NEWS FROM HUMAN RESOURCES

SAQA SCOOPS AN INVESTORS IN PEOPLE AWARD

SAQA was one of the 40 pilot sites that were selected to participate in the Investors in People Standard in South Africa. This International Standard is built on four principles, namely commitment to the development of people, planning to achieve that end, implementing effective action plans, and evaluation of the success.

SAQA is proud to announce that it has been recognised as an Investor in People organisation after receiving recognition from Investors in People UK in June 2003. With this recognition, SAQA will receive a certificate and a plaque. " This process has afforded our organisation an opportunity to measure itself against an International Standard of good people management. The honour of being recognised as an Investors in People site shows clearly that we take pride in our people and believe in their training and development. In addition to benefits associated with such recognition, we are also entitled to use the Investors in People logo in our documents", said Mr Isaacs, Executive Officer of SAQA. "We are a learning organisation and our people are committed to their own improvement – we are proud of our achievement!"

Quality in education and training has been identified as a key goal that lies at the foundation of the delivery of the government's Human Resource Development Strategy. SAQA recognised that in order to attain its goal of ensuring quality qualifications that will serve the needs of the nation, it needed to embark upon a process of developing its own people to their full potential in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the National Qualifications Framework. This initiative is also in line with the first objective of the National Skills Development Strategy which urges organisations to have enterprise-based people development.

Since the Standard is about continuous improvement, SAQA has drawn up a plan to retain the Investors in People Standard. The Standard is motivation enough to encourage SAQA to continue supporting the development and improvement of employee performance, to work as a team, committed to the transformation of education and training and to the enhancement of our nation's ability to manage the change to a system of quality of which we can all be proud.

RPL SCOPING EXERCISE: A SURVEY OF CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION

Recognition of Prior Learning is a key deliverable of the National Qualifications Framework. The necessary legislation, policies and guidelines have now been put in place. However, the time has come to "practice what we preach". The RPL Scoping Exercise hopes to take the first step in the systematic implementation of this important process.

The SAQA Recognition of Prior Learning policy has been in existence for a year. However, as a policy is only as good as its implementation and in keeping with SAQA's philosophy of supporting policies with implementation guidelines, a discussion document – *Criteria and Guidelines for the Implementation of RPL* - has been developed and was in the public comment phase until 30 June 2003. In addition, over the past two years, SAQA has captured queries about RPL from individuals, organisations and providers. The initial purpose of this database of queries was to determine the nature of RPL services required and the extent of these.

In support of the information gained through the initial database, the Directorate Quality Assurance and Development (DQAD) is now embarking on an extensive survey of the current implementation of RPL. This is known as the "RPL Scoping Exercise". The primary aim of this process is to determine the extent of RPL implementation at the level of the learning site. In addition, the survey also seeks to identify the quality assurance and monitoring processes put in place for RPL systems, as well as to determine how RPL is implemented and for what purpose, i.e. RPL for access to learning programmes, RPL for awarding of credits, or a combination of these. Most importantly, the survey will seek to identify "best practices" in order to facilitate implementation at other learning sites.

In brief, the objectives of the survey are:

- to identify challenges with regard to the implementation of RPL;
- to highlight critical areas where RPL is needed, i.e. to conduct a needs analysis;
- to inform potential beneficiaries of RPL processes and assist them in accessing information on the topic of RPL services;

and

- to use the findings and statistical analyses to inform future research.

A survey questionnaire has been developed, and will be sent to organisations and institutions, which will be requested to complete it as a data-collection tool.

The information collected will be fed into an improved database developed by the Directorate: Quality Assurance and Development. Ongoing analysis of the data will take place, and reports will be submitted to SAQA committees and will also serve at formal SAQA meetings. For this reason, SAQA requests organisations or individuals who are in the process of implementing RPL services to contact the Directorate. For more inputs and comments contact: Betty Serame at (012) 431 5093 or bserame@saqa.co.za.

