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LAUNCH OF LETTER AND PROVIDER NEWS PAGES

In an effort to make the Bulletin a forum for the exchange of information on the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the Editor invites stakeholders and role players in the education and training sector – and indeed the public at large – to submit for publication in a Letters section of the SAQA Bulletin correspondence either in response to articles in the Bulletin or on issues surrounding the development and implementation of the NQF.

In addition, the Editor extends an invitation to all who are concerned with developing and implementing the NQF to contribute for publication in a Provider News section of the Bulletin brief accounts of policy development and NQF

implementation strategies that might stimulate other providers of education and training to undertake similar courses of action in their own learning areas. For example, provider development of policies for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) would be of interest to providers operating in comparable learning environments.

Contributions, addressed to "The Editor, SAQA Bulletin", may be mailed to Postnet Suite 248, Private Bag X06, WATERKLOOF, 0145, South Africa; faxed to +27 12 346-5814; or e-mailed either via the SAQA web-site to saqainfo@saqa.org.za or to michael_cosser@saqa.co.za.

THE STATUS OF ARTICLES IN THE SAQA BULLETIN

SAQA reasserts its statement in previous issues of the Bulletin that only those parts of the text clearly flagged as decisions or summaries of decisions by the Authority should be seen as reflecting SAQA policy.

EDITORIAL

As SAQA reflects on its activities and areas of involvement over the past year, there is much to celebrate:

- The National Standards Bodies (NSBs) are up and running
- Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) are in the process of being recognized or established (March saw the gazetting of the first SGBs – for Forestry, Surveying, Educators in Schooling, and Educators in Adult Basic Education and Training - for public comment)
- unit standards and qualifications have been published for public comment (June 1998 saw the gazetting of unit standards for Adult Basic Education and Training [ABET], while March 1999 saw the gazetting of unit standards for Pharmacists' Assistants and ABET, and qualifications and unit standards for Carpentry, Bricklaying, and Tyre Manufacture)
- Applications for Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (ETQA) accreditation have been received, and are being processed by the Quality Assurance Division (QAD) of SAQA
- SAQA is acting as the ETQA for the accreditation of Private Higher Institutions. Until April 1994 SAQA had contracted the Quality Promotion Unit (QPU) of the South African Universities Vice-Chancellors' Association (SAUVCA) and the Certification Council for Technikon Education as evaluation agencies. SAUVCA recently informed SAQA of the closure of the QPU and has requested that SAQA make alternative arrangements. Applications for provider accreditation for Private Higher Education and Training Institutions are enjoying consideration by the Quality Assurance Division of SAQA. Thus far three such institutions have received provider accreditation
- SAQA is participating in an international benchmarking project on competency standards involving Mexico (Council for Normalization and Certification of Competency Standards), the UK (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority), Scotland (Scottish Qualifications Authority) and Australia (Australian National Training Authority), with New Zealand scheduled for inclusion
- SAQA is involved in the implementation of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, a project aimed at moving education and training systems in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region towards equivalence, harmonization, and eventual standardization over the next twenty years
- With the promulgation of the Skills Development Act (Act No. 97 of 1998), SAQA is integrally involved with the Department of Labour processes. SAQA will be represented on the National Skills Authority. Presently SAQA is in the partnership with the Department of Labour (DoL) around two of the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) functions, namely, learnerships and ETQAs
- Through its representation on the Council on Higher Education (CHE), SAQA will be influential in ensuring the fast tracking of the establishment of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) and, by extension, a quality assurance system for higher education and training

Notwithstanding these milestones, however, there is no doubt, judging by SAQA's communication with the public at large and the education and training community in particular, that there remains ignorance and misunderstanding about the role of SAQA in the development and implementation of the NQF and the impact of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in and on South African society. To this end, SAQA has decided to devote the best part of an entire issue of the Bulletin to the addressing of "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQs) – those questions posed to SAQA Members and staff by members of the public with a frequency that demands a public response.

Since SAQA has now entered the SGB registration phase, moreover, the remainder of this issue of the Bulletin is devoted to an outline of the process leading to the registration of SGBs. A process including a timeline for the recognition and the establishment of SGBs is outlined.

Works Cited

RSA (1998). "Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act No. 97 of 1998)."
Government Gazette No. 19420 (2 November). Pretoria: Government Printer.

QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED OF SAQA

By Michael Cosser (Deputy Director, Framework Development, SAQA), Sebolelo Mokhobo-Nomvete (Director, Framework Development, SAQA) & Gail Elliott (Head, Quality Assurance, SAQA), Joseph Samuels (Director Framework Implementation, SAQA), Samuel Isaacs (Executive Officer, SAQA), Anne Obelhozer (Member of the Authority, SAQA Board)

Introduction

Since the appointment of staff to SAQA from November 1997 onwards, and particularly since the launching of its web-site in April 1998, SAQA has received a number of frequently asked questions (FAQs) about aspects of NQF development and implementation. In articulating and addressing those questions, this article seeks to promote greater understanding of the NQF in an attempt to facilitate its development and implementation. The questions below emanate from two main sources: telephonic, fax, and e-mail enquiry directed to specific members of SAQA staff; and general internet e-mail enquiry via the SAQA web-site.

