General Implementation Criteria

19. Implementation of the National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment includes:

- a) adopting and facilitating the principles, content, and implementation criteria in this Policy document;



- b) where articulation has been agreed within and between Sub-Frameworks, and where agreement is being sought towards articulation, actively seeking to use assessment to enable articulation; and
- c) an orientation to assessing demonstrated learning outcomes and where appropriate, learners' potential; and wherever appropriate, assessment with learner engagement and feedback, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT).

### **Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment Relating to Formal, Non-formal and Informal Learning, and the Implementation of CAT and RPL**

- 20. As part of a fair and accountable system for teaching and learning, assessment in respect of formal, informal and non-formal learning is transparent and includes CAT and RPL where feasible.
- 21. Formal learning is learning that occurs in an organised and structured education or training environment and is described as such. What is to be assessed and assessment criteria in relation to this formal learning is made clear to learners in applicable ways - through discussion, visual [seen] ways, aural [heard] ways, or enacted demonstration, or other appropriate means.
- 22. In order to be registered on the NQF, the design of qualifications and part-qualifications includes consideration of CAT possibilities. Assessment for CAT usually takes place once comparability has been established at curriculum level. Assessment that is part of CAT takes the following into account:

#### **a) Credit accumulation**

Each qualification and part-qualification registered on the NQF is based on learning outcomes and is assigned a credit value. Each credit represents 10 notional hours of learning and is allocated at a specific level of the NQF. Credits can be accumulated over time and counted towards a qualification or part-qualification if the learning is current.

#### **b) Credit transfer**

Credits can be relocated upwards, downwards, or sideways in the NQF, towards another qualification or part-qualification registered on the same or different Sub-Framework of the NQF. Steps are taken to support individuals starting on new or more advanced courses by identifying gaps in knowledge and/or skills, and taking steps to address these gaps.

**c) Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)**

The diverse features of credit accumulation and credit transfer are combined to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace. Evidence of articulation possibilities, including within and between the Sub-Frameworks of the NQF and the world of work, are included in the design of new qualifications and part-qualifications in order to promote CAT. These possibilities are publicised widely. In promoting CAT, qualifications are compared using credible methods that determine the comparability of the curricula concerned. Where there are gaps, supplementary work may be required. All rules governing CAT decisions are valid, fair, reliable, and transparent. Further guidance for CAT can be found in the National Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SAQA, 2014).

23. Assessment is integral to RPL processes where informal and non-formal learning are recognised. The following forms and features of RPL are key. Further guidance is provided in the National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (SAQA, 2013).

a) RPL is multi-contextual, and how it takes place differs between contexts. There are two main forms of RPL which reflect differing RPL purposes and practices:

*RPL for access* which provides alternative access routes into programmes of learning; and

*RPL for credit* which involves obtaining credit towards a qualification, part-qualification or professional designation, for learning/ experience obtained informally or non-formally.

b) Assessment in RPL occurs not in isolation but as part of the RPL process which includes:

- candidate support before, during and after the RPL process;
- preparation for an RPL process or sub-process;
- mediation of knowledge obtained informally or non-formally, and that required formally;
- assessment of competence; and
- certification.

c) RPL can be carried out at any NQF level (see National Policy for the Implementation of RPL [SAQA 2013], for more detail).

## Criteria and Guidelines for Implementing Assessment for Differing Purposes

24. Differing assessment purposes are recognised.

### a) Formative assessment

Formative assessment is assessment designed to feed into further learning, and is very important for the learning process. A range of formal, non-formal, and informal *formative* assessment procedures are used to focus teaching and learning to improve learner success. When formative assessment is formal, results are recorded and count towards promotion marks. Formative assessment includes, amongst other aspects:

- verbal educator-learner interaction with individual learners, groups of learners or whole classes – noting that in some contexts learners feel more comfortable interacting with educators when in small groups; in other contexts learners can handle one-on-one interaction with educators;
- demonstrations with or without commentary;
- feedback on partly or fully completed work;
- elaboration of assessment criteria through verbal, visual (seen), aural (heard) or demonstration/ simulation means; and
- dynamic assessment, the kind of assessment which consciously seeks to consolidate existing learning to build further learning. It can take the form of test-teach-test methods with the giving of feedback, and other forms. The giving of feedback based on learning observed is central. Dynamic assessment seeks to assess change in amount or quality of learning after mediated instruction has taken place. It needs an intensive interactive relationship between educators and learners, and respectful educator-learner relationships.

### b) Summative assessment

Summative assessment is conducted at the end of sections of learning or whole learning programmes, to evaluate learning related to a particular qualification, part-qualification, or professional designation. Summative assessment of learning usually has as its aim the evaluation and/or the certification of learning that has already taken place, and the extent to which this learning has been successful. Summative assessment is usually formal.

