A SURVEY BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SAQA) ON THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROFESSIONAL BODIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

RESEARCH REPORT

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CONTENTS PAGE

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) evaluates national South African policy implementation on an ongoing basis, towards strengthening the implementation and further development of the policy concerned. In 2016-2017, the DPME, in collaboration with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa, conducted an Implementation Evaluation of the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act. This study found NQF implementation embedded in the system for education, training, development and work in the country. It also found some areas of inefficiency and areas needing further development. The recommendations of the study led, in 2018, to the development and implementation of the 'NQF Improvement Plan' by the DHET, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Quality Councils. One of the actions in this plan includes clarifying the roles and responsibilities of professional bodies in the context of the NQF.

SAQA has since conducted an in-depth analysis of the overlaps in legislation for the NQF, SAQA, the Quality Councils and statutory professional bodies. Furthermore, SAQA hosted separate half-day workshops with statutory and non-statutory bodies in August and September 2020 respectively to engage with the legislation overlap analysis and initiate discussions to identify and clarify the roles and responsibilities of professional bodies. The workshops yielded various views and insights about the roles and responsibilities of statutory and non-statutory professional bodies, and informed the development of an online survey that SAQA sent to all professional bodies. The survey sought to deepen NQF partner understandings of the roles and responsibilities amongst professional bodies.

This report discusses the findings of the online survey. SAQA documented its legislation overlap analysis in a separate report that is available upon request. Furthermore, the minutes of the workshops are also available. Therefore, this report does not include the legislation analysis or discussions at the workshops.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

As noted in the introduction to this report, the study on the roles and responsibilities of professional bodies involved three separate but related activities to gather relevant data. The **first** activity was an analysis of the overlaps in the legislation for SAQA, the Quality Councils and statutory professional bodies [SAQA produced a separate report]. The **second** involved two separate workshops with statutory and non-statutory bodies during which the legislation analysis was presented, and as part of this, professional bodies participated in an exercise involving the spontaneous 'calling out' (naming of) their roles and responsibilities. The **third** drew from the first two activities and culminated in an online survey.

The overall design of the larger study was qualitative in nature. The legislation overlap analysis involved a documentary analysis and review, the workshop discussions were interactive and yielded qualitative insights, and the online survey included mostly open-ended questions to deepen and enrich the insights gained. The online survey

did include closed-ended, multiple-response and Likert-type items that generated useful descriptive statistics. The study purposely focused on professional bodies and considered all 103 of the SAQA-recognised professional bodies for the survey.

SAQA developed the online survey using Google Forms and emailed the survey link to ninety-seven (97) of the 103 professional bodies towards the end of January 2021. The link was not sent to five (5) professional bodies as four were voluntary associations of a statutory professional body, and another statutory body had requested to be de-recognised. Seventy-eight (78) of the ninety-seven (97) professional bodies who were e-mailed the link, completed the survey, resulting in an overall response rate of 80,4%. Of the seventy-eight (78) participating professional bodies, seventeen (17) were statutory (22%) and sixty-one (61) were non-statutory (78%). Evidently, both statutory and non-statutory professional bodies actively participated in the online survey.

In terms of how professional bodies *responded* to the survey, it was evident that in some cases, more than one individual in a professional body submitted a response, and these responses were counted as different individuals had responded to the survey. More than one response was received from three (3) professional bodies who were non-statutory bodies -- one body submitted two (2) responses; another body also submitted two (2) responses; and a third body submitted four (4) responses. This resulted in a total of eighty-three (83) responses from the 78 bodies. Hence, the analysis refers to the number of *individual responses* (i.e. 83*)* to the survey rather than the number of professional bodies responding to the survey, as each individual response was analysed and reflected in the Google Forms software.

SECTION 3 of this report presents and discusses the results of the survey.

3. SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This report maintains the anonymity of the participating professional bodies as well as the identity and personal details of each individual that submitted a response on behalf of a professional body. Furthermore, the research team removed duplicate responses from the dataset prior to the analysis as described.

3.1 Profile of Survey Respondents

The profile of respondents in **Figure 1** reflects the **type** of professional body that participated in the survey. The survey asked the following question: What type of professional body are you? The question about professional body *type* received 83 responses from statutory and non-statutory bodies.

