

SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

NO. 681

14 JULY 2017



SAQA LANGUAGE POLICY

In accordance with the Use of Languages Act, 2012, 4(1), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), as a national public entity, has developed a Language Policy regarding the use of official languages for government purposes. The Language Policy was adopted by SAQA after a public consultation process.

SAQA's view is that this policy will contribute to the quality of SAQA services and the objectives of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, 67, (Act No. 67 of 2008), which states that, the aims of the NQF are to "contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large."

The SAQA Language Policy is based on a number of Acts, Regulations and Guidelines including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, National Language Policy Framework, the Promotion of Access to Information Act, the Pan South African Language Board Act and the Batho Pele principles.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Samuels', is written over a horizontal line.

Joe Samuels
SAQA Chief Executive Officer

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SAQA LANGUAGE POLICY

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1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

1.1 The purpose of this Language Policy is to give details of the following:

1.1.1 The use, by SAQA, of English for its day-to-day activities including communicating with the general public;

1.1.2 Communication with:

- 1.1.2.1. people who use an indigenous South African language other than English and who are not proficient in English;
- 1.1.2.2. groups using indigenous South African languages where feasible;
- 1.1.2.3. Blind people; and
- 1.1.2.4. Deaf people.

1.2 The SAQA Language Policy is based on the following Acts, Regulations and Guidelines:

1.2.1 **The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (1996)**, in terms of:

- Section 6(i) which affords official status to 11 languages and South African Sign Language;
- Section 6(3) which states that, "*The national government and provincial government may use any particular language for purposes of government taking into account usage, practicality, expense and regional circumstances and the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province*"; and
- Section 30 which states that "*Everyone has the right to use the language and participate in the cultural life of their choice*".

1.2.2 **The National Language Policy Framework, (2003)**, which states that, "*a publication policy of multilingualism (i.e. the function, the audience and the message) should be followed in those cases that do not require publication in all 11 official languages. However, where the effective and stable operation of government at any level requires comprehensive communication of information, it must be published in all 11 official languages*".

1.2.3 **The Pan South African Language Board Act, (Act No. 59 of 1995)**, which provides for the recognition, implementation and furtherance of multilingualism and the development of previously marginalised languages.

1.2.4 **The Promotion of Access to Information Act, (Act No. 2 of 2000)**, which gives effect to the constitutional right of access to any information held by

- the State and any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights.
- 1.2.5 **The Batho Pele Principles** as contained in the government white paper on “*Transforming Public Service Delivery*” (1997).
 - 1.2.6 **The Use of Official Languages Act, (Act No. 12 of 2012) and Regulations**, which require the adoption of a language policy by a national department, national public entity and national public enterprise.
 - 1.2.7 **The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, (Act No. 67 of 2008)**, which states that, “*The objectives of the NQF are designed to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large*” (Section 5(2)).
 - 1.2.8 **The SAQA “Guidelines for Plain English Writing and Editing” (2015)**, which provides clear guidance for writing English in an accessible way.
- 1.3 SAQA has taken the decision to use English as the language of business and operations and to use (a) English, (b) at least one language from the Nguni cluster such as isiZulu, (c) at least one language from the Sotho cluster such as SeSotho, (d) Xitsonga, (e) TshiVenda, and (f) Afrikaans for oral communications with the public whenever feasible. This includes translating NQF policy documents into all 11 official languages over a period of time, through using sworn language practitioners (i.e., translators and interpreters). This will be done gradually taking the language clusters and costs into considerations until all the NQF policies have been translated into all the official languages. The decision has been taken in a spirit that is mindful of the following objectives and principles of the South African government, namely the need to:
- 1.3.1 promote multilingualism amongst the South African public;
 - 1.3.2 support and grant equal access to information and services to all South Africans regardless of language, race, religion, sexual orientation or creed;
 - 1.3.3 eradicate the marginalisation of indigenous South African languages;
 - 1.3.4 foster respect for and respect for language rights;
 - 1.3.5 use language that is accessible to all; and
 - 1.3.6 promote a culture of social justice and inclusivity.
- 1.4 The mix of using English as the language for daily operations at SAQA, together with (a) at least one language from the Nguni cluster such as isiZulu, (b) at least one language from the Sotho cluster such as SeSotho, (c) XiTsonga, (d) TshiVenda, and (e) Afrikaans for oral communications with the public whenever feasible – as well as gradually translating NQF policy documents into all 11 official languages, and using sworn language practitioners (i.e., translators and interpreters), has been chosen for the following reasons:
- 1.4.1 South Africa, in its macro-level social and economic policies, emphasises both local development and integration into the global world. On the one hand, the focus on local development, and eradicating poverty and

