

# NQF Implementation Framework 2015-2020



higher education  
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Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



basic education

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# Foreword

Ten years have passed since the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act (Act 67 of 2008) replaced the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (Act 58 of 1995). This resulted in an amended NQF with three Sub-frameworks and 10 levels replacing South Africa's first NQF comprising three bands and eight levels.

The NQF Act, in addition to introducing amendments to the structure of the NQF, also established three Quality Councils (QCs), one for each of the three Sub-Frameworks, to, *inter alia*, develop qualifications and part-qualifications and implement a quality assurance regime within their respective Sub-Frameworks. The recognition of professional bodies and the registration of professional designations also became an NQF focus.

SAQA has been charged with the responsibility, after consultation with and sometimes in consultation with, the QCs, of developing the national policies that are required to enable the NQF to be implemented, and thus realise the objects of the NQF. Likewise, the QCs have the responsibility of developing policies that are aligned to the SAQA policies, for their respective Sub-Frameworks. All the required policies have been developed and adopted for implementation. We now move from the policy development phase to policy implementation.

Implementation of the NQF requires careful thought and planning. This Implementation Framework for the 2015-2020 period provides a broad roadmap for implementation of the NQF and includes:

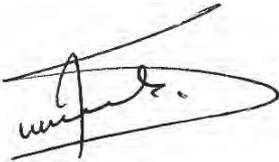
- Strengthening collaboration between the NQF partners for optimum use of resources and no duplication of services and responsibilities;
- Developing a clear definition and understanding of SAQA's NQF oversight role and the role of the three QCs;
- Developing universal understanding of and buy-in amongst the NQF role players and the general public of NQF policies such as the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Articulation, Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) and Assessment;
- Providing adequate human, financial and capital resources, bearing in mind the realities of the economic situation in the country;
- Setting up efficient and effective systems to make the NQF work;
- Simplifying the NQF to make it accessible to the learner on the street and more usable by the providers of education and training; and
- Co-ordinating the three Sub-Frameworks to ensure seamless mobility of learners from and between the Sub-Frameworks as they continue on their career and learning pathways.

The government's White Paper on the Post-School Education and Training sector contains many invaluable recommendations that place the sector up-front and centre in the social and economic development of South Africa and its citizens. These recommendations require urgent and in-depth consideration and inclusion in the plans to further develop the NQF. Some of the recommendations, such as the establishment of community colleges, have already been implemented by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) while others are included in this Implementation Framework.

The value of registered qualifications, which contain only outcomes and associated assessment criteria without supporting curriculum, has been debated and been under dispute since the inception of the NQF. One of the initiatives included in this Framework is to analyse different qualification types and, if it is in the interests of the users of the NQF, to develop a process for the inclusion of curriculum standards into NQF registered qualifications. The decolonisation of South African qualifications and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge also form part of the deliberations to make the NQF relevant to South African learners.

The NQF database of learner achievements, recognised professional bodies and registered professional designations housed in the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) plays a vital role in education and training and skills development planning, in the placement of employees into vacant posts, in the detection of misrepresented qualifications and in the curbing of unscrupulous education provision. The digitisation of all learner records on the NLRD will further enhance these NQF-related functions.

I wish to thank the Minister of Higher Education and Training (HET) for his astute leadership and for the trust he has placed in SAQA and the NQF partners to further develop and implement the NQF. We look forward to a synergistic implementation of the policies and processes of the NQF by the NQF partners by ensuring that the NQF provides a relevant and accessible service to the citizens of our country. The NQF must enable all South Africans to develop the knowledge and skills needed for career and personal development, while simultaneously facilitating socio-economic development in South Africa.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Samuels', enclosed within a large, stylized, hand-drawn oval shape.

Joe Samuels  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
SAQA

# 1. Introduction

SAQA and the QCs must seek to achieve the objectives of the NQF by:

- a. Developing, fostering and maintaining an integrated and transparent national framework for the recognition of learning achievements;
- b. Ensuring that South African qualifications meet appropriate criteria, determined by the Minister: HET as contemplated in Section 8 of the NQF Act, and are internationally comparable; and
- c. Ensuring that South African qualifications are of an acceptable quality.

## 2. Purpose of the NQF Implementation Framework

The NQF Act requires the organisations tasked with implementing the NQF to do so in a transparent and integrated manner. SAQA must, in order to advance the objectives of the NQF, oversee the implementation of the NQF in accordance with an implementation framework prepared by SAQA after consultation with the QCs (NQF Act 13(1)(e)). The NQF Implementation Framework allows for NQF organisations to work on a common agreed-upon road map for implementation that is accessible to all NQF partners and stakeholders.

The NQF Implementation Framework 2015/16 - 2019/20 builds on the work and the priorities set out in the 2011 – 2015 NQF Implementation Framework. The priorities in Table 1 have been set for the next five years.