Figure 1: Profile of survey respondents

Of the 83 responses to the survey, 66 responses were received from non-statutory bodies (79,5%) and 17 were received from statutory bodies (20,5%).

3.2 Act(s), Amendment Act(s), Regulations, and other policies that frame the work of the professional body

SAQA asked professional bodies about the various acts, regulations and policies that framed their work, in order to contextualise the study and gain a better understanding of the broader legislative environment professional bodies operated within. The survey included an open-ended question to achieve this understanding, receiving 83 responses, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Open-ended question and number of responses

Question: What Act(s), Amendment Act(s), Regulations, and other policies frame the work of the professional body?	
Number of responses to the question	83
Type of question	Open-ended/responses typed-in

In response to this question, professional bodies reported a range of Acts that directly or indirectly regulated professions under their jurisdiction. The number of Acts mentioned is too long to be listed here. The following provide a few verbatim examples:

- "National Qualifications Framework Act (Act 67 of 2008, as amended)";
- "Skills Development Act";
- "Skills Development Levies Act";
- "Companies Act";
- "Legal Practice Act";
- "Occupational Health and Safety Act";
- "Quantity Surveying Profession Act";
- "Engineering Professions Act 46 of 2000";
- "Civil Aviation Act, 2009 (Act 13 of 2009)";
- "Nursing Act 33 of 2005";
- "Property Practitioner Act"; and

- other Acts.

The professional bodies also referred to some Regulations as well as Codes of Conduct and Ethics that related to Acts of Parliament in their space of work.

In addition to the Acts and related Regulations, the professional bodies mentioned policies that directly and indirectly guided their work. The mentioned items included the NQF policy suite, for example, and this report includes the year for ease of reference:

- Policy and Criteria for the Recognition of Professional Bodies and the Registration of Professional Designations (as amended, 2019);
- National Policy and Criteria for the Implementation of RPL (Amended in March 2019);
- National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa (SAQA, 2014a);
- Policy for CAT (SAQA, 2014b);
- Level Descriptors (SAQA, 2012); and
- Regulations (NQF Levels 1 to 4) (SAQA, 2003).

Some professional bodies mentioned the NQF Sub-Frameworks under which they operated and the related policies. For example, there was mention of the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) overseen by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). The following provide examples of verbatim responses:

- "QCTO Policy on Accreditation of Skills Development Providers";
- "QCTO Policy on Accreditation of Assessment Centres";
- "QCTO Assessment policy";
- "QCTO Delegation of Qualification Assessment to AQPs";
- "QCTO Policy on delegation to DQPs and AQPs, E-Assessment of Qualifications and Part Qualifications on the OQSF- revised policy";
- "QCTO Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning"; and
- "the QCTO Revised OQSF Policy".

3.3 Role of the Professional Body regarding the Professions under its Jurisdiction

The survey asked professional bodies about their roles with regard to the professions under their jurisdiction. Professional bodies were able to select multiple answers from a varied list of response options. Table 2 presents the responses to this question.

Table 2: Role of the professional body regarding the professions under its jurisdiction: Numbers and percentages of responses

Response Item	Number of Responses	% of Responses
Assist in the promotion and protection of the profession(s)	78	94,0%
Develop, administer and govern policy relating to the profession(s)	60	72,3%

Control the practice of the profession(s)	51	61,4%
Investigate, in accordance with the relevant legislation, complaints relating to professionals	72	86,7%
Investigate, in accordance with the relevant legislation, complaints relating to students	34	41,0%
Advise the Minister concerning any aspect falling in the scope of the legislation	36	43,4%
Advise the Minister on the amendments or adaptation of the legislation in order to strengthen professional practice; democracy; transparency; equity; accessibility; and community involvement	43	51,8%
Control the professional registration of persons	68	81,9%
Set standards for the training of intended practitioners	68	81,9%
Set standards for the examinations required	54	65,1%
Encourage and facilitate continuing professional development (CPD)	80	96,4%
Encourage professional practice in the context of the South African democracy, equity and equality	73	88,0%
Encourage transparency in the profession(s)	71	85,5%
Encourage community involvement	57	68,7%
Communicate with stakeholders in the profession(s)	79	95,2%

Table 2 shows that the role described as 'Encourage and facilitate continuing professional development (CPD)' received the highest number and percentage of responses (80; 96,4%) amongst professional bodies, followed closely by 'Communicate with stakeholders in the profession(s)' (79; 95,2%) and 'Assist in the promotion and protection of the profession(s)' (78; 94%). The results suggest that CPD, communication with stakeholders, and promoting and protecting the profession, were considered as key roles by professional bodies, with each having received over 90% of responses.