inequality is essential for the well-being of people in the country. The integration of South Africa into the global world is also of central importance to allow the lifeblood of developments to flow in and out of the country as needed. On the other hand, the use of indigenous languages is important for South Africa's internal development as well as social cohesion. The use of English is important for linking South Africa with the rest of Africa and the global world, international advancements, and technological development.

- 1.4.2 The need to have a standardised format and terminology for registered qualifications and part-qualifications and so avoid confusion and misunderstanding on the part of providers of education and training, learners and the general public.
 - 1.4.3 The need for employers in the private and the public sectors to fully understand the qualifications held by prospective employees so as to make decisions on their suitability for employment. The NQF and its information system, the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), contain information in English that is accessed by interested parties around the world.
 - 1.4.4 SAQA is resource-dependent. However, SAQA is committed to its leadership role in the NQF context, which seeks to make quality lifelong learning in an integrated system for education, training, development and work, a reality for all people in South Africa. While daily operations will be in English, the NQF policies for which SAQA is responsible for will be translated into all the other 10 official languages in a gradual manner. For instance, in the first year SAQA will translate two of its NQF policies into two languages belonging to the Nguni and Sotho language clusters. This will be followed by the translation of the same two policies into TshiVenda, XiTsonga and Afrikaans. In the third year the same two policies will be translated into two other languages from the two main clusters, that is, Nguni and Sotho. The process will continue until all the official languages have been translated. This process will take four to five years to complete. As SAQA has nine NQF policies three more cycles will be needed to ensure that all the policies are translated into the other 10 official languages. This will take a further 12 to 15 years to complete.
 - 1.4.5 Audio clips will be made available to benefit both the Deaf and Blind communities. SAQA will provide, where necessary, interpreting /translation services by sworn language practitioners for the other 10 official South African languages, and will continue to seek opportunities to use and promote the use of South Africa's 11 official languages within its resource context.
- 1.5 SAQA has an information manual which is available in all 11 official South African languages on the SAQA website which gives details of the services it offers. SAQA will seek opportunities on an ongoing basis to make other information available in all 11 official South African languages, as enabled by its resource context.

- 1.6 The rights of indigenous South African language speakers are safeguarded as is their right to access NQF information as SAQA handles client queries, both oral and written, in the preferred language of the client.

2. THE NATURE OF SAQA

- 2.1 SAQA is a juristic person established under the South African Qualifications Authority Act of 1995 and whose continued existence is confirmed by the National Qualifications Framework Act, (Act No. 67 of 2008).
- 2.2 SAQA is accountable to the Minister of Higher Education and Training.
- 2.3 The NQF is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the:
- Classification;
 - Registration;
 - Publication; and
 - Articulation of quality-assured national qualifications.
- 2.4 The objectives of the NQF are designed to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large. The NQF objectives are to:
- 2.4.1 create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;
- 2.4.2 facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths;
- 2.4.3 enhance the quality of education and training; and
- 2.4.4 accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities (NQF Act, Section 5).
- 2.5 The objectives of SAQA are to:
- 2.5.1 advance the objectives of the NQF;
- 2.5.2 oversee the further development and implementation of the NQF; and
- 2.5.3 co-ordinate the Sub-Frameworks of the NQF (NQF Act, Section 11).
- 2.6 SAQA sees the NQF as a framework for **communication, co-ordination** and **collaboration** across **education, training, development** and **work**.