Recognition of Prior Learning

1. What kind of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) model is SAQA proposing to introduce?

It is not the place of SAQA to develop a model of RPL, but that of ETQAs and providers of education and training: ETQAs, in that they are responsible for assuring the quality of assessment (of which RPL forms a part); providers, in that in terms of the criteria for the accreditation of providers set out in the ETQA Regulations (RSA, 1998a), they need to have in place "policies and practices for [amongst other things] learner entry" (Regulation 13(d)(iii)). This implies that RPL as a mechanism for access or entry into learning could be an element of such policies and practices. Built into the rules governing the award of a qualification by a constituent provider, moreover, is an indication that "the qualification may be achieved in whole or in part *through the recognition of prior learning*, which concept includes but is not limited to learning outcomes achieved through formal, informal and non-formal learning and work experience" (Regulation 8(1)(h), RSA, 1998b; emphasis added).

Because SAQA adopts a flexible, consultative approach towards the implementation of the NQF, the education and training sector should have the freedom to develop models for RPL, provided that these

- comply with the objectives of the NQF (see RSA, 1995)
- can stand up to intellectual scrutiny, and/or are grounded in sound education and training theory
- are internationally comparable
- can be adequately resourced (in terms of both human and financial resources)
- are aligned to the notion of integrative assessment (see Regulation 8(1)(g), RSA, 1998b); and
- comply with the criteria and guidelines for assessment that SAQA will be publishing.

2. How does a university establish learner readiness for entry into learning programmes in the absence of national qualifications with clear articulation mechanisms built into them?

SAQA proposes two courses of action. The first is to enter into qualifications/programmes-equivalence or parity agreements with other Higher Education and Training (HET) institutions; and the second is for each institution to devise, and implement, learner entry policies and practices which may include a RPL policy – as required by the ETQA Regulations (Regulation 13(d)(iii); RSA, 1998a).

Organizational Structure and Functions

1. What do SAQA staff do at SAQA?

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which came into being through the promulgation of the SAQA Act (RSA, 1995), is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the NQF. The following diagram outlines the functions of the various directorates in terms of this mandate.

FUNCTIONS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

The question about what it is exactly that staff do at SAQA is neither asked nor to be answered facetiously.

Staff in Framework Development (FD) are responsible for the preparation of the SAQA Annual Report to Parliament, the development of policy on various aspects of NQF implementation, the drafting of Position Papers on various topics on an ad hoc basis, the publication of the SAQA Bulletin and the co-ordination of work on various SAQA publications, the management of the Resource and Information Service, and the research of various aspects of SAQA's work.

Staff in Framework Implementation work either in the sub-directorate of Standards Setting or in the sub-directorate of Quality Assurance (QA). Those in Standards Setting co-ordinate and facilitate the work of National Standards Bodies (NSBs) and oversee the standards setting process, while those in Quality Assurance are responsible for overseeing the process of the accreditation of ETQAs and providers of education and training and for establishing various mechanisms for accreditation, moderation, and assessment.

In addition, staff in the directorate of Framework Implementation are engaged in action research, collaborating with the directorate of Framework Development (the managers of policy development) in the drafting of policy around various aspects of the implementation of the NQF. Framework implementation is the largest unit of SAQA and is supported by a significant number of administrative, logistical support and secretarial staff.

Staff in Communications and Secretarial Services, as the nomenclature suggests, provide SAQA with a secretariat to service SAQA (i.e., Authority), Executive Committee, Finance Committee, and Management Committee meetings,

and are responsible for internal and external communication. The Unit is also responsible for the maintenance of the NQF database and web-site.

Against this overview of SAQA staff functions, it should be emphasized that SAQA oversees the development and implementation of the NQF. "Overseeing" means SAQA carrying out its functions such that it is able to provide leadership, at the same time, showing sensitivity to and serving the interests and the needs of the education and training sector. It also means that SAQA ensures coherence, coordinates and facilitates. All South Africans who have a stake in education and training – providers of education and training (e.g., schools, training centres), those who ensure the quality of that education and training, and of course learners themselves – are responsible for ensuring that the development and implementation of the NQF is successful.

A. Accreditation of Providers of Education and Training

1. How can my company receive accreditation as a training provider in the absence of an ETQA having been accredited in my sector?

If your company provides training against standards and qualifications in the Higher Education and Training Band (HETB) of the NQF, then it can apply for accreditation as a Private Higher Education and Training Institution. Inquiries can be directed to the Quality Assurance Division within the directorate of Framework Implementation at SAQA (see "SAQA Contact Details" later in this Bulletin). For inquiries about private further education and training accreditation, the same route may be followed.

In the absence of an ETQA having been accredited in any of the three sectors (economic; social; and education and training), SAQA can act as an interim ETQA. Presently, SAQA is acting as an interim ETQA, for the accreditation of private higher education and training institutions until the HEQC is established and fully operational. SAQA had contracted the Quality Promotion Unit of the South African Universities Vice-Chancellors' Association and the Certification Council for Technikon Education as evaluation agencies, however, since the closure of the QPU, will be making alternative arrangements. This will not affect the process. In the case of the accreditation of private providers in the Further Education and Training Band SAQA is in discussion with the Department of Education to attempt to establish a similar arrangement.

2. Can I be accredited as a provider if I only offer courses of less than six months' duration?

Providers are accredited to offer learning programmes against specific standards and qualifications. A course does not necessarily equal a qualification. A course may address the needs of certain standards that are parts of a qualification. The "shortest" qualification registrable on the National Qualifications Framework is a certificate, which in terms of the NSB Regulations (RSA, 1998b) must consist of a minimum of 120 credits (a credit being equivalent to ten notional hours of learning). Since notional time is merely a convenient measurement for determining the average length of time the average learner supposedly takes to complete a unit of learning, however, one should not equate notional time with real time to suggest - as some have done - that a qualification of 120 credits will take one year to achieve. Indeed, in an outcomes-based education and training system it is learner readiness alone which should determine when assessment occurs, and hence how long the learning programme leading to the award of the qualification should take.