Professional bodies also selected other roles in high numbers. The roles that received between 80-89% of responses included:

- 'Encourage professional practice in the context of the South African democracy, equity and equality' (73; 88%);
- 'Investigate, in accordance with the relevant legislation, complaints relating to professionals' (72; 86,7%);
- 'Encourage transparency in the profession(s)'(71; 85,5%);
- 'Control the professional registration of person(s)'(68; 81,9%); and
- 'Set standards for the training of intended practitioners' (68; 81,9%).

Evidently, roles pertaining to advancing practice within the South African context, encouraging transparency, controlling professional registration and setting standards were amongst the roles considered key by professional bodies.

Roles that received lower numbers of responses included, 'Advise the Minister concerning any aspect falling in the scope of the legislation' (36; 43,4%) and 'Investigate, in accordance with the relevant legislation, complaints relating to

students' (34; 41%). Evidently, professional bodies to a lesser extent considered their role to be about advising the Minister on any aspect falling in the scope of the legislation, possibly as they perceived this type of advice as being broad. However, professional bodies saw a role in providing more specific advice pertaining to various values, with 'Advise the Minister on the amendments or adaptation of the legislation in order to strengthen professional practice; democracy; transparency; equity; accessibility; and community involvement' having received half of the responses (43: 51,8%). Furthermore, it seemed that professional bodies considered their roles as being more about investigating complaints related to *professionals* than to students.

Other responses to this question

The survey instrument also allowed respondents to identify additional roles in an 'Other' category. Professional bodies used this opportunity to identify a range of roles not listed in the survey instrument. There were no particular differences between non-statutory and statutory bodies regarding this question so reporting of the results is across both types of bodies. However, where it made sense to do so, the type of professional body is identified in brackets.

Additional roles sometimes received more than one mention, but also received single mentions. Examples include, amongst others, conducting research around best practice and evolving/emerging trends; establishing/awarding/administering professional designations (mentioned by two bodies); and enhancing the standards, and promoting the rule of law and the independence of, the judiciary and the profession (the latter in specific reference to non-statutory bodies). Three professional bodies mentioned the role of setting standards.

One theme that emerged amongst some professional bodies was the issue of holding professionals accountable. At least nine (9) professional bodies referred to this aspect and closely related the matter to the role of protecting the public and implementing a code of conduct. One body mentioned ensuring "accountability for actions and ensuring public confidence" in the profession, another said that one should "hold professionals accountable for their actions", and a third body saw the need to "protect the consumer from [the] malpractice of professionals" and to "proactively audit professionals' work or actions". A fourth mentioned the role of "protecting the public and the environment", while a fifth referred to "protecting the public interest'. A sixth body spoke of the need to "conduct disciplinary hearings of designation holders and members where necessary", while a seventh mentioned a code of conduct and referred to the role of defining a code of conduct for members to subscribe to and "holding them accountable when professionals [members] breach this code". An eighth mentioned also that it had developed a code of good practice and a variety of support services for the profession (suggesting that these actions be considered as a professional body role). A ninth said that one role of a professional body was to "promote compliance to [an] ethical code of conduct".

One professional body, a statutory entity, mentioned the role of conducting accreditation visits to any educational institution that has a department, school or faculty (subject to Sections 5 and 7 of the Higher Education Act of 1997, as amended). Another looked beyond South Africa's borders and felt that a role should be the "growth

and recognition of [the] profession into Africa as a whole". For one professional body, a role was to ensure the voices of professionals were heard -- "conveying the voice of industry professionals to relevant stakeholders which will inform and guide amendments to align with improved best practice" -- while another spoke of "addressing historical regress with regard to industry qualifications" with a Quality Council and one Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA). The role of the professional body in making decisions about the relevance of qualifications was mentioned by one professional body - "we recognise their [education and training providers] curriculums and [the] learning outcomes of their qualifications as either being relevant to the profession or not".

