

## SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

NO. 1004

23 OCTOBER 2015

**PROFESSIONAL BODY RECOGNITION AND PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION  
REGISTRATION****EVALUATION REPORT****1. NAME OF BODY: SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL FOR PROFESSIONAL AND  
TECHNICAL SURVEYORS (PLATO)**

- 1.1 PLATO applied to SAQA for recognition as a professional body and for the registration of three (3) professional designations on the NQF in terms of the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008.
- 1.2 DRR evaluated the application against the *Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation for the Purposes of the NQF Act*.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE PROFESSIONAL BODY**

- 2.1 The South African Council for Professional and Technical Surveyors (PLATO) is a statutory council established by Section 2 of the South African Council for Professional and Technical Surveyors Act (PLATO Act), Act 40 of 1984, as amended. PLATO, an Afrikaans abbreviation for the Professionele Landmeters en Tegniiese Opmeters, exists since 1950 as the Central Council for Land Surveyors under the Land Survey Act 9 of 1927 for registration of Professional Land Surveyors. The Geomatics Profession Act, Act 19 of 2013 which is to supersede the PLATO Act will provide for the establishment of the South African Geomatics Council.
- 2.2 The Council and geomatics profession are to:
- achieve transparency and equity in the profession in order to ensure its legitimacy and effectiveness;
  - accomplish high standards of quality and integrity in the profession;
  - promote the profession and pursue improvements in the competency of registered persons through the development of skills, knowledge and standards within the profession;
  - promote environmentally responsible geomatics work which will ensure sustainable development;
  - transform the profession in order to reflect the demographics of the country and to redress the imbalances of the past.
  - regulate the geomatics profession so as to promote and protect the interests of the public in relation to geomatics work, as long as it is not inconsistent with any other applicable law;
  - keep and maintain national registers of the different geomatics professionals in accordance with the Act;
  - ensure and promote a high standard of education, training and development in the geomatics sector; and

- support the functioning of disciplinary and appeal structures established under the Geomatics Profession Act.

### 2.3 Registered Persons and Affiliations

- PLATO is a statutory professional body with 2617 registered persons from various categories across all nine provinces as at 30 June 2015.
- Registration with the Council is open to persons employed in both the public and private sector, in educational institutions; and to those operating their own private practices. Furthermore persons who are fully retired; those who are not practicing the profession as well as qualifying persons from foreign countries are eligible to apply for registration.
- PLATO liaises and works closely with the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform on specific projects. In addition, it has good working relationships with the following voluntary associations:
  - South African Geomatics Institute (SAGI)
  - Geo-information Society of South Africa (GISSA)
  - Institute of Mine Surveyors of South Africa (IMSSA)
- Internationally, PLATO is affiliated to:
  - Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).  
PLATO had entered into a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) with RICS. The MOU is aimed at benefiting professionals who are registered with PLATO. Some of these benefits include direct entry for PLATO registered Professional Surveyors to professional membership of RICS subject to the successful completion of the RICS ethics module. Similarly, a Surveying Technologist registered with PLATO is eligible for direct entry to Associate membership of RICS in the Land or Engineering pathway subject to the successful completion of the RICS online ethics module.
  - International Federation of Surveyors (FIG)  
PLATO has been a member association of FIG (abbreviation derived from the French: *Fédération Internationale des Géomètres*) since June 1983. The key focus of this affiliation is on building the capacity of the member surveying association and encourages individual surveyors to act as agents of positive change through the process of development and growth for the benefit of Africa and its people.

Additionally, the FIG invites African countries to co-host its yearly workshop events. In December 2011, PLATO and the Geomatics Department of the University of Cape Town co-hosted the workshop by assuming responsibility for all the logistical arrangements. The theme of the workshop was *"Building resilience in the profession: A focus on Young People and Women"*.

### 2.4 Education and Training

- PLATO is not a registered or accredited training provider but conducts accreditation visits to training providers offering geomatics-related educational programmes. The accreditation visits happen at least once every four years. The Council must notify and provide the Minister with reasons if no accreditation visits within the four-year period were undertaken.

- The following local and international training providers are currently accredited by PLATO:
  - Universities of Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Free State, Salzburg (Austria), and Southern Queensland (Australia);
  - Universities of Technology: Durban, Tshwane, Cape Peninsula and Mangosuthu; and
  - Private Higher Education Institutions: Esri South Africa.
- The Council does not act as a workplace provider but recognises workplaces for the delivery of learnerships. However, it may advise and assist any training provider, voluntary body or examining body regarding the educational facilities for training of registered persons and prospective registered persons.
- PLATO has no formal agreements in place with universities. However, it recognises specific qualifications and part-qualifications as requirements to be registered as a geomatics practitioner.