The short answer to the question, then, is that if one is offering a learning programme against a qualification or part of a qualification, i.e. standards, registered on the NQF, the length of time devoted to its delivery is immaterial - provided that the provider satisfies the ETQA which has accredited it, of its capacity to offer a learning programme which meets the criteria for quality built into the qualification.

3. What does regulation 3(2)(g) of the ETQA Regulations mean?

[3(2)(g) An organization seeking accreditation as an Education and Training Quality Assurance Body shall demonstrate that "the function of external quality assurance is separate from and independent of the function of provision of education and training"]

Regulation 3(2)(g) of the ETQA Regulations (RSA, 1998a) means that an organization cannot be both a provider and an ETQA at the same time. For instance, an organization such as the Institute for Marketing Management (IMM) that presently provides education and training programmes, examines, and awards qualifications and certificates would not be able to be accredited as an ETQA for IMM qualifications and certificates. It would only be accredited as such when it terminated the function of providing education and training. This means that it would then be eligible to apply for accreditation as an ETQA for other organizations that provide the appropriate education and training.

4 a) Can a non-registered provider which wishes to be accredited as a provider of education and training in terms of regulation 13(a) of the ETQA Regulations apply to be registered with the ETQA from which it seeks accreditation prior to seeking such accreditation?

Do all private schools and further education and training establishments have to be registered and accredited to provide education and training?

ETQAs accredit providers - they do not register providers. The Department of Education, under the Schools Act of 1996, HET Act of 1997 and FET Act of 1998, registers providers. According to these acts all providers, public and private, providing education and training in the three bands – GET, FET and HET - must be registered. This regulation therefore says that, registration as a provider must be with the Department of Education in terms of the relevant Act, and accreditation to offer specific national qualifications must be with the appropriate accredited ETQA.

4 b). Will such accreditation ensure that "illegal schools" are shut down?

The rationale for the policy of registration and accreditation is to have a public register that informs the public of which institutions are legal and have an acceptable quality management and assurance system for the education and training they are providing. Institutions that are accredited and registered will be obliged to display their registration and accreditation certificates. As the register of registered and accredited institutions will be public, the public will be in a position to ascertain the status of an institution before registering as learners.

4 c). What steps are being taken to ensure that illegal schools will not open their doors to students next year?

Any school which is not registered cannot operate in terms of the SA Schools Act. SAQA will endeavour to ensure that the public will have access to the names of institutions registered in the 9 provinces and at national level.

B. Accreditation of Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs)

1. Will an ETQA be obliged to train its own staff, and who will assess them?

Two of the criteria for ETQA accreditation are that the organization seeking such accreditation has the capacity (in every sense of the word) to perform the functions assigned to it by the Authority, and that it has quality management policies and procedures which enable it achieve quality in the performance of its functions (Regulation 3(2)(d) & (f); RSA, 1998a).

In part, capacity to perform functions assigned to it implies that the staff of the ETQA will need to be in a position to perform the functions assigned to the ETQA. An applicant ETQA would have to show that their staff has the appropriate knowledge and skills to perform the functions. If they do not have, the ETQA would then need to show when and how it will ensure that its staff will be trained appropriately. It is possible that this lack of capacity of the staff may mean conditional accreditation provided that other capacity is in place. The conditional accreditation, however, would be on the understanding that the ETQA's training plan is implemented.

Even after accreditation additional training of ETQA staff may be necessary. Regulation 9 (1) k of the ETQA Regulations indicates that SAQA may allocate additional functions to an accredited ETQA and the successful

implementation of these may require the ETQA staff to undergo further training. Furthermore, no system, especially education and training, is static and hence has to respond to the dynamism in the system. New approaches and developments may require the additional training of ETQA staff.

A quality management system includes policies governing staff recruitment and development. An applicant or accredited ETQA will have to provide evidence of giving attention to staff training and development.

Registered standards and qualifications will be assessed by accredited providers and quality assured by accredited ETQAs. SAQA as the body which accredits ETQAs is ultimately responsible for assessing the quality of accredited ETQAs' performance.

C. Moderation

1. What kinds of bodies are likely to be appointed as moderating bodies, and how will they ensure that assessment of outcomes is fair, valid, and reliable?

Regulation 22 (a), (b), (c) of the ETQA Regulations states that professional and examining bodies may apply for either:

- recognition as a standards generating body, or
- accreditation as an ETQA, or
- be appointed as a moderating body.

Professional and examining bodies which hitherto have been involved in one way or another with examining in their respective fields and which do not apply for ETQA status (one of the functions of moderating bodies is to make recommendations to SAQA concerning accreditation of ETQAs and improvements required in their functioning) are likely to be appointed as moderating bodies, provided that they satisfy the criteria for appointment laid down in Regulation 18 (a), (b), (c) of the ETQA Regulations (RSA, 1998a), which are that they:

- meet the criteria for the registration of moderating bodies recommended to the NSB by an SGB
- are able to perform the moderation function so as to ensure that assessment of the outcomes described in standards or qualifications is fair, valid and reliable; and have national stakeholder representation at decision-making level.