3.4 Responsibility of the Professional Body regarding the Professions under its Jurisdiction

Further to exploring the roles of professional bodies, the survey asked professional bodies about their responsibility with regard to the professions under their jurisdiction. Professional bodies were able to select multiple answers from a varied list of response options. The results are evident in Table 3.

Table 3: Responsibility of the professional body regarding the professions under its jurisdiction: Numbers and percentages of responses

Response Item	Number of Responses	% of Responses
Establish and/or register voluntary associations	26	31,7%
Develop and implement criteria for the professional registration of persons	74	90,2%
Manage the registration of persons (e.g., develop and maintain the register, publish the register, consider applications, register candidates and persons who meet the criteria, decide the period of validity of registration, decide the form of registration certificates and the form of the register and its review, make extracts from the register, develop and implement control of professional conduct including penalties for misconduct, and effecting restrictions, suspensions, cancellations and others)	72	87,8%
Charge application, registration and annual fees (e.g., decide the fees, how and when these will be paid, and grant exemptions from fees)	79	96,3%
Prescribe the qualifications/ part-qualifications required as the basis for professional registration	71	86,6%
Develop and implement accreditation criteria for education and training institutions (faculties/ departments/ laboratories/workshops/ clinics) offering qualifications and/or part qualifications and/or other programmes needed for the profession – and withdraw this accreditation when entities do not meet the professional body criteria	55	67,1%
Determine the conditions for and/or conduct continuing professional development (CPD), where applicable after consultation with voluntary associations	77	93,9%
Approve any education/ training facility, where applicable after consultation with voluntary associations	43	52,4%

Approve any educator/ trainer, where applicable after consultation with voluntary associations	33	40,2%
Give advice/ assistance to any education and training entity, voluntary association or assessment body for the education/ training/professional development of registered persons and prospective registered persons	69	84,1%
Conduct examinations and/or appoint examiners and moderators and/or award certificates for the examinations, while charging/ not charging fees for these services	53	64,6%
Recognise or withdraw recognition for any examination related to the profession	44	53,7%
Enter into agreements with any person/ entity inside or beyond South Africa, for the purposes of recognising an examination relating to the profession(s)	40	48,8%
Establish mechanisms for recognised persons to gain recognition for their qualifications in other countries	42	51,2%
Establish mechanisms for recognised persons and persons seeking recognition, to gain recognition in South Africa for their foreign qualifications	44	53,7%
Consult with SAQA regarding education/ training/ professional development	67	81,7%
Consult with the Council on Higher Education (CHE) regarding the quality of education and training linked to the profession	37	45,1%
Consult with the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) regarding the quality of education and training linked to the profession	56	68,3%
Consider any matter affecting the profession(s) and take the necessary actions	77	93,9%
Seek SAQA recognition in the context of the NQF Act	74	90,2%

Table 3 shows that some professional body responsibilities received a significant number and proportion of responses, which suggested that professional bodies largely considered these responsibilities as key. The responsibility described as 'Charge application, registration and annual fees (e.g., decide the fees, how and when these will be paid, and grant exemptions from fees)' received the highest number and proportion of responses (79; 96,3%). This was followed closely by 'Determine the conditions for and/or conduct continuing professional development (CPD), where applicable after consultation with voluntary associations' (77; 93,9%), 'Consider any matter affecting the profession(s) and take the necessary actions' (77; 93,9%), and 'Develop and implement criteria for the professional registration of persons' (74; 90,2%).

Specifically with regard to their relationship with SAQA, professional bodies saw their responsibility of seeking recognition from SAQA as key, with the responsibility described as 'Seek SAQA recognition in the context of the NQF Act' having received 74 responses (90,2%). Furthermore, consulting with SAQA was deemed key, with 'Consult with SAQA regarding education/ training/ professional development' having received 67 responses (81,7%). Managing the registration of persons, prescribing the qualifications/part qualifications that form the basis of qualifications, and providing advice/assistance to various stakeholders were also amongst the responsibilities

selected in high numbers, with each having received over 80% of the responses [see Table 2].