### c) Integrated assessment

Integrated assessment is a holistic set of assessment tasks needed for a qualification, part-qualification or professional designation. Integrated assessment could consist of written assessment of theory together with a practical demonstration of competence – where a learner's conceptual understanding of something is evaluated through the approach he/ she takes in applying it practically. The intention is to assess learners in the modes in which they are expected to display particular competencies.

**d) Diagnostic assessment**

Diagnostic assessment is usually conducted before teaching or training starts, for the purposes of identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses, in order to use the associated information for the purposes of creating suitable learning environments.

**Criteria and Guidelines for Implementing the Principles of Assessment**

25. Enhancing the quality of assessment in line with best practice nationally is based on understanding the principles of assessment, for which guidelines are given here. It is expected that implementation of the principles of assessment will take different forms in each of the specific contexts of the three QCs with their Sub-Frameworks.
26. Checking for validity/validation includes:
- a) validation of assessment tools, which involves ensuring the match between what is to be assessed and the suitability of the tools chosen to measure this aspect;
  - b) validation of assessment tasks, which involves ensuring the match between what is to be assessed and the suitability of the tasks to make this aspect visible/audible;
  - c) validation of assessment processes including developing assessment tools and tasks, marking, moderation, and providing feedback on assessment conducted – ensuring a match between the processes and goals of assessment; and
  - d) enhancing credibility or validation through a peer-review process where all aspects of the assessment process are documented and available for scrutiny.
27. Enhancing the reliability of assessment includes ensuring that similar judgements are made across similar contexts about:
- a) assessment tools and tasks;
  - b) marking;
  - c) moderation;
  - d) recording and dissemination of results;
  - e) certification; and
  - f) record keeping.
28. Building integrity into assessment processes and tools includes:
- a) assessment questions based on work actually covered, or to enhance learning in a genuine way;
  - b) learners being honest about what they offer to be assessed;
  - c) markers striving to understand what is being offered by learners for assessment, and grading it fairly at all times;

- d) moderators moderating a fair sample of cases; and
- e) feedback being given to learners and educators after moderation.

29. Increasing transparency and accountability in assessment includes:

- a) making assessment purposes, processes, criteria and consequences known and visible to all relevant stakeholders; and
- b) providing evidence of the development and moderation of assessment tasks and instruments where appropriate.

30. Ensuring fairness in assessment involves:

- a) an appropriate assessment range, where the full range of relevant competencies and levels of cognitive demand needed for a qualification, part-qualification or professional designation is assessed. This range includes types and levels of competence required at each NQF level (see *Level Descriptors for the South African NQF* [SAQA, 2012]);
- b) equal assessment opportunities for all learners regardless of their ethnicity, age, gender, culture, disability, social class, language and other contextual features;
- c) equitable costs where:
  - (i) the calculation of fees takes into consideration the actual costs involved as well as the affordability of the fees in the target markets in each instance;
  - (ii) there is a correct and proper evidence trail for invoicing and receipting;
  - (iii) there is fair and transparent affordability means testing; and
  - (iv) there is access to a competent ombudsman in the event of confusion or dispute;
- d) transparent communications around fees where the following kind of information is shared:
  - (i) what fees are chargeable;
  - (ii) the basis on which fees are calculated; and
  - (iii) the type and level of services to be rendered;
- e) sensitivity to language, where:
  - (i) an accessible language of learning and teaching is used, which is mediated for those learners for whom it is not their mother tongue;
  - (ii) care is taken to use appropriate language that is free of ambiguity and technical jargon; and
  - (iii) in cases of translation into different national languages, the assessment is consistent and the alternate forms comparable;
- f) moderation to enhance consistency and reduce bias, which includes:
  - (i) documentation of internal moderation procedures and outcomes;

- (ii) in the case of statistical moderation, procedures that at minimum present and explain the distribution of learner performance and the techniques used to moderate this performance;
  - (iii) documentation of processes for the appointment of external moderators with expertise and experience;
  - (iv) documentation of external moderation procedures and outcomes; and
  - (v) documentation of processes by which internal or external grading irregularities or sources of error are or will be corrected;
- g) supportive administrative procedures, which include:
- (i) clear and accessible information;
  - (ii) standardised conditions under which assessment is conducted; and
  - (iii) standardised appeals processes which are the same for all similar instances within an institution;
- h) in the case of RPL, mediation between knowledge and skill gained in informal and non-formal ways, and the formal knowledge and skill required;
- i) in the case of CAT and learners transferring between institutions or departments, recognition that CAT is carried out on the basis of the qualification or part-qualification concerned, and that there is no discrimination on the basis of whether or not an institution is public or private, or on the basis of where qualifications, part-qualifications or credits were obtained, or any other aspect unrelated to the knowledge and skills concerned; and
- j) the purpose of assessment being to evaluate and enhance learning.
31. A range of modes of teaching and learning, including assessment, such as face-to-face, distance, e-learning, full-time, part-time, portfolio, block release, mixed-mode and multi-modal approaches is attempted to facilitate lifelong learning and to maximise inclusivity.