2. What is a SETA?

A Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) is a body established under the Skills Development Act (RSA, 1998c) whose main purpose is to contribute to the improvement of skills in South Africa through achieving a more favourable balance between demand and supply, and by ensuring that education and training

- acknowledges and enhances the skills of the current work force, (in addition to ensuring that new entrants to the labour market are adequately trained)
- meets agreed standards within a national framework
- is provided subject to validation and quality assurance; and
- where appropriate, is benchmarked against international standards (NTB, 1999).

The full list of SETA functions is contained in the Skills Development Act (RSA, 1998c). Those which affect SAQA's work most directly are that SETAs

- monitor education and training in the sector; and

- are accredited by SAQA as ETQAs within the economic sector (distinguished in Regulation 2(3) of the ETQA Regulations (RSA, 1998a) from the education & training sector and the social sector), and therefore fulfil all the functions of ETQAs as set out in Regulation 9 (RSA, 1998a).

SETA membership differs from that of NSBs and SGBs by comprising only representatives of organized labour, organized employers, relevant government departments and, with the consent of the Minister of Labour, any interested professional body and any bargaining council with jurisdiction in the sector.

D. Accreditation of Providers from Abroad

1. How does a university from abroad go about receiving accreditation from SAQA to offer qualifications? Does it need to submit a full self-evaluation to SAQA as well as register with the Registrar for Private Higher Education Institutes, or would SAQA accept evidence of the university's standing and the quality of its provision from a recognized quality assurance agency in the country concerned?

In order to be accredited by SAQA, a university from abroad has to have a base in South Africa. The university may use the same name that it uses in its home country. Once it has a base in South Africa the university applies for accreditation from SAQA. Presently SAQA has a publication entitled *Procedures for Preliminary Accreditation: Private Higher Education Institutions*, which contains criteria and procedures regulating the preliminary accreditation of institutions providing learning in the higher education and training band of the NQF. Using these criteria and procedures the university submits its application to SAQA. The application includes self and peer evaluation. If successful, the institution is given preliminary accreditation. In addition, in order to operate in South Africa, the university has to apply to the Registrar for Private Higher Education Institutes for registration as a Private Higher Institution. This process is necessary in order to protect South African students from exploitation by unscrupulous providers.

SAQA has yet to enter into formal agreements with recognised quality assurance agencies of other countries on the mutual recognition of accredited providers.

2. As a university abroad wanting to launch a programme in South Africa,

a. if we were to begin the registration process now, how long would it be before we could offer the programme?

The period from the time of submitting an application to receiving preliminary accreditation is four months for institutions new to the country. The Registrar for Private Higher Institutes is informed as soon as preliminary accreditation has been granted. Information on how long registration takes can be acquired from the Registrar for Private Higher Education Institutes. See contact details later in the Bulletin.

b. what does the registration process require of us (in terms of documentation, on-site visits to our campus, costs)?

Presently, for preliminary accreditation there are no on-site visits. Preliminary accreditation is based on paper evaluations, which include self and peer evaluations following the criteria and procedures contained in the publication mentioned in the response to 1 above.

The costs are: R2000 per institution; R2000 per programme that leads to a qualification or certificate.

c. would we be eligible for conditional registration while our application for registration is being considered?

Conditional and full registration requires SAQA accreditation.

E. Assessment

1. Does SAQA provide guidelines on the ideal relationship between formative and summative assessment in an integrated assessment system?

SAQA is in the process of developing guidelines for assessment. The ideal relationship between formative and summative assessment has to be considered within the notion of continuous assessment and an understanding of the difference in purpose of formative and summative assessment. Continuous assessment embraces both formative and summative assessment. The NQF system allows for both types of assessment to be administered on a continuous basis over the course of a structured learning experience.

Formative assessment refers to assessment that takes place during the process of learning and teaching. Its purposes may be to diagnose learner strengths and weaknesses, provide feedback to learners on their progress (or lack of), assess the success of learning and teaching strategies employed thus far, inform how the learning and teaching strategies can be improved, assist both the learner and practitioner/assessor plan future learning, assist the learner and practitioner/assessor make decisions regarding the readiness of the learner to do summative assessment. This assessment is not intended to be used for assessing whether the learner has successfully achieved or not in terms of being awarded a credit, qualification or certificate. Formative assessment takes place on a continuous basis during the course of learning.

When formative assessment results are recorded and used to make judgements about achievement, they, then fall into the category of summative assessment. When results initially collected as results for formative assessment purposes are used for summative assessment purposes, the learner should be informed. The assessor should also indicate to the learner, which outcomes are being recorded as having been achieved and the criteria used. It may not be necessary to assess these outcomes again.

Summative assessment is assessment for making judgement about achievement. This is carried out when a learner is ready to do assessment having gone through a learning programme. Summative assessment is carried out when the assessor and the learner agree that the learner is ready to be assessed so that credit for achievement can be given, recorded and reported. This may be a certificate in the case of a qualification or a formal recording of credit in the case of a unit standard.

Emphasis is on learner readiness, the learner having gone through a learning programme. A learning programme can be organised around an outcome or a set of outcomes depending on what is appropriate in terms of ensuring learner success. Summative assessment is administered when a learner has gone through such a learning programme and is ready to be assessed in order to be judged as competent or not competent and credit given for competence and the credit recorded and reported.