Professional bodies, to a lesser extent, saw their responsibilities as consulting with the Council on Higher Education (CHE) or approving an educator or trainer. The responsibility described as 'Consult with the Council on Higher Education regarding the quality of education and training linked to the profession' received 37 responses (45,1%), while 'Approve any educator/ trainer, where applicable after consultation with voluntary associations' received 33 responses (40,2%). Furthermore, about a third of responses suggested that professional bodies, to a lesser extent, considered their responsibility as 'establishing and/or registering voluntary associations' (26; 31,7%).

Other responses to this question

This particular questionnaire item also included an 'Other' category, and it was evident that professional bodies used this as an opportunity to share what they thought were the additional responsibilities professional bodies could have. Overall, nine (9) professional bodies provided responses, with no particular themes being evident within or across statutory or non-statutory professional bodies. Nevertheless, the type of professional body is identified in each case given the small numbers of responses.

One professional body (non-statutory) mentioned that they had implemented training and admission exams under the direction of and accreditation by the "Legal Practice Council (LPC)", another saw the promotion and development of the profession and its practices as a responsibility, while for one statutory body, there was a need to "recognise voluntary associations".

One professional body, a non-statutory entity, reported that responsibilities should be to; "ensure that legislative requirements as prescribed by South African law are conformed to"; "establish and maintain a governance practice to ensure the body operates according to good corporate governance and [an] ethical code of conduct"; and "uplift the image of those individuals operating in the field of [anonymised]".

One of the statements in the instrument included the responsibility of seeking recognition with SAQA in the context of the NQF Act. One professional body (non-statutory) expressed having experienced no success in this regard – "this has been pursued for many years without success".

For one professional body (non-statutory), a responsibility was to work closely with the relevant SETA to facilitate, amongst other things, learnerships, internships and bursaries, and another responsibility was to form part of a Community of Expert Practitioners (CEPS) where the SETA is the Development Quality Partner (DQP) for the QCTO. Another body (statutory) also saw a need to work with the relevant SETA – "consult the relevant sector education training authority regarding the quality of education and training linked to the profession".

One professional body (statutory) mentioned the matter of accreditation and reported that there was a need to "accredit professional bodies who in turn accredit educational institutions".

3.5 Advantages that SAQA Recognition has brought to the Professional Body

The survey explored what professional bodies considered the advantages of SAQA recognition. This aspect was a multiple-response item and professional bodies were able to select multiple answers from a varied list of response options. The results are evident in Table 4.

Table 4: Advantages of SAQA recognition

Response Item	Number of Responses	% of Responses
Alignment to the values in the South African Constitution	55	66,3%
Alignment to NQF values, structures and processes	67	80,7%
Enhanced status	60	72,3%
Enhanced public visibility	44	53,0%
Enhanced credibility	67	80,7%
Enhanced public trust	53	63,9%
Access to support for flexible pathways	34	41,0%
Access to NQF-related information	61	73,5%
Access to NQF-related support	46	55,4%

'Enhanced credibility' and 'Alignment to NQF values, structures and processes' were seen as key advantages of SAQA recognition, with each having received 80,7% of the overall responses, followed by the advantages of 'Access to NQF-related information' (61; 73,5%) and 'Enhanced status' (60;72,3%). About two-thirds of professional bodies (55; 66,3%) saw 'Alignment to the values in the South African Constitution' as an advantage of being recognised by SAQA. Evidently, SAQA recognition has afforded professional bodies' greater credibility and status within the education and training context, thus improving their overall reputation in the sector. Furthermore, SAQA recognition brought upon the benefits of alignment to the NQF and access to NQF information, both of which point to the value attached to the NQF and its various systems, processes and information.

Professional bodies, to a lesser extent, saw 'Access to support for flexible pathways' as an advantage, with this advantage having received 34 responses (41%) - possibly as professional bodies may be, in some ways, unfamiliar with SAQA's role and continued work in the areas of articulation, recognition of prior learning (RPL), and credit accumulation and transfer (CAT).

Other responses to this question

This questionnaire item included an 'Other' category. A total of eight (8) responses were received for this item. There were no particular differences noted between statutory and non-statutory bodies, nor were there any emerging themes. Given the small number of responses, the type of professional bodies was identified.