SAQA LAUNCHES NEW LEADERSHIP CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE TO STRENGTHEN NQF IMPLEMENTATION IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (FET) BAND

With funding support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), SAQA has embarked on a new initiative, developed jointly with the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (Ontario MTCU, Canada) -- the *NQF Support Link*. This initiative is scheduled to be completed in 2004 under SAQA's leadership, and is managed by Ontario MTCU in partnership with SAQA. The goal of the initiative is to develop senior leadership capacity building materials and platforms to strengthen NQF implementation "on the ground" in the education and training system. The initial focus of the project is the executive, governing and senior programme leadership in the new Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges and in other targeted organisations. It is anticipated that *NQF Support Link* activities will focus, beyond 2004, on other NQF implementation priority areas.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

The first phase (five years) of CIDA-funded support to SAQA for NQF development and implementation concluded in 2001. This phase focused primarily on support for the building of SAQA's organisational and administrative capacity from its inception, as well as on the development and launch of the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD).

At the conclusion of the first phase, the Governments of Canada and South Africa, at the request of the South African Departments of Education and Labour and SAQA, agreed that a second phase of support, over four years (2002-2006), would be undertaken with a strengthened focus on NQF implementation "on the ground". Ontario MTCU continues to be the CIDA-appointed executing agency for the project in partnership with SAQA.

The thrust of the second phase is on developing and delivering senior leadership capacity-building materials to support NQF implementation, with initial emphasis on the executive, governing and senior programme leaders in the newly constituted Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges and other targeted organisations, i.e. those with whom the FET colleges would need to work in order to meet the colleges' responsibilities for implementing the NQF. This initiative is known as the *NQF Support Link*, the collective term referring to a range of NQF implementation leadership capacity building activities being developed for the FET band.

At its April 2002 meeting, the South Africa-Canada Project Steering Committee approved the four-year project implementation plan and authorised the release of a Request for Proposals to solicit bids from South African and Canadian suppliers to provide a "comprehensive solution" for planning, developing, piloting and delivery of appropriate learning tools for the *NQF Support Link*.

This tender process has resulted in a contract being awarded to the Universalia Management Group Limited, of Montreal and Ottawa, Canada, in partnership with the South African National Business Initiative (NBI), the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) and a number of other South African education and training organisations.

2. NQF SUPPORT LINK OBJECTIVES AND ITS "FET LEADERSHIP" TARGET AUDIENCES

Again, the *NQF Support Link* is designed to ensure that the benefits of the NQF accrue to FET learners. The emphasis is on developing NQF implementation leadership to provide first and second chance learning and training opportunities for youth and young adults. These include "unemployed or under-employed youth and adults, others who need to update skills, reskill and retrain for South Africa's changing economy" and "the constituencies that have, historically, been excluded from education and training opportunities". (A New Institutional Landscape for Public Further Education and Training Colleges, Department of Education, 2001).

Specifically, the goal of this initiative, aligned with the Government of South Africa's Human Resource Development Strategy (April 2001) and with *A New Institutional Landscape for Public Further Education and Training Colleges: Reform of South Africa's Technical Colleges* (Department of Education, September 2001) is:

To equip the leadership of the Further Education and Training (FET) band and, in particular, the governing, executive and programme leadership of the FET Colleges and of targeted organisations, with the learning resources and qualifications to embed the NQF effectively to meet the needs of learners in a focused, nimble and timely manner.

In order to fulfil the above objective, the initiative is designed to ensure that national system-wide consistency in treatment of learners, as envisioned in the NQF, is embedded in FET learning, teaching and service, with respect to:

- Standards and qualifications.
- Principles and criteria for access to education and training.
- Recognised standards of quality.
- Clear procedures for quality assurance and redress.

The targets of the initiative will be groups of leaders, as follows:

- FET College Councils.
- FET Chief Executive Officers, Senior Managers and Heads of Department.
- Leaders of other targeted organisations, e.g. skills planning, learnership and ETQA managers in the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), and skills development facilitators based in the workplace.

The work will be carried out with the involvement and support of:

- Officials in the national Department of Education's Chief Directorate: FET Schools and Colleges.
- Officials in the FET Directorates of provincial Education Departments.
- Officials in the Department of Labour with FET responsibilities.
- SAQA officials.