### 3. EVALUATION AGAINST SAQA CRITERIA

#### 3.1 Governance, Management and Sustainability

- Section 4 of the Geomatics Profession Act 19 of 2013 provides for the appointment of a Council comprising at least 13 but no more than 15 members by the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform. The Council serves a four-year term and is composed as follows:
  - 4 registered geomatics practitioners in the full-time employ of the State, of whom –
    - 1 is the Chief Surveyor-General;
    - 2 must be geomatics practitioners in the full-time employ of the Department Rural Development and Land Reform; and
    - 1 must be a geomatics practitioner in the full-time employ of the Department of Mineral Resources.
  - at least 7 but not more than 8 geomatics practitioners, of whom –
    - at least 2 must be geomatics practitioners who are not in the full-time employ of the State; and
    - at least 6 but no more than 7 must represent voluntary associations equitably.
  - 1 person nominated by the Council on Higher Education; and
  - at least 1 but not more than 2 persons to represent the interests of the public.
- The Council, with the concurrence of the Ministers of Rural Development and Land Reform and Finance, appoints the Registrar who is responsible for carrying out the Council's mandate, providing strategic direction and leadership to staff and managing the daily functioning of the organisation.
- In accordance with Section 6(1)(a) of the Act, the Council has established the following functioning committees to assist in the execution of its oversight duties and responsibilities:
  - Management Committee
  - Disciplinary Committee

- Rules Committee
  - Professional Registration Screening Committee
  - Evaluation Committees
  - Education and Training Committee
  - Mine Valuation Committee
  - CPD Registration Committee
- A maximum of five (5) council members appointed before the repeal of the PLATO Act remain in office for the first term of the Geomatics Council.
  - The staff members in the Registrar's office responsible for management, administration and execution of the Council's day-to-day operations and the implementation of policies relative to its statutory, mandated roles and functions.
  - PLATO generates its funds primarily through annual professional registration fees.
  - PLATO received an unqualified audit report for the year ended 31 August 2014. The Council is on a financially sound footing to acquire adequate assets, settle its liabilities, and meet its financial obligations that occur in the ordinary course of business.

### 3.2 Disciplinary Matters and Accountability

- Section 19(1) of the Geomatics Profession Act provides for the development and publication of a Code of Conduct for the registered geomatics practitioners. All registered persons must subscribe to the Code in the form of a written acceptance thereof when applying for professional registration.
- The Code determines the ethical standards for professional conduct and practice which must be adhered to by registered persons. Failure to comply constitutes misconduct which would lead to an investigation that could result in a disciplinary hearing.
- Members of the public and employers or clients may lodge formal complaints or charges against registered persons in writing.
- The Council must refer valid complaints or allegations against a registered person to investigating officers.
- The Investigating Officer(s) must, after the conclusion of the investigation, submit a report with its recommendations to the Council as to whether or not sufficient grounds exist for the charge/s.
- The Council appoints a Disciplinary Tribunal to hear a charge of improper conduct against a registered person. The tribunal must consist of at least:
  - 2 registered persons or Council members;
  - A person qualified in law and who has at least five (5) years' experience in the legal profession; and
  - 2 persons with specialised knowledge of matters concerning the particular charge.
- The Registrar performs the administrative functions necessary to support the functioning of the tribunal.

- The Disciplinary Tribunal, after concluding the hearing, notifies the Council in writing of its finding and the reasons therefor. The Council gives effect to the decision of the tribunal by publishing the finding and sanction imposed in the Government Gazette.
- Contravention of the Code of Professional Conduct may result in the registered person being cautioned, reprimanded, suspended from membership, struck from the membership roll or have his/her designation revoked.
- The Act makes provision for an appeals process which could be invoked by the registered person charged to have an adverse finding and/or sanction reconsidered.

### 3.3 Data Management

PLATO maintains a public electronic database of its registered persons, consisting of personal details, designations awarded and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities.

### 3.4 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

- The Council may take any steps it considers expedient for the protection of members of the public in their dealings with persons registered under this Act and the maintenance of the integrity and enhancement of the status of the profession. As such, CPD is compulsory for registered persons from all categories and adherence thereto is a requirement for renewal in every five yearly cycle.
- PLATO places emphasis on its registered persons to maintain their technical and professional competence by adhering to its CPD Policy, as revised and adopted by the Council in November 2014.
- The CPD Registration Committee is tasked with the oversight and administration of the CPD system and reports to the Registrar and the Council on CPD related matters.
- Registered persons are required to achieve and record a certain amount of CPD points or hours, depending on the designation awarded (see Para 4.2), as a mandatory requirement for retaining the designation.
- CPD activities are divided into three categories, namely: developmental activities (category 1); work-based activities (category 2); and individual activities (category 3). CPD credits must be earned in at least two of the categories, with at least 5 credits per five-year cycle from category 1.
- Some of these CPD activities involve:
  - attending technical and professional conferences, seminars, educational meetings or refresher courses approved by the Council;
  - participating in accredited courses in line with PLATO's validation criteria;
  - delivery lectures or papers at accredited and registered formal educational meetings, seminars and workshops;
  - mentoring, coaching, tutoring, teaching or lecturing;
  - lecturing to undergraduate and postgraduate learners;
  - serving as a moderator or external examiner at tertiary level; and