One professional body (non-statutory) reported that SAQA recognition had afforded the body the advantage of ensuring that the training provided (by providers) was

registered and complied with benchmarked standards, while another (non-statutory) reported that recognition had enabled them to "level the playing field" between insurance companies and providers of repairs. One professional body saw an advantage of SAQA recognition specifically in relation to foreign qualifications (this was not explained but very likely has to do with the evaluation of foreign qualifications), while another (non-statutory) was able to conduct a "skills gap analysis" for business advisors.

One professional body reported that, as a non-statutory body, achieving the listed advantages (as listed in the questionnaire) was "the onus of the professional body". This professional body was of the view that statutory bodies achieved these advantages "almost automatically".

An advantage for one professional body (statutory) was the ability to provide guidance on relevant policies such as RPL and CPD, while another (non-statutory) was able to "endorse critical skills visa applications" of their international/South African Development Community (SADC) members that wanted to work in the South African heritage sector.

3.6 Advantages that SAQA Recognition has brought to _members_ of the Professional Body

In addition to asking professional bodies about the advantages of SAQA recognition for the professional body, SAQA wanted to determine the advantages of recognition for _members_ of the professional body. The question was open-ended and received responses from all 83 participating professional bodies, as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5: Advantages of SAQA recognition for members

What advantages has SAQA recognition brought to _members_ of your professional body?	
Number of responses to the question	83
Type of question	Open-ended/responses typed-in

The recurring themes in the responses to this question ranged from employment, learning, and continuing development opportunities to the credibility of the profession and its professionals, the status of the profession, information databases and sharing, RPL, and other issues. Only a few professional bodies reported no advantages emanating from SAQA recognition for their members.

Employment, learning and continuing development opportunities

One professional body responded that SAQA recognition brought "recognition of [its] designations by prospective employers and other stakeholders" as well as external assurance of their training linked to accreditation standards and international benchmarks. Another professional body noted the "preferential treatment by buyers of [its] services" given to members.

SAQA recognition, one professional body commented, gave members "an advantage in terms of employment opportunities"; enabled "access to accredited training";

provided an "opportunity to become part of a substantial local and international network of […] practitioners", and afforded the ability to "enjoy local and international recognition and status as registered and capable practitioners".

To others, SAQA recognition has helped members to acquire more expertise as part of their career paths; it has paved the way for "better career prospects, [and] better status with clients".

One professional body reported that recognition also lent credibility to professional body members in the workplace and business landscape and ensured "correct placement of professionals" according to the designations acquired.

SAQA recognition, one professional body indicated, "enhanced [members'] knowledge about the role of the [professional body] and what it means to be accredited to be custodians of certain designations". Another professional body indicated regarding knowledge that, "members are … expected to participate in CPD activities and to take … active role[s] in maintaining their professional designation[s]". The same body indicated that there was a higher level of member accountability regarding member management of their personal profiles, updated information, etc. for loading on the [National Learners' Record Database (NLRD)].

They [professional bodies] become more credible in the […] industry. Their [members'] professional membership improves their confidence; [and they become] trustworthy in their services to employers," according to another professional body.

According to one body, SAQA recognition also brought about "alignment of their [members'] employment professional development plans with their association activities" and raised the standards of sector-specific development opportunities.

Another body reported that the approval of CPD programmes as a requirement of recognition by SAQA, afforded the professional body the ability to ensure that members had the requisite abilities, skills and knowledge.

The credibility of the profession/professional

Professional bodies reported that SAQA recognition brings some level of credibility to the members of professional bodies and the professions themselves. One professional body remarked that recognition supported the "credibility of certificates" while another said it meant "credibility" for designations. Another professional body shared these sentiments, stating that SAQA recognition had brought "credibility to their higher qualifications and professional designations", "credibility of the profession" and "credibility to the professional designation". SAQA recognition has provided [professional body] members with credible designations acknowledged by other professional bodies and legislators.

Not only has SAQA recognition brought credibility to the members of the professional body and the professional body itself; it also ensured and encouraged "adherence to [a] standards framework and values [of the profession]". In the same breath, another professional body said that recognition "inspired confidence" in their clients that the individual was "competent and credible".