A unit standard may contain more than one specific outcome, each outcome having accompanying assessment criteria. The learning facilitator-assessor may decide to design a learning programme for each outcome and assess achievement of the outcome at the end of each learning programme. On the other hand the facilitator-assessor may choose to assess both outcomes in one assessment having gone through both learning programmes. Another possibility is that the facilitator-assessor may design one learning programme for both outcomes and assess having gone through that learning programme. A similar situation is possible in the case of a qualification. In SAQA terms a qualification is the planned combination of learning outcomes with a defined purpose/purposes that is intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning. In this case, the facilitator learner may organise learning programmes around one outcome or more than one outcome and therefore assess at the end of one learning programme per outcome or one learning programme per more than one outcome or have one assessment at the end of more than one learning programme.

The above understanding of a learning programme makes it possible for summative assessment to be done on a continuous basis during the total learning experience for a unit standard or qualification. Summative assessment can be carried out at any of the given points of the total learning experience exemplified above. Furthermore, the methods and instruments of assessment are not only confined to written examinations within a limited time (e.g. 3 hours) whereby the learner is required to rely heavily on the recall of work learnt in order to answer. Summative assessments can make use of a range of methods (observation, product evaluations, written and oral questioning)

and a range of instruments (practicals, role plays, written assignments, tests, examinations, demonstrations, projects, case studies, simulations etc). Evidence for summative assessment can be collected from a variety of sources. When summative assessment is carried out it must be clear to the learner that the results of the assessment is going to be recorded as a credit.

These instruments and methods can, also, be applied in formative assessments. The important issue is that the method and instrument must match what is being assessed and appropriate and sufficient evidence must be collected and it must be clear to the learner whether they are undergoing formative or summative assessment. The amount of formative assessment is determined by the needs of the learner. Every outcome and its accompanying assessment criteria specified in a unit standard or qualification has to be assessed for summative assessment purposes.

2. What credentials does one need to be/become an assessor, and how do I go about registering as such?

The criteria for the registration of assessors are tied to the qualification or standard registered. In generating, reviewing, updating and recommending standards and qualifications, SGBs are required to recommend criteria for the registration of assessors and moderators or moderating bodies. It is against these criteria that ETQAs will register assessors for registered standards and qualifications. It must be borne in mind that SAQA is committed to the notion of a practitioner-assessor. As the "Criteria and Guidelines: ETQAs" article has it, "The education, training or development practitioner (ETD) is thus viewed as being both learning facilitator and assessor. Further, this notion of ETD practitioner allows for the inclusion of other people in the assessment process, for example, workplace supervisors, managers or team leaders; colleagues or peers. The management of their assessments can then be included in the overall management and maintenance of the ETQA's broader assessment system" (Elliott, 1999).

Recognition of Qualifications Obtained Abroad

1. How do I establish whether my overseas qualification qualifies me for acceptance as a student in a South African university?

The university concerned may have a recognition agreement with the institution from which you obtained your qualification, or it may be prepared to establish one on request. In the absence of such an agreement, you should contact the Centre for the Evaluation of Educational Qualifications (CEEQ) at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), or from July 1999 at SAQA, to determine whether any equivalence, or at least parity, of qualifications can be established.

Registration of Standards and Qualifications

1. What is the difference between a qualification and a learning programme, and can a programme be registered on the National Qualifications Framework?

The essential difference between a qualification and a learning programme is that a qualification is a learning outcome, and a learning programme the process one embarks upon in fulfilment of that outcome.

A qualification means the formal recognition of the achievement of learning. This is subject to the definition and rules of combination as defined in 8(1) of the NSB Regulations. A learning programme on the other hand is the process which one embarks upon in order to fulfil that achievement.

A qualification is characterized by learning outcomes – critical cross-field and specific outcomes – which provide the learner with opportunities for further (lifelong) learning (for definitions of these terms, see RSA, 1998b). Subject to SAQA approval, a qualification can be registered on the National Qualifications Framework. Once thus registered, the qualification becomes "public domain property" (RSA, 1998b). A learning programme is a provider-specific course or programme offered to learners against a particular qualification, and is subject to quality assurance by an accredited ETQA. Learning programmes, then, can not be registered on the National Qualifications Framework.

2. What route should a university follow if it wishes to register a new qualification (Department of Education (DoE)? SAQA? SGB), and where can one find guidelines for submission of applications?

New qualifications are generated by and within Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs), which are formed by key education and training stakeholder interest groups and experts in a particular learning area. For example, a meeting of the Deans of Faculties of Education in May last year to discuss collaboration at the level of standards generation issued in the formation of an SGB for schooling. The intention is to design qualifications for practitioners who facilitate and assess learning in schools (as opposed to work-place, technical colleges, training centres etc). An application for recognition has been submitted to NSB 05 (Education, Training and Development) and has been gazetted (in the Government Gazette) for public comment. Alternatively, a National Standards Body (NSB) may establish an SGB within the framework of sub-fields in its organizing field. Once recognized or established, the SGB is issued with a certificate of registration by the NSB which defines its brief in terms of the standards and qualifications which it will generate.

New qualifications developed within or by an SGB according to SAQA-generated criteria¹ are forwarded to the relevant NSB for recommendation to SAQA for registration on the National Qualifications Framework.

Departments/Faculties/Schools within universities need, in collaboration with SAQA and NSBs, to establish links

- with the Co-ordinator (within SAQA) and the Chair of the NSB responsible for the field under which they fall to determine how best to proceed with standards generation; and
- with departments/faculties/schools in other universities as well as with technikons, colleges, and non-formal providers of education and training offering similar qualifications, with a view to such provider groupings applying for recognition as SGBs in order to generate new standards and qualifications for registration on the NQF.

