The South African Qualifications Authority
NQF Implementation Framework
2011-2015
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Foreword

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a remarkable feature in the New South Africa. It is one of the first qualifications frameworks that have been developed in the world and provides a comprehensive system for the classification and registration of quality qualifications. Faced with challenges of unemployment, inability to access education and skills shortages, South Africa needs a world class education and training system that is able to address these challenges. The NQF underpins the education and training system in such a way that learners and workers (irrespective of their race, gender, background, religion, geographical location or ability) are able to progress in their career and educational paths so as to gain access and opportunities that better their lives. This means that the post-school education and training system must also provide relevant and quality qualifications to the public.

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the three Quality Councils (QCs) namely, the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi) and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), are working together collaboratively to ensure that the work of each organisation upholds the objectives and values of the NQF. The purpose of the NQF Implementation Framework is a roadmap to guide all NQF organisations to effectively implement the NQF. Our collaboration will ensure a quality NQF system that allows learners and workers to flourish. The collaboration will also ensure that all three sub-frameworks under the NQF function in an integrated and coordinated manner, with each organ in the system supporting the other.
Considerable progress has already been made in this regard, including the following:

- The determination of the sub-frameworks of the NQF;
- The publication of the policies for the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF) and the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF);
- The establishment of agreed level descriptors;
- Policy and criteria on the recognition of professional bodies and registration of professional designations on the NQF;
- Policy and criteria for the registration of qualifications and part qualifications on the NQF;
- National policy for the implementation of the recognition of prior learning;
- Draft policy for credit accumulation and transfer;
- Draft policy for designing and implementing assessment for NQF qualifications, part qualifications and professional designations; and
- System of Collaboration.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, for his leadership on the NQF and his confidence in the NQF organisations. Let us embrace our roles of ensuring a quality education and training system for the people of South Africa by championing the tasks delegated to us as well as advancing the objectives of the NQF. Through effective communication, collaboration and coordination we will be able to make the NQF a valued asset of the people of South Africa.

Mr Joe Samuels
Chief Executive Officer
SAQA
**Context**

1. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act (67 of 2008) requires that the development and implementation of the NQF, and by implication also the three Sub-frameworks, takes place in accordance with an NQF Implementation Framework that is prepared by South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) after consultation with the Quality Councils (QCs). This document contains the key elements of the NQF Implementation Framework for the period 2011 to 2015.

2. The Implementation Framework should be read with the following base and complementary documents:
   a. *Towards the establishment of an NQF Forum* (NQF Forum 2010);
   b. *Regulations for Resolving a Dispute in terms of the NQF Act* (GG33483, 27 August 2010);
   c. *Guidelines on Strategy and Priorities for the NQF* (Minister: HET);
   d. *System of Collaboration for the NQF* (SAQA 2011, revised 2013);
   e. *Performance agreement between the Minister of Higher Education and Training (HET) and the President* (2010);
   f. *National Skills Development Strategy* (DHET);
   g. *The core identity of the Sub-frameworks* (SAQA 2011);
   h. *White Paper on Post-school Education and Training* (DHET 2013);
   i. *National Development Plan 2030* (NPC 2011);
   j. *Determination of the Sub-frameworks that comprise the NQF* (DHET 2012); and

3. The Implementation Framework is prepared under the guidance of the NQF Forum, and is owned by its permanent sub-committee, the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) Committee.

4. The Implementation Framework identifies the processes by which SAQA and the QCs will ensure the full and effective take-up of their functions in terms of the NQF Act, including the transition from the SAQA Act (1995) to the NQF Act (2008). A key purpose of the Implementation Framework is to ensure that the NQF remains an integrated system while accommodating the necessary and unique Sub-framework approaches established through the NQF Act.
5. The Implementation Framework informs and draws on the strategic planning cycles of the NQF implementation partners and presents these objectives in an integrated manner, but without losing the identity of the partners. The main purpose is to find synergies and promote collaboration between the three Sub-frameworks while acknowledging the differences in approaches. The Implementation Framework provides a future vision of what can be achieved over a five-year cycle and towards which the NQF partner organisations will align their own strategies.

NQF implementation priorities for 2011-2015

6. The following six priorities have been identified for this period:
   a. Completion of transition from the SAQA Act to the NQF Act;
   b. Develop a System of Collaboration between SAQA and the QCs;
   c. Coordination of the three Sub-frameworks of the NQF;
   d. Establishment of standard setting and quality assurance mechanisms within each of the three Sub-frameworks;
   e. Completion and operationalisation of the progression and articulation apparatus of the NQF; and
   f. Further development and improvement of the information apparatus of the NQF.