3. SAQA'S ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

In addition to achieving its objectives, SAQA is responsible for the following:

- 3.1 Advising the Minister of Higher Education and Training on NQF matters;

- 3.2 Developing a system of collaboration to guide the mutual relations of SAQA and the Quality Councils (QCs);
- 3.3 Resolving disputes regarding the QCs;
- 3.4 Developing, publishing and ensuring the currency and relevance of Level Descriptors;
- 3.5 Developing policy and criteria for the development, registration and publication of qualifications and part-qualifications;
- 3.6 Registering qualifications and part-qualifications recommended by the QCs on the NQF;
- 3.7 Developing policy and criteria for assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT);
- 3.8 Developing policy and criteria for the recognition of professional bodies and the registration of professional designations on the NQF;
- 3.9 Recognising professional bodies and registering professional designations on the NQF;
- 3.10 Liaising with international counterparts on qualifications framework matters and informing the QCs and other interested parties about international practice;
- 3.11 Conducting and commissioning research on issues relating to the development and implementation of the NQF, including periodic studies of the impact of the NQF on South African education, training, and employment – and publishing the findings;
- 3.12 Maintaining a national system of records of registered qualifications, registered part-qualifications, learner achievements, recognised professional bodies, registered professional designations and related information. This is done by means of populating and maintaining the National Learners' Records Database;
- 3.13 Providing a foreign qualifications evaluation and advisory service; and
- 3.14 Informing the public about the NQF.

4. THE NATURE OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY SAQA

SAQA provides ongoing support and information to learners, providers of education and training and the general public regarding registered qualifications and part-qualifications, learner achievements, professional bodies and professional designations, foreign

qualifications, international qualification framework practices and trends, NQF-related research findings and any other related education and training matters. These services include the following:

4.1 Evaluating foreign qualifications

This service is for individual persons with foreign qualifications wishing to enrol for study at a South African institution and/or applying for work, study and/or residence visas/permits. Their qualification documents are often in foreign languages that require the competence to read these languages or the necessary tools to do so. Applicants are therefore required to submit quality translations together with qualifications in foreign languages. Communication with clients is through English, as it is the preferred language in business environments. SAQA employs some staff members with foreign language competencies and where possible, SAQA staff will communicate with foreigners in their own language. SAQA documentation and information, including application materials, policies, guidelines and Certificates of Evaluation, are available in English.

4.2 Verifying learners' South African qualifications and issuing certificates of achievement

Certificates are issued in English, but enquiries, which must be received in writing, may be made in any of the South African official languages.

4.3 Verifying the authenticity of qualifications for employers and institutions of learning

This service is provided to counter the presentation of misrepresented qualifications or qualifications issued by non-accredited institutions. Applications must be made in writing and may be in any of the official South African languages. The statements of authenticity are issued in English as that is the generally accepted language of government and business in South Africa.

4.4 Registering qualifications and part-qualifications on the NQF

Qualifications and part-qualifications are submitted to SAQA for registration on the NQF, in English, by the three Quality Councils. Communication (written and oral) regarding the qualifications or part-qualifications submitted by the Quality Councils is through the medium of English as the language of government and business in South Africa.

4.5 Recognising Professional Bodies and registering Professional Designations on the NQF

All communication with professional bodies regarding recognition and registration of professional designations is done in English as the language of government and business in South Africa. This includes applications for recognition and registration, corresponding certificates issued to professional bodies, site visits, monitoring visits, evaluation reports and queries.

4.6 **Maintaining the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)**

The general public has electronic access to the databases of registered qualifications and part-qualifications, recognised professional bodies, registered professional designations and associated information which is available on the NLRD through the SAQA website. Clients may make e-mail, fax, written or telephonic enquiries on NLRD-related information. The NLRD Registers are kept in English to ensure the consistency of terminology and understanding and because the language of business is English. The NLRD and SAQA website are used by foreign countries as well as by the South African public. The enquiries submitted to SAQA may be in any of the South African official languages and the response will be given in the same language, unless the reply is to be used in a context where English is required.

4.7 **Developing NQF policies**

SAQA is required to develop, oversee the implementation, and keep current a number of NQF-related policies such as the NQF Level Descriptors, and national policies and criteria for; registering qualifications and part-qualifications on the NQF; recognising professional bodies and registering professional designations; the implementation of the RPL; implementing CAT; designing and implementing assessment; evaluating foreign qualifications; and the misrepresentation of qualifications and related information, among others. The development of the policies must be done in consultation with and in some cases after consultation with the Quality Councils. The meetings and work to develop the policies is done in English as the language of business, and the policies are published in the government gazette, and in hard copy form, in English. The main suite of NQF policies will be translated into all 10 South African official languages, and made available on SAQA's website.