3. NQF SUPPORT LINK OVERVIEW

The initial *NQF Support Link* will focus on six NQF priorities, with contents being developed by South African experts in the following areas:

- Implementing the NQF (foundation module).
- Strategic Governance in Implementing the NQF.
- The NQF and Learning Programmes.
- The NQF and Assessment.
- The NQF and Learnerships.
- Information Systems, the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) and the NQF.

The *NQF Support Link* being developed by Universalia and partners includes:

- A learning system composed of an integrated suite of flexible capacity building standards.
- Resources and learning tools (e.g. modules, computer-based activities, on-site applied activities).
- Advisory support.
- A Learning Management System (LMS).

The *NQF Support Link* will use a variety of methodologies and media. The solution is designed to be sustainable, scalable, easily maintainable and readily modifiable over time, to meet the NQF-related needs of not only the FET band, but also of other sectors and institutions in education and training in South Africa.

4. TIMETABLE

The development and implementation schedule for the initial *NQF Support Link* is as follows:

- May 2003 to August 2003: Design and development.
- September 2003 to March 2004: Testing, piloting and delivery.

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The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and other SADC national qualifications authorities are developing the skills base of the region by ensuring resource and capacity building in education and training. The harmonisation and articulation of qualifications and standards in the region are desirable moves and congruent with economic growth and development.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is the key programme of African renaissance under the African Union, and will be built on the foundations of regional groupings. NEPAD highlights the importance of regional cooperation and also identifies human resource development as a priority, with a focus on health, education and skills development. SAQA is active in the NEPAD initiative and believes that sustainable development includes the practical use of appropriate models for creating and maintaining meaningful economic and social wealth.

The divisive colonialism of the past meant the evolution of different systems of education and training and different qualifications and standards in SADC countries. The notion of a Regional Qualifications Framework emerged from the protocol on education and training of 1998, signed by the SADC ministers of education. Technical committees were formed and their strategic plans were incorporated into the SADC Human Resources Development sector in July 2002.

SAQA SUPPORT TO THE SADC REGION

Economic opportunities in the SADC region and the development of qualifications and standards are linked by the common demand for skills and training. Without the availability of appropriate skills, economic development will be held back. The right skills and suitable investment underscore the simplicity with which sustainable development might be achieved.

At a seminar hosted by SAQA between November 25 and 27 2002 in Pretoria, different national qualifications frameworks were compared and standards were benchmarked. Under discussion were current national qualifications framework initiatives in Mexico and South Africa; training in project management competencies at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia and at BPR Project Management, South Africa; the Arusha and Washington Conventions; the private sector and its relation to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the SADC region; the NQF in Namibia and other SADC countries; qualifications in the insurance sector; and training in the tourism sector from Sun International and in the petroleum industry from Beyond Petroleum.

The purpose and objectives of the seminar were:

- to share experiences in the development of NQFs internationally;
- to investigate and record initiatives (national, regional, continental and global) in terms of standards setting in order to learn from different experiences;
- to begin to develop a network of actors working internationally on standards setting and qualifications;
- To set up a database of information on projects and programmes internationally that relate to standards setting and qualifications; and
- to strengthen regional and global cooperation.

Participants included: Mr Carlos Klapp (Mexico), Ms Lynn Crawford (Australia), Ms Alicia Aitken (Australia), Ms Angela Irwin (New Zealand), Mr Doug Blackmur (New Zealand); colleagues from SADC countries (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Swaziland, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Mauritius, Malawi and Botswana); local speakers; members of the NQF structures (NSB, SGB and ETQA members); and SAQA staff members and co-learners.

In keeping with the outcomes of the seminar, one of which was to identify the trends and imperatives in articulating and harmonising qualifications and standards, SAQA continues its support of sustainable development in the SADC and its support to SADC member countries. This support will be provided through the harnessing of SAQA's resources and skills for the capacity building of member states in the region around NQF development; and the establishing of exchange initiatives with SADC member states, including the examination of different models of skills supply.

The purpose of the exchanges is to empower participants through the development of the skills needed to implement and administer SADC country national qualification frameworks. The nature of the exchanges is determined by the needs of member countries, which will be reviewed regularly. Priority areas for exchanges include finance and accounting, insurance, agriculture, mining and retail, hospitality and entertainment, project management and development communications.