## 3. Priorities for the period 2015 – 2020

**Table 1: List of Priorities for the period 2015 - 2020**

Priority 1	Further development and implementation of the NQF
Priority 2	Implementation of the White Paper on Post-school Education and Training (2013)
Priority 3	Ongoing implementation and further refinement of a System of Collaboration between SAQA and the QCs
Priority 4	Co-ordination of the three Sub-Frameworks of the NQF
Priority 5	Implementation of standards and quality assurance mechanisms within each of the three Sub-Frameworks
Priority 6	Further development and improvement of the information apparatus of the NQF

### 3.1 Priority 1 - Further development and implementation of the NQF

The NQF is a living entity that must respond to changes in the South African education and training environment. Further development is envisaged in the following ways:

- a. Develop a process in collaboration with the QCs to include curriculum statements or indicators in registered qualifications and part-qualifications (2017);
- b. Develop and report, in collaboration with the QCs, on:
  - i. processes to address:
    - decolonisation and transformation of qualifications, and
    - inclusion of curricula in qualifications;

- ii. how qualification standards can underpin the development and delivery of decolonised and transformed qualifications and curricula ;
  - iii. the impact such measures will have on qualification design; and
  - iv. the changes required to the Policy for the Registration of Qualifications and Part-Qualifications on the NQF to include the above measures (2018);
- c. Review the policies of the NQF on a systemic basis and make the necessary amendments to assure better policy implementation (2019);
- d. Re-examine existing registered qualifications and part-qualifications to identify those that are narrow, exclusionary and non-transformative and begin a process to amend them (2017); and
- e. Develop, in collaboration with the QCs, possible mechanisms to include indigenous knowledge into curricula of higher education and further education qualifications (2017).

### ***3.2 Priority 2 - Implementation of the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (2013) (WP PSET)***

The WP PSET focuses on simplifying the NQF and ensuring that qualifications on each of the three Sub-Frameworks have clear articulation pathways. The NQF organisations will achieve this through the following interventions:

- a. Continue to focus on legacy qualifications to either incorporate them into the NQF or phase them out (2018);
- b. Register credible and relevant qualifications and part-qualifications for the TVET system with clear articulation pathways for learners exiting the TVET system into either further learning or work (2019); and
- c. Develop a system-wide understanding of articulation and RPL and assist education and training institutions/providers to implement the operational policies of SAQA and the QCs on Articulation, RPL and CAT (2016).

### ***3.3 Priority 3 - Ongoing implementation and further refinement of a System of Collaboration between SAQA and the QCs***

The System of Collaboration was developed to assist SAQA and the QCs to work together in a manner that would promote the implementation of the NQF. The System of Collaboration describes how SAQA and the QCs should work together and the channels that should be followed in the case of a dispute. Ongoing implementation and further refinement will take place in the following ways:

- a. Evaluate the system of Collaboration to identify weaknesses and develop initiatives to improve cooperation and collaboration within the NQF family (2017); and
- b. Develop and promulgate SAQA's role as the oversight body of the NQF as well as the relative roles of the QCs as the key implementing bodies of the NQF (2016).

### *3.4 Priority 4 - Coordination of the three Sub-Frameworks of the NQF*

The three Sub-Frameworks have been developed, published and implemented. Focus has shifted towards ensuring that the nomenclature of each qualification within the Sub-Framework is coherent with that Sub-Framework. Much more needs to be done to ensure that learners are able to craft learning pathways within and across Sub-Frameworks. This will be achieved in the following ways:

- a. Develop, in collaboration with the QCs, implementation and monitoring mechanisms, to facilitate easy movement of learners across occupational and associated learning pathways within and between the Sub-Frameworks (2017);
- b. Work with institutions, professional bodies and employers to ensure that artisans who qualify through the RPL route and those with the National N Diploma are granted equal recognition with those who gain entrance through traditional means (2017); and
- c. Hold discussions with the Department of Labour and the DPSA to encourage them to make use of NQF levels rather than individual qualification types in their vacancy advertisements (2016).

### *3.5 Priority 5 - Implementation of standards and quality assurance mechanisms within each of the three Sub-Frameworks*

The quality assurance role of SAQA and the QCs is vital for the success of the NQF. The implementation of standards and quality assurance measures will be done in the following manner:

- a. Develop and register quality qualifications that comply with the Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part-Qualifications on the SA NQF (ongoing);
- b. Recognise professional bodies and register professional designations in accordance with the Policy on the Recognition of Professional Bodies and the Registration of Professional Designations on the SA NQF (ongoing);
- c. Conduct a joint study into existing quality assurance mechanisms in the three Sub-Frameworks with a view to harmonising and integrating such mechanisms into a cohesive quality assurance system, to support articulation arrangements (2018); and
- d. Ensure that all backlogs in quality assurance processes such as accreditation, registration of private providers, external moderation and verification and the certification of learners are addressed (2016).

### *3.6 Priority 6 - Further development and improvement of the information apparatus of the NQF*

An efficient and well-functioning NQF requires an inclusive database of digital learner records, registered qualifications, registered and accredited practitioners and

any other information required. SAQA currently has the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) which is the information apparatus designed to achieve this goal. Records are, however, also kept by the QCs and other institutions and millions of records are still in paper format. Information apparatus will be further developed in the following ways:

- a. Digitise all learner achievements and record them on the NLRD (2019);
- b. Work with QCs, Universities South Africa (USAf), National Artisan Moderation Body (NAMB), DHET, Department of Basic Education (DBE), Assessment Quality Partners (AQPs), DHET Examinations Directorate and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) to gain support for the Digitisation Project and to encourage collaboration in achieving learner record digitisation (2016);
- c. Encourage the QCs and other institutions to provide digitised learner records to the NLRD timeously (2016);
- d. SAQA will work collaboratively with DHET, the three QCs, South African Police Service (SAPS) and the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) with regard to misrepresented qualifications (on-going);
- e. Establish a Register of Misrepresented Qualifications and Providers operating outside of the South African NQF (2016);
- f. Assist QCs to identify and report misrepresented qualifications to SAQA (2016); and
- g. Establish the Register of Fraudulent Qualifications (2017).

## 4. Conclusion

The NQF Implementation Framework 2015-2020 has been developed to focus the work of SAQA and the QCs towards achieving their goal of further developing and implementing the NQF.





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