4.8 **Informing the public about the NQF**

SAQA carries out a number of activities to inform the public about the NQF and to advocate the NQF. These include workshops, information sessions, hosting of conferences, compilation of publications and leaflets, posting of relevant information on social media and on print media as well as participating in conferences and workshops of other organisations when invited. The main NQF policies will be made available in a gradual manner in all 11 official languages. Most other publications and general NQF information are available in English. However, when SAQA participates in advocacy and information-giving events such as career exhibitions, radio and television broadcasts, and digital media where SAQA communicates with different groups of people in large numbers, SAQA will ensure that oral communications are in (a) English, (b) a language from the Nguni cluster such as isiZulu, (c) a language from the Sotho cluster such as SeSotho, (d) XiTsonga, (e) Tshivenda, or (f) Afrikaans, and (g) sign language, as appropriate and possible within the resource context.

4.9 Handling NQF-related queries from the general public

SAQA receives queries on a daily basis from the general public about NQF-related matters. The queries are received in writing by e-mail, fax and telephonically. Some clients visit the SAQA offices. Even though most queries are made in English, responses are given in other languages in which the query is submitted to SAQA. Where necessary, SAQA will provide the services of sworn language practitioners.

5. REGIONS OR GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS WHERE SAQA PROVIDES ITS SERVICES

SAQA is situated in Pretoria, but as required, provides its services across the country and internationally. Services are provided and queries answered either face-to-face at SAQA or by use of telephone, fax, e-mail, social media, letters, reports and certificates to customers who are unable to visit SAQA personally.

6. SAQA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

SAQA uses English as its medium of communication for all its day-to-day operations. However, English is used in conjunction with (a) at least one language from the Nguni cluster such as isiZulu, (b) at least one language from the Sotho cluster such as Sesotho, (c) XiTsonga, (d) Tshivenda, (e) Afrikaans and (f) sign language for oral/ sign language communications, where feasible. SAQA's business activities in English include:

- All meetings, workshops and conferences both within SAQA and for the general public;
- Agenda documents for meetings and minutes and records of meetings;
- Publications, e.g. policies, criteria and guideline documents and research findings;
- The SAQA Annual Integrated Report;
- Communication on the SAQA Intranet;
- The NLRD and other information systems used for managing NQF information;
- Communication with the Minister of Higher Education and Training and the Department of Higher Education and Training;
- Communication with other government departments;
- Completion of official forms;
- Advertisements of SAQA vacancies in the media;
- Notices in the government gazette;
- Certificates of evaluation, verification, registration and recognition;
- Disciplinary hearings; and
- Official signage in the SAQA building identifying facilities and services.

However, when communication is initiated by a client in another South African official language or by someone who is not proficient in English and where the use of English will lead to misunderstanding or confusion, the language of the client is used. In addition, ongoing attempts to use South Africa's 11 official languages on SAQA's website, and Braille/audio clips, where feasible, will be made.

7. COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHOSE LANGUAGE OF CHOICE IS NOT ENGLISH

SAQA communicates with members of the public whose language of choice is not English as follows:

- 7.1 Written queries (faxes, letters and e-mails) in a language other than English are referred to a staff member who is proficient in the language used, and will compile a response which is checked for correctness and accuracy according to set standards. If that staff member is unable to answer the query, then assistance is provided to prepare an appropriate response which is then translated into the language of the query, by a sworn translator. The reply is checked by a staff member who is proficient in the language and edited for correctness and accuracy according to set standards. While at times the services of sworn translators may need to be procured, SAQA will encourage staff members to volunteer for the learning and development required to become sworn translators.
- 7.2 Written requests in a language other than English for verifications, certificates, and others are dealt with as in point 7.1 above. However, the certificate/ statement is issued in English and accompanied by a letter in the client's language explaining the contents of the certificate and the reason for issuing it in English. The usual check for correctness of information is done according to set standards, by sworn translators. The certificates and statements are issued in English as that is the language of government and business in South Africa.
- 7.3 Oral requests (telephonic and from walk-in clients) in a language other than English are referred to a staff member proficient in the language of the client and can provide the required information in the language of the client. In cases where translating/ interpreting is required the staff member who is able to provide the required information will deal with the query and assist the client in answering the query with the help of a sworn translator. When there is no staff member at SAQA proficient in the client's language to assist the client, the client is requested to return to SAQA at an appointed time (within seven working days) for a meeting with a sworn interpreter. SAQA arranges for an appropriate interpreter to be present.
- 7.4 Should a client with a hearing impairment approach SAQA with a query and there is no SAQA staff member proficient in sign language, the client is requested to:
 - 7.4.1 Submit the query in writing with the answer provided in writing while the client is present; or
 - 7.4.2 Bring his/her own sign-language interpreter for a meeting at an arranged time; or
 - 7.4.3 Let SAQA secure the services of a sign-language interpreter for a meeting at a predetermined time.