3. Will short (certificate) courses be recognised by SAQA?

SAQA registers qualifications, not courses. However, in the interim registration period (June 1998 to June 2003) certificate courses will be recognised by SAQA if they were submitted for recording purposes by 30 June 1998 and provided they are formatted in NQF terms in line with the criteria set out in the NSB Regulations (RSA, 1998b) by 30 June 2000. Courses of six months' duration or less are unlikely to receive interim registration in July 2000 unless SAQA is satisfied that upon such formatting they qualify as certificates.

Institutions which failed to submit their standards and qualifications for recording by June 1998 will have to submit them via SGBs as new standards and qualifications for recommendation to NSBs and thence to the Authority for registration on the NQF.

4. When will the first standards and qualifications be registered on the Framework?

The first standards and qualifications have already been gazetted for public comment: Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) standards were gazetted both last year and on 26 March 1999, while standards for pharmacy and qualifications and standards for carpentry, bricklaying, and the tyre manufacturing industry were gazetted in March 1999.

Once standards and qualifications have been gazetted, they are submitted to the relevant NSB for consideration, and thence to the Authority for final approval and registration on the Framework. The following article in this edition of the Bulletin explains the processes of SGB recognition and establishment.

The imminent registration of the first SGBs will give added impetus to standards setting and registration of standards and qualifications on the NQF.

The first standards and new qualifications ought to be registered by 2000.

H. Design of Qualifications

1. Who decides on the allocation of credits to a qualification in the Higher Education and Training Band: SAQA? A university? The sector as a whole? The NSB? The SGB?

Credit allocation is simply a way of indicating the notional time the average learner takes to achieve the outcomes of a particular unit of learning. One credit is allocated to ten notional hours of learning – being the total time notionally taken by the average learner to achieve the outcomes of that unit of learning. The NSB Regulations (RSA, 1998b) indicate that a National Certificate, to which a minimum of 120 credits is allocated, may be pegged at any of the eight levels of the NQF, provided that 72 or more of the credits are assigned at or above the level at which the certificate is pegged. SAQA will register a qualification as a National Diploma if it consists of 240 or more credits, of which at least 72 credits are at level 5 or above, and as a National First Degree if it consists of 360 or more credits, 72 or more of which are at level 6 or above. It is, however, the SGB which will suggest the number of credits to be assigned to a qualification, and the NSB which will recommend to the Authority the qualification so constructed for registration. The opinions of key role players in the sector will contribute to the SGBs' decision making process.

In the case of existing qualifications submitted to SAQA for recording by 30 June 1998 as part of the interim registration phase, however, the body or organization that submitted the qualification will itself make that credit assignment.

Credit assignment is not, moreover, to be confused with level assignment: it is the complexity of learning described in the level descriptors which will determine the level at which a qualification is pegged on the Framework. Credit assignment remains merely a convenient mechanism for arbitrary determination of notional time taken to achieve the outcomes of a unit of learning.

2. How do I know whether the qualification I want to have registered should be a certificate, a diploma, or something else?

Comparison with existing qualifications and a consideration of the quantity and complexity of the learning outcomes will assist in determining the notional hours of learning that will be required. Credit assignment will assist you in determining the nature of the qualification you are designing or wanting to have registered.

Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs)

1. Can a constituency represented by an individual on an SGB replace its representative either with a new individual or with an alternate once the SGB has been registered and its members appointed?

Membership of SGBs is not as rigidly prescribed as that of NSBs, where membership is constituency-based (six stakeholder groupings are represented on each NSB). Flexibility of SGB membership is necessary to ensure that the appropriate mix of expertise and representivity is achieved. The notion of replacement of "representatives" is, therefore, antithetical to the very concept of the SGB: since membership is individual (it is only nomination which is group-determined), no individual can be said to "represent" a particular constituency. Technically, a constituency can motivate that a nominated member no longer enjoys that support of the nominating body, but the resignation or replacement of the individual is between the member and the constituency, not SAQA.

2. Can a member of an SGB also be a member of an NSB?

In exceptional circumstances, yes - provided that the member recuse him/herself when decisions involving a clash of interests are made either in an NSB or in an SGB meeting. However, in the interest of social and economic development of the nation at large, it preferable to broaden the base of those exposed to the standard generation process.

3. What is the relationship between SGBs and ETQAs?

The ETQAs through their quality assurance processes of the delivery of standards and qualifications may recommend to NSBs the review and adaptation of registered standards and qualifications or the establishment of new standards and qualifications. If, however, the question is whether an SGB may be an ETQA (or vice versa), the ETQA Regulations (RSA, 1998a) make it clear that a body or organization may apply for recognition as or membership of an SGB, accreditation as an ETQA, or appointment as a moderating body.

In the case of professional bodies whose Acts ostensibly allow them to set standards and quality assure the delivery of their standards, application for accreditation as an ETQA does not preclude the body from proposing the formation of an SGB in the field in question, provided that there is no overlap of ETQA and SGB in terms of membership or function. In order to broaden participation in the standard setting and quality assurance processes of the NQF to meet the objective of social and economic development of the nation at large, SAQA Regulations are intended to facilitate a shift to the broader participation of stakeholders in the education and training sector.

4. What is a Standards Generating Activity/initiative?

SAQA does not recognise any structure called a "Standards Generating Activity". The SGB, as indicated above, is the locus of standards generation, and an SGB is recognised or established by an NSB for the purpose of the generation of specific standards and qualifications within a framework of sub-fields.