One professional body reported that South Africa was the only country in the world, where [a professional body in the field concerned] was recognised in the NQF context, and this had afforded the profession and its professionals, credibility.

From a skills development perspective, a professional body reported that being registered [or recognised] as a professional body with SAQA added status to the members. Skills development providers had "assurance that the qualifications were accredited".

Another responded that SAQA recognition was key to the skills development programmes and that it brought about "respect of the members' qualifications in particular for corporate organisations".

Increased credibility, according to one body, played a critical role in organisational "accountability, public trust and status".

One professional body reported that the value of SAQA recognition had only brought "benefit to members and organisations" who recognised the professional standards set by the professional body.

According to one body, SAQA recognition also contributed to the credibility of current applied skills and competencies as a "continuous process throughout the lifelong learning journey".

One non-statutory professional body noted that recognition had not yet brought any benefits to its members: "support from national stakeholders whom the body engages continually has been disappointing and has a definite effect on member and public recognition".

Another professional body raised a critical point that having titles (designations) registered with SAQA assisted them in making sure the industry maintained its professional status. This body also indicated that recognition assisted them in "exposing [bogus] learning centres" that were that were not registered with the CHE or the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MHEST) and whose qualifications were not in line with the NQF levels of SAQA.

Relatedly, another professional body indicated that recognition ensured that the professional body and its members were adhering to the standards set by SAQA and the objectives of NQF Act, and furthermore that "the professional body is constitutionally sound as SAQA regulations must meet Constitutional values and the Bill of Rights".

Status of the professional body/professionals

In addition to the credibility that members of professional bodies received from SAQA recognition of their professional bodies, their status seemed to be enhanced. For example, one professional body noted, "National and Provincial Government Departments value our inputs more in a highly regulated […] industry". This, as described by another professional body, signalled "good standing and respect from clients in the public and private sector".

One body stated there was "respect of the individuals in the industries" while another reported that members were able to demonstrate "professionalism and competence" with professional designations under a recognised professional body.

As reported by one professional body, recognition also "heightened awareness of the [professional body/] association and […] professionals with organisations/ corporate entities", while another reported that recognition "improved status and employability" of members, who would then "enjoy the respect of others due to improved image".

Important to note was a comment by another professional body that SAQA recognition brought "pride in the profession, compliance with education and training standards, and compliance with [a] code of conduct for members" and also "enhanced their status and trustworthiness". Another body reported that recognition also provided the professional body with the ability to provide members with a designation. The designations meant something and had "status in the community".

Other professional bodies indicated that SAQA recognition gave them a good "professional standing" and "occupational status" as well as recognition internationally, while one body reported that SAQA recognition brought a strong legislative and regulatory foundation that built "trust in the system".

Information database and sharing

An important theme from the survey responses related to the National Learners' Record Database (NLRD) and other benefits. SAQA recognition, one professional body responded, brought "the ability to have their [members'] Professional Designations recorded in the NLRD" while another stated that the recognition had brought them "access to NQF-related support and information".

Another body reported that SAQA recognition brought "very little other than registration on the NLRD", while one noted, "qualifications are registered on the NLRD, which [potential] employers can check".

Through, or resulting from SAQA recognition, one professional body reported various benefits to members:

> complete access to the [professional body's] website (including the part that can only be accessed by and is for the exclusive use of members); receive […] electronic newsletters to keep abreast of new technology and repair techniques; have access to international federations; have access to controlled professional development support programmes; provide employers access to their membership base to monitor and manage their members' CPD progress.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Some of the professional bodies hinted at the role that SAQA recognition had played in terms of RPL for their members. For example, one professional body noted that its international exam was now "locally registered" and enabled members who passed it to receive local qualifications.

The same professional body also noted:

> there are large numbers of persons in the relevant profession who were operating in an informal environment and did not have formal professional recognition in the past. Professional recognition via the professional body, based on the NQF Act and SAQA recognition of the professional body, and clearly defined training and RPL standards, bring status and recognition to those who did not have such recognition in the past. The application of a Code of Good Practice, and the formal commitment to a Code of Ethics and a Disciplinary Code, all formally backed by SAQA recognition of the professional body, is working towards the achievement of improved levels of discipline within the profession.