The follow-up meetings in all cases will be scheduled within seven working days of the client approaching SAQA with the query.

8. ACCESS TO THE SAQA LANGUAGE POLICY BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- 8.1 The SAQA Language Policy will be available in all 11 official South African languages on the SAQA website.
- 8.2 Requests for a hard copy of the Language Policy may be made to SAQA in writing, telephonically or in person. Copies of the Policy can either be handed to clients or sent to them.
- 8.3 People making telephonic requests will in the first instance be referred to the SAQA website, but can be provided with a hard copy on request.
- 8.4 SAQA documents will not be available in Braille due to the high cost of production and the relatively few requests for Braille versions of documents available in the past. Attempts will be made to develop audio clips wherever feasible within the resource context.

9. COMPLAINTS MECHANISM

- 9.1 Any person (either a SAQA staff member or a member of the public) who is dissatisfied with SAQA's use of official languages may lodge a complaint in any of South Africa's 11 official languages. The complaint must be in writing. The name, address and contact details of the complainant, and full details of the complaint must be provided. Such a complaint must be:
 - Addressed to the SAQA CEO;
 - Either delivered by hand to SAQA, or sent by e-mail to the SAQA CEO or sent by registered post to SAQA's postal address; and
 - Lodged within 3 months of the complaint arising.
- 9.2 The SAQA CEO will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 48 hours of receipt.
- 9.3 The SAQA CEO may request the complainant to:
 - Supply more information to aid the investigation into the complaint; and
 - Arrange a meeting to conduct an oral enquiry into the complaint.
- 9.4 The SAQA CEO must, within 3 months of receipt of the complaint:
 - Consider the complaint, conduct the necessary investigation and make a decision on the complaint; and
 - Inform the complainant in writing of the decision.

Contact details of the SAQA office

Physical Address: SAQA House, 1067 Arcadia Street, Hatfield, Pretoria
Postal Address: Postnet Suite 248, Private Bag X06, Waterkloof, 0145
Telephone: (012) 431-5000
Fax: (012) 431-5147
E-mail: saqainfo@saqa.org.za
Website: <http://www.saqa.org.za>

- 9.5 A complainant not satisfied with the decision of the SAQA CEO may lodge an appeal with the Minister of Higher Education and Training.
- 9.6 The appeal must be in writing, in any of South Africa's 11 official languages. The name, address and contact details of the appellant and the full details of the appeal must be provided. Such an appeal must be:
- Addressed to the Minister of Higher Education and Training;
 - Either delivered by hand to the Ministry of Higher Education and Training or sent by registered post to the postal address of the Minister of Higher Education and Training; and
 - Lodged within 1 month of the SAQA CEO's decision being received by the complainant.
- 9.7 The Minister of Higher Education and Training, in accordance with the Regulations, must:
- Consider the appeal and make a decision; and,
 - Inform the appellant in writing of the decision.

Contact details of the Ministry of Higher Education and Training

Physical Address: 123 Francis Baard Street, Pretoria, 0001
Postal Address: Private Bag X174, Pretoria, 0001
Telephone: +27 12 312 5555
Fax: +27 12 323 5618

10. EXEMPTION FROM ESTABLISHING A LANGUAGE POLICY UNIT

The Minister of Arts and Culture has in terms of section 12 (1) of the Use of Official Languages Act, 12 of 2012 granted SAQA exemption, in part, from establishing a Language Policy Unit. SAQA will assign a senior employee to perform the functions of a Language Policy Unit. The functions of the SAQA Language Official will be subject to the highest quality assurance protocols.

11. SUBMISSION OF ANNUAL REPORTS

SAQA will on an annual basis, and within 3 months of the end of its financial year, submit a report to the Minister of Arts and Culture and to the Pan South African Language Board. The report will include details on:

- 11.1 The implementation of SAQA's Language Policy;
- 11.2 Any complaints received regarding SAQA's use of official languages and the manner in which these complaints were addressed; and
- 11.3 Any other matter that the Minister may prescribe.