Monitoring Education & Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs)

Between October 2002 and March 2003, the Directorate Quality Assurance and Development (DQAD) examined the efficacy and efficiency of SAQA policies in terms of Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) implementation. A key focus area in this regard has been the implementation of the procedures for monitoring and auditing of Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs). These procedures are aimed at creating and enhancing a viable and credible quality assurance system within the NQF. DQAD has designed and implemented a monitoring and education and training quality auditing rollout plan for ETQAs, aimed at capacitating and assisting them to carry out their statutory functions and to verify whether the ETQAs are complying with SAQA legislation. DQAD plans to have monitored all ETQAs by July 2003.

Monitoring has two key components, namely a preliminary monitoring meeting and a two-day monitoring intervention. During the initial monitoring discussion, the monitoring brief is clarified and a monitoring agreement is signed. The following ETQAs have been monitored to date:

- Banking Sector Education and Training Authority (BANKSETA)
- Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority (CHIETA)
- Clothing, Textiles, Footwear and Leather Sector Education and Training Authority (TEXTILES)
- Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA)
- Diplomacy, Intelligence, Defence and Trade Education and Training Authority (DIDTETA)
- Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA)
- Energy Sector Education and Training Authority (ESETA)
- Financial & Accounting Services Sector Education and Training Authority (FASSET)
- Food & Beverages Manufacturing Industry Sector Education and Training Authority (FOODBEV)
- Forest Industries Education and Training Authority (FIETA)
- Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority (HWSETA)
- Information Systems, Electronics and Telecommunication Technologies (ISETT)
- Insurance Sector Education and Training Authority (INSETA)
- Local Government, Water and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (LGWSETA)
- Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (MERSETA)
- Media, Advertising, Publishing, Printing, and Packaging (MAPPPSETA)
- Mining Qualifications Authority (MQA)
- Police, Private Security, Legal and Correctional Services Sector Education and Training Authority (POSLECSETA)
- Primary Agriculture Education and Training Authority (PAETA)
- Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority (PSETA)
- Services Sector Education and Training Authority (SERVICES)
- Sector Education and Training for Secondary Agriculture (SETASA)
- Tourism and Hospitality Education and Training Authority (THETA)
- Transport Education and Training Authority (TETA)
- Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (W&RSETA)
- South African Nursing Council (SANC)
- Professional Accreditation Body for Health and Skincare (PAB)
- South African Institute for Materials Handling (SAIMH)
- South African Board of Personnel Practices (SABPP)
- Council on Higher Education (CHE)
- Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA)
- The South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC)
- Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)

Draft monitoring reports have been compiled and are currently being discussed with the relevant ETQAs. These reports are based on quantitative as well as qualitative data that were collected during the monitoring intervention. DQAD is in the process of finalising these reports in a way that will make them meaningful to ETQAs and that will help in indicating strengths, gaps and weaknesses in ETQA functioning. It is envisaged that information emerging from these reports will assist DQAD and the ETQAs in developing individualised developmental and support plans encompassing priority areas and timeframes for delivery.

Through this process of monitoring, SAQA identified the preliminary emerging trends that are set out below.

EMERGING TRENDS

- ETQAs were positive about the NQF.
- ETQAs displayed a high level of commitment towards the implementation of the NQF through their fulfilment of the principal criteria, identity criteria and functional criteria as per schedule C of the procedure for the monitoring and auditing of ETQAs.
- The relationship between ETQAs and SAQA: DQAD is positive, and an increased spirit of cooperation and partnership is prevalent.
- It was also evident that the relationships among ETQAs have improved and that there is an increased level of sharing and cooperation in terms of capacity and information. For example, ETQAs are now signing memoranda of understanding among themselves to improve working relations.
- ETQA staff are extremely knowledgeable about their ETQA function, its processes, its primary focus areas and the NQF environment.
- There is a high level of transparency shown by ETQAs. SAQA looks at national state representation at board level at these ETQAs. It has been established, through documents such as annual reports and minutes of board and committee meetings, that such representation does exist.
- ETQAs found the SAQA monitoring instrument and procedures to be valid and relevant. By using this approach they could measure their own levels of delivery, competency and communication.