Priority 1: Completion of transition from the SAQA Act to the NQF Act

7. The transition from the SAQA Act (1995) to the NQF Act (2008) requires a coordinated effort from all NQF implementation partners. The NQF Forum and CEO Committee will play an important role in this regard, and it is recommended that the NQF Forum meets annually or at the request of the Minister: HET, and the CEO Committee meets quarterly. SAQA must continue to provide the Secretariat support to ensure that progression is achieved. Attendance of meetings must be prioritised by all NQF implementation partners.


9. The Guidelines on Strategy and Priorities for the NQF must be completed by the Inter-departmental NQF Steering Committee at least six months prior to the applicable period wherein they will apply.
10. A review of the HEQSF must be undertaken and completed by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) by 2012. The review must take into account the concurrent development of the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF) and Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF).

11. The GFETQSF must be finalised and an implementation strategy agreed by Umalusi by 2012. The finalisation must take into account the concurrent review of the HEQSF and development of the OQSF.

12. The OQSF must be finalised and an implementation strategy agreed by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) by 2012. The finalisation must take into account the concurrent review of the HEQSF and development of the GFETQSF.

13. Any necessary organisational adjustments to SAQA, the CHE, Umalusi and the QCTO must be prioritised and completed by 2012. Specific support should be given to the QCTO in order for it to operate as an independent organisation with the necessary capacity to perform its legislative role.

**Priority 2: Develop a System of Collaboration between SAQA and the QCs**

14. The System of Collaboration developed by SAQA, in consultation with the QCs, must guide the mutual relations of SAQA and the QCs in such a manner as to avoid or prevent conflict and resolve disputes.

15. The System of Collaboration must include details on the functioning of the following:
   a. NQF Forum;
   b. CEO Committee;
   c. Bi- and multi-lateral engagements between SAQA and the QCs, as well as between QCs; and
   d. Conciliation process overseen by SAQA and/or DHET.

16. The System of Collaboration for the NQF must be completed by SAQA by December 2011.

**Priority 3: Coordination of the three Sub-frameworks of the NQF**

17. SAQA must oversee the further development and implementation of the NQF and ensure the achievement of its objectives. In doing so, SAQA must ensure that the three Sub-frameworks of the NQF are developed in a coordinated manner. SAQA must facilitate ongoing engagement between the three QCs.
18. SAQA must develop, after consultation with the QCs, the following NQF policies by 2012:

   a. Level descriptors for the NQF;
   b. Registration of qualifications and part-qualifications;
   c. Assessment, recognition of prior learning and credit accumulation and transfer; and
   d. Recognition of professional bodies and registration of professional designations on the NQF.

**Priority 4: Establishment of standard setting and quality assurance mechanisms within each of the three Sub-frameworks**

19. The standards setting and quality assurance apparatus of the three Sub-frameworks must be completed and operationalised by 2013, with procedures for collaboration in place for inter-dependent and complementary qualifications and part-qualifications.

20. Each QC must develop, taking into account NQF policies, the following Sub-framework policies by 2012:

   a. Development, registration and publication of qualifications;
   b. Assessment, recognition of prior learning and credit accumulation and transfer; and
   c. Quality assurance.

21. Interim and transitional mechanisms must be agreed and communicated to stakeholders by 2011.

22. Delegations and/or memoranda of understanding by QCs to competent standards setting and quality assurance bodies must be developed and implemented by 2013.

**Priority 5: Completion and operationalisation of the progression and articulation apparatus of the NQF**

23. The new progression apparatus of the NQF must be completed and operationalised by 2014. This must include mechanisms for ensuring that learners are able to progress within the learning system and along their chosen career paths.

24. The national careers advisory service must be fully developed with adequate capacity required to service the country by 2014.

25. Professional bodies must be recognised by SAQA and their designations registered on the NQF by 2015.
Priority 6: Further development and improvement of the information apparatus of the NQF

26. The National Learners’ Records Database (NLRD) must be further developed and the functionality improved to also accommodate national data on professions, including professional bodies, professional designations and holders of professional designations.

27. The NLRD must make accurate information available to stakeholders and the public on a regular basis, but at least once per year.

28. The databases of QCs must be further developed and the functionality improved to accommodate sector-specific changes by 2014. Compatibility with the NLRD must be ensured.