5. How will SAQA establish coherence in each of the twelve organizing fields of the NQF?

One of the functions of the National Standards Bodies (NSBs) is to ensure coherence in and across its organizing field. It is also, however, incumbent upon SAQA staff (specifically, the Head of Standards Setting and the Assistant Director of the particular NSB) and, to an extent, SGBs to achieve coherence across the field. In other words, notwithstanding the NSB's responsibility for defining the boundaries of the field for which it is constituted and a framework of sub-fields guiding the recognition and/or establishment of SGBs (RSA, 1998b), the establishment of coherence is a collaborative venture. In carrying out their functions NSBs would be expected to flag areas where coherence is necessary across fields and the need to create cross references between NSBs.

Coherence is achieved, moreover, in the context of minimum duplication. The application of the principle of "maximum coherence, minimum duplication" in the formation of SGBs occurs in relation to two parameters: sub-field delineation; and the need for standards and qualifications. One of the functions of the NSB is to identify those areas in which standards and qualifications are needed, and to recommend the establishment of an SGB to generate those standards and qualifications; the recognition or establishment of the SGB, however, occurs within the framework of sub-fields delineated by the NSB. It is the prerogative of the NSB to determine how many SGBs it will register in its organising field *in relation to the purpose of SGB recognition or establishment*. Thus if "maximum coherence, minimum duplication" is best realised through the establishment of one SGB per sub-field, and such establishment satisfies the needs of the field as a whole for standards and qualifications, the NSB will follow this route; but if the standards and qualifications required in a sub-field are not able to be generated within the context of the establishment of one SGB per sub-field, then the NSB will recognise or establish more than one SGB in a sub-field. If, however, the organising principle for the establishment of SGBs becomes the need for standards and qualifications alone, there is a danger that a time-consuming and expensive process is set in place for a very small number of standards and qualifications – which would issue in unnecessary expense, if not a waste of resources. The NSB needs to be sensitive, then, in achieving a balance in its registration of SGBs in the field – a balance epitomised in adherence to the principle of "maximum coherence, minimum duplication".

6. What is the difference between SGB "recognition" and "establishment", and which is the preferable route to follow?

SGBs may be registered in one of two ways: either the NSB *establishes* an SGB; or the NSB *recognizes* as an SGB an organization or group of organizations which has applied for SGB recognition. Either way, the NSB, together with SAQA, has to ensure coherence in the organization of standards generating processes in and across the field.

The NSB Regulations (RSA, 1998b) do not favour one route above another. The SAQA Position Paper on "Standards Generation within the NQF" discusses both processes in some detail.

In addition to the information provided in the responses to FAQs above, further information on SAQA policy can be found on the SAQA web-site, which is designed in the following way.

The clickable arrows at the top of the SAQA web-site home page (www.saqa.org.za) indicate the broad categories under which one will find information at the web-site. These are:

- **New**- New has recently been added to flag recent postings of material on the site.
- **Documents**- Documents comprises (miscellaneous) SAQA documents, Policy documents relating to SAQA, and Legislation relating to SAQA (including the three pieces of indispensable SAQA legislation: the SAQA Act; the NSB Regulations; and the ETQA Regulations).
- **Publications**- Publications contains, at the time of writing, five editions of the SAQA Bulletin and four editions of the SAQA Update. Within the SAQA Bulletin one will find, variously, proposed sub-field delineation; criteria and guidelines for the generation and evaluation of standards and qualifications; level descriptors; an overview of assessment within outcomes-based education and training (OBET); and criteria and guidelines for the accreditation of Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs).
- **Framework**- Framework is a page devoted to Framework Implementation, and contains draft policy and implementation information on Standards Setting and Quality Assurance. Under the Standards Setting section is a list of the 12 NSBs, three of which (NSB 03, NSB 07, and NSB 11) at the time of writing are clickable and provide further information on developments within the respective fields for which these NSBs are responsible.
- **Mission**
- **Members**
- **Contact** - Contact affords members of the public an opportunity to interact with SAQA via Internet e-mail.

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THE PROCESSES FOR THE RECOGNITION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDARDS GENERATING BODIES (SGBs)

By Joe Samuels (Director, Framework Implementation, SAQA), Michael Cosser (Deputy Director, Framework Development, SAQA) & Sebolelo Mokhobo-Nomvete (Director, Framework Development, SAQA)

SGBs may be registered in one of two ways: either the NSB *establishes* an SGB; or the NSB *recognizes* as an SGB an organization or group of organizations which has applied for SGB recognition. In an attempt at clarifying the steps involved in the two processes, SAQA has devised the following models for establishment and recognition.

SGB Establishment

The NSB, having delineated the sub-fields within its organizing field, proceeds to establish SGBs within the framework of those sub-fields.

The following table outlines the process of SGB establishment and provides an accompanying timeline.

Table 1. Process for SGB Establishment.