32. The user-friendliness and availability of assessment-related documentation is ensured.

#### **Assessment Requirements and Responsibilities**

33. All national assessment-related policies are aligned with this National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment.
34. Stakeholders responsible for the implementation and further development of the NQF demonstrate how they have taken account of this National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment and related advice provided by SAQA and the QCs.

### 35. Responsibilities of SAQA

- a) Develop policy and criteria, after consultation with the QCs, for Assessment, RPL, and CAT.
- b) Oversee the implementation and further development of the NQF which includes overseeing the implementation of policy for Assessment, RPL and CAT.
- c) Advise the Minister of Higher Education and Training on matters relating to the NQF, including Assessment, RPL and CAT.

### 36. Responsibilities of the QCs

- a) After taking into account first, this National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment, and then other relevant national assessment policies and the assessment policies and approaches of the other QCs, develop for use in their Sub-Frameworks:
  - (i) high level policy and criteria for assessment that are aligned with this National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment;
  - (ii) detailed assessment directives and guidelines where applicable; and
  - (iii) exemplars where feasible.
- b) Take guidance from the assessment approaches of other QCs, and encourage partnerships in order to align or partly align learning and assessment across Sub-Frameworks wherever feasible. Where this feasibility exists, commence alignment.
- c) Oversee, support, monitor and evaluate the assessment-related work in their Sub-Frameworks. Monitoring includes:
  - (i) assessing alignment with the principles, content, and implementation criteria in the National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment; and
  - (ii) evaluating and disseminating the development and implementation of best practice within and across sectors in the Sub-Framework.
- d) Develop and maintain an information management system for the recording of assessment results and trends, that is compatible with the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) and other relevant government information management systems.
- e) Monitor the equitability of assessment fees and transparent communications around fees, in their Sub-Frameworks as feasible and appropriate in the interests of fairness to learners and encouraging access to learning.
- f) Monitor and ensure the development of feedback mechanisms so that what emerges from assessment is fed into improving curriculum and teaching practices.

37. Responsibilities of assessment bodies for external and site-based assessment where applicable

- a) Take into account this National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment.
- b) Take into account QC assessment policies.

38. Responsibilities of providers of education, training, and assessment

- a) Fulfil the relevant quality assurance requirements.
- b) Progressively develop capacity to implement the assessment policies of their accrediting QC(s) in line with this National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment. In the case of Provincial Departments of Education, follow Department of Basic Education and Umalusi directives in line with this National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment.
- c) Enter into partnerships to align or partly align curricula, learning and assessment in ways that facilitate systemic articulation and learning pathways where applicable.
- d) Support and monitor development of stakeholders involved in providing assessment and the extent of adherence to the National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment in their institutions where applicable.
- e) Develop and maintain an information management system for the recording of assessment results and trends in these results, and as directed by an assessment body and QC as applicable, that is compatible with the NLRD and other relevant government information management systems.
- f) Ensure equitable fees and transparent communication around fees where applicable.
- g) Ensure development of feedback mechanisms so that what emerges from assessment is fed into improving learning programmes and teaching practices.

39. Responsibilities of recognised professional bodies

- a) Ensure alignment of processes for the implementation of progression pathways and awarding of registered professional designations, with this Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment.
- b) Collaborate with SAQA, the QCs and suitable providers to incentivise and advance quality assessment practices in their constituencies.



- c) Progressively research, develop and enhance capacity to initiate, support, monitor and evaluate quality assessment practices in accordance with this Policy.
  - d) Ensure development of feedback mechanisms so that what emerges from assessment is fed into curriculum strengthening processes.
40. Responsibilities of all those involved in assessment for NQF qualifications and part-qualifications, and registered professional designations
- a) Be appropriately qualified and competent to conduct assessment in the specific context concerned.
  - b) Adhere to requirements determined by the relevant legislation.
  - c) Conduct assessment in line with this National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment.
  - d) Ensure development of feedback mechanisms so that what emerges from assessment is fed into curriculum strengthening processes.
41. Responsibilities of learners participating in assessment
- a) Accept co-responsibility as a party involved in assessment processes, which means taking responsibility for all of the learner's parts of the assessment process.
  - b) Participate in assessment processes in an honest manner displaying integrity at all times.
  - c) When required, to follow the appeals procedures of the assessment providers concerned.

#### **Effective Implementation Date**

42. This Policy comes into effect on the date of its publication in the Government Gazette. It replaces the policy documents *Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications* developed in 2001; and *Guidelines for Integrated Assessment* developed in 2005 by the South African Qualifications Authority.

## List of Acronyms

CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
FET	Further Education and Training
GFET	General and Further Education and Training
GFETQSF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework
NAMB	National Artisan Moderation Body
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
QC	Quality Council
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
Umalusi	Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training

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