- writing and publishing of articles in peer-reviewed journals relevant to the geomatics profession.
- The Council may conduct random audits as it deems necessary and practicable of registered persons who are due for renewal. If, during the audit, the Council establishes that a registered person has failed to comply with the CPD policy, it may decide if any remedial steps are necessary.
- If at the renewal of registration stage the Council is convinced that the person seeking re-registration is still not compliant with the requirements, the Council refers the matter to the Appeal Committee to decide if renewal of such person's registration should be granted or not. Before making such a decision, the Appeal Committee must present the person with an opportunity to give reasons why renewal of his/her registration should not be refused.
- Persons who have been formally de-registered due to non-compliance to the CPD Policy may apply to the CPD Registration Committee to be re-registered by submitting evidence of remedial CPD undertakings.

#### 4 PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS

##### 4.1 Designation Awarding Process

- Applications from candidates to be registered with PLATO are assessed by the Education Advisory Committee in terms of the set criteria for recommendation to the Council.
- Council considers the recommendation and makes a final decision in this regard.
- Candidates with qualifications obtained from educational institutions outside the RSA must have their foreign qualifications evaluated by SAQA.
- A designation certificate, bearing a unique registration number, is issued to successful applicants.

##### 4.2 Designations to be Registered

**Designation Title:** Geomatics Technician

CRITERION	DESCRIPTION
<b>UNDERLYING NQF REGISTERED QUALIFICATION/PART-QUALIFICATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A recognised NQF level 6; OR</li> <li>• A comparable qualification at Level 6</li> </ul>
<b>PRACTICAL LEARNING</b>	220 to 240 days compulsory training in a range of prescribed tasks under the supervision of a qualified person at least one designation higher and/or with a minimum of five years post registration experience for professionals.
<b>BOARD / ADMISSION EXAMINATION / ASSESSMENT</b>	Candidates must write and pass the relevant law examinations set by an independent examiner and externally moderated.
<b>CPD</b>	Geomatics Technicians must accumulate and record at least 13 CPD credits over a five-year cycle.
<b>APPLICATION OF RPL</b>	RPL requirements are set out in Act 19 of 2013. The Council in terms of the Act must make rules within 90 days after the Act has been promulgated which determine in liaison with the relevant quality council, if applicable, the recognition of any prior learning relating

	to the geomatics profession.
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**Designation Title:** Geomatics Technologist

CRITERION	DESCRIPTION
<b>UNDERLYING NQF REGISTERED QUALIFICATION/PART-QUALIFICATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A recognised NQF level 7; OR</li> <li>• A comparable qualification at Level 7</li> </ul>
<b>PRACTICAL LEARNING</b>	220 to 240 days compulsory training in a range of prescribed tasks under the supervision of a qualified person at least one designation higher and/or with a minimum of five years post registration experience for professionals.
<b>BOARD / ADMISSION EXAMINATION / ASSESSMENT</b>	Candidates must write and pass the relevant law examinations set by an independent examiner and externally moderated.
<b>CPD</b>	Geomatics Technologists must accumulate and record at least 20 CPD credits over a five-year cycle.
<b>APPLICATION OF RPL</b>	RPL requirements are set out in Act 19 of 2013. The Council in terms of the Act must make rules within 90 days after the Act has been promulgated which determine in liaison with the relevant quality council, if applicable, the recognition of any prior learning relating to the geomatics profession.

**Designation Title:** Geomatics Professional

CRITERION	DESCRIPTION
<b>UNDERLYING NQF REGISTERED QUALIFICATION/PART-QUALIFICATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A recognised NQF level 8; OR</li> <li>• A comparable qualification at Level 8</li> </ul>
<b>PRACTICAL LEARNING</b>	220 to 240 days compulsory training in a range of prescribed tasks under the supervision of a qualified person at least one designation higher and/or with a minimum of five years post registration experience for professionals.
<b>BOARD / ADMISSION EXAMINATION / ASSESSMENT</b>	Candidates must write and pass the relevant law examinations set by an independent examiner and externally moderated.
<b>CPD</b>	Geomatics Professionals must accumulate and record at least 20 CPD credits over a five-year cycle.
<b>APPLICATION OF RPL</b>	RPL requirements are set out in Act 19 of 2013. The Council in terms of the Act must make rules within 90 days after the Act has been promulgated which determine in liaison with the relevant quality council, if applicable, the recognition of any prior learning relating to the geomatics profession.