Step	Responsibility	Timeline
1. Advertise, through the media (certainly print, and possibly radio), the Government Gazette, and the SAQA web-site, the proposed establishment of an SGB and brief of the SGB, calling for nominations to serve on it	NSB sub-committee for SGBs, in conjunction with NSB Assistant Director	3-week deadline provided for responses to reach SAQA office
2. Process nominations: a. Verify nominations b. Consult affected constituencies, and shortlist up to 25 nominations for publication in Government Gazette	a. NSB Assistant Director b. NSB Assistant Director in consultation with the NSB sub-committee for SGBs	a + b: maximum of 2 weeks
3. Publish names of nominees for public comment a. Screen nominations b. Publish nominations in Government Gazette, and simultaneously in the media (on a one-off basis) and on the SAQA web-site	a: Director: Framework Implementation (FI) b: NSB Assistant Director, in conjunction with FI Management Committee (gazetting via Executive Office)	3-week deadline provided for responses to reach SAQA office
4. Process responses and appoint SGB members: a. Consult affected constituencies, and where possible finalise SGB membership b. Appoint SGB members c. Publish SGB membership and, contingent upon the securing of funding, convene first meeting of SGB	a: NSB Assistant Director b + c: NSB Assistant Director in conjunction with NSB SGB Sub-Committee	1 week

5. Ensure that the work of the SGB meets the requirements for the registration of standards and qualifications as determined by the Authority (regulation 19(1)(d), NSB Regulations [RSA, 1998])	NSB	Duration of SGB appointment
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A 13-week establishment process is made possible only through the announcement in the media and on the SAQA web-site of the publication date of the nomination list for the SGB in the Government Gazette and through the simultaneous publication on the SAQA web-site and in the media of the nomination list itself.²

Scenario for SGB Recognition

The proposal that NSBs be proactive in establishing SGBs does not, however, mean that groupings should be discouraged from applying for recognition as SGBs. The NSB Regulations (RSA, 1998) do not privilege one form of SGB formation over the other; and as the following process for SGB recognition illustrates, the processes of SGB recognition and SGB establishment are of similar duration.

Table 2. Process for SGB Recognition.

Step	Responsibility	Timeline
1. Any initial communication regarding an SGB application is answered via the relevant NSB Coordinator's desk, in line with respective NSB procedures. The NSB Coordinator communicates this correspondence to the Chair of the NSB sub-committee for SGBs.	NSB Assistant Director	Received and acknowledged within 2 days
2. Potential SGB applicant meets with members of the NSB sub-committee for SGBs. This conversation will cover the current situation as well as NSB plans for SGBs in the sub-field. The sub-committee members will advise SGBs on actions to be taken. ³	NSB sub-committee for SGBs	Within 2 weeks of NSB Facilitator's letter
3. The SGB applicant prepares its application in accordance with the advice it has received, and in accordance with the NSB Regulations and the criteria and guidelines published by SAQA (Gunthorp, 1998).	SGB applicant	Open-ended ⁴
4. The NSB Facilitator receives an application for SGB status. It is screened vis-à-vis initial conversation and the NSB Regulations (RSA, 1998). In particular, it will be checked against issues of expertise and the requirements of equity and redress. The application will be presented to the Director : Framework Implementation for screening before being gazetted.	NSB Assistant Director	1 week
5. Should the application not pass the screening, the originators of the application will be contacted and further information and direction made available to them.	NSB Assistant Director	1 week
6. Should the application conform to NSB Regulations (RSA, 1998) and be reasonably in line with all other specifications, it is gazetted via the Executive Officer's office.	FI	7 weeks ⁵
7. During the gazetting period, the NSB SGB sub-committee and the SAQA office – in consultation with the NSB – consider necessary changes to the SGB application, and communicate these	NSB SGB sub-committee, SAQA office, & NSB	

to the originators of the application.		
8. On the closing date for public comment, the NSB Facilitator forwards comment received to the NSB, the originators of the SGB application, and the Director: Framework Implementation, with a recommendation.	NSB Assistant Director	
9. The finalized SGB application is forwarded to the SAQA office for inclusion on the agenda of the next NSB meeting ⁶	SGB applicant	
10. A decision on the application is taken at the NSB meeting on the basis of a proposal put forward by the NSB sub-committee for SGBs	NSB sub-committee for SGBs & NSB	
11. The final composition and brief of the SGB are published in the Government Gazette for public notification.	FI	

On the assumptions that

- *the SGB applicant takes two weeks to prepare its application for recognition (step 3)*
- *the application is approved (step 6)*
- *the redrafting of the application in response to public comment can be accomplished within two weeks (step 8)*
- *the final application coincides, within two weeks, with the holding of an NSB meeting to consider it (step 10); and*
- *the NSB approves the application for final public notification in the Government Gazette (step 11)*

the entire process for approval of SGB recognition would take no more than 15 weeks.

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Ms Shirley Steenekamp	Principal, Johannesburg Technical College and Executive Director, Vocational Education Development Company	Committee of Technical College Principals
Ms Silas Zuma	National Director, National Institute for Community Education and Chairperson, College Sector Coalition	Colleges other than teachers' and technical colleges

This edition was compiled, edited, and designed by Michael Cosser

Footnotes:

1. Guidelines for submission of applications are contained in the NSB Regulations (RSA, 1998) and in the document "Criteria for the Generation and Evaluation of Standards and Qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework", which appears in *SAQA Bulletin 2.1* (August 1998).
2. This step is proposed in order to counter the inaccessibility of the *Government Gazette* to many stakeholders, who would have readier access to the SAQA web-site and to the media.

3. Steps 1 & 2 are necessary only if the SGB applicant requires the advice which the NSB sub-committee for SGBs gives it. If such advice is not needed, the entire process is shortened by two weeks.
4. The length of time the SGB applicant takes to prepare its application is unspecifiable.
5. As in the case of SGB establishment, the 4-week gazetting period for the public to submit comments to SAQA will be supplemented by the simultaneous publication of the SGB application on the SAQA website and (on a one-off basis) in the media.
6. The entire process of SGB recognition needs to be planned, as far as possible, around the published dates of NSB meeting