Other related/ emerging issues regarding this question

Professional bodies also indicated other benefits that emerged from SAQA recognition. For instance, the recognition "allowed for designations to be formally registered [on the NQF]", that "they [members] now have a degree as well as a designation", it also "aligned qualifications"; and enabled the "professional development of licenses" and the "attainment of [a] designation".

One professional body commented that they used SAQA NQF levels as stipulated in the various [pieces of legislation] to register professionals. Recognition also meant that SAQA "looked after" professions, and kept them "abreast of NQF requirements".

Another professional body added that those with foreign qualifications had their programmes evaluated in terms of their equivalence to NQF levels. Those seeking employment in the public sector could also get "verification of their qualifications with SAQA" as the body submitted learner achievements to SAQA.

No benefits from SAQA recognition

Seven (7) responses (8,4%) showed that SAQA recognition had brought no benefits or advantages to their members. For example, these professional bodies responded with "None" (a non-statutory body response); "Nothing more than the Institute already established" (non-statutory body); "Unfortunately [for the member], individually nothing" (non-statutory body); and "None of which we are aware" (non-statutory body); "N/A" (non-statutory); and "International recognition carries more weight [than SAQA recognition]" (non-statutory body).

3.7 Attendance of SAQA-hosted Professional Body Forums

To gauge whether professional bodies had engaged with SAQA on matters related to professional bodies within the context of the NQF, one survey question explored whether professional bodies had attended any SAQA-hosted professional body forums. The survey asked: Have you as a professional body attended any SAQA-hosted professional body forums? SAQA hosts such forums routinely every year (often more than one). Figure 2 illustrates the responses to this question.
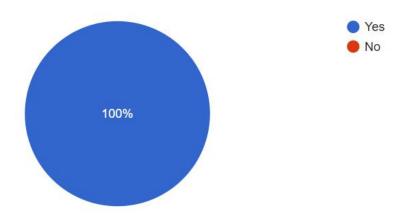
Figure 2: Attendance of forums

This question yielded 83 responses. All responses (100%) were a 'yes' and showed that professional bodies had engaged with SAQA through their attendance of professional body forums.

3.8 Number of SAQA-hosted Professional Body Forums attended annually

Following the previous question, the subsequent survey question asked how many SAQA-hosted professional body forums professional bodies had attended annually. This question received 83 responses, as evident in Figure 3.
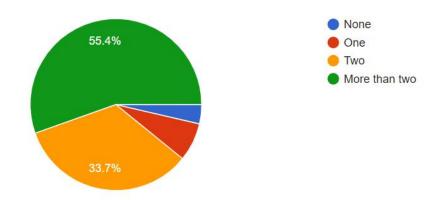

Figure 3: Number of forums attended

Over half the number of responses (46; 55,4%) indicated that professional bodies had attended more than two forums; about a third (28; 33,7%) of the number of responses identified having attended two forums, and six (6) responses identified having attended one forum (7,2%). While for the previous question, 100% of responses were 'yes' to having attended any SAQA-hosted forum, for this question there were three (3) responses (3,6%) that signalled having attended <u>no</u> forums. It might be that these professional bodies interpreted this question differently. Overall, it was evident that there was a good level of participation by professional bodies in SAQA-hosted forums.

3.9 Benefits of SAQA's Professional Body Forums

In addition to the questions about attendance of professional body forums and the number of forums attended, SAQA was also interested in understanding the *benefits* of such forums to professional bodies. As indicated in Table 6, the question was open-ended and received 83 responses.

Table 6: Forum benefits

What are the benefits of these forums (to your professional body)?	
Number of responses to the question	83
Type of question	Open-ended/responses typed-in

Dominant themes in the responses to this question were 'information sharing', 'networking' and 'awareness', with three responses (4%) being "none".

Information sharing/ improvement of own operations

The professional bodies surveyed pointed out 'information-sharing' as one of the key benefits of SAQA-organised and hosted forums, and reported that this had aided their respective work. The following were recurring aspects (sub-themes) of what the professional bodies had to say regarding SAQA professional body forums.

A few professional bodies reported *obtaining information/updates from SAQA* for their own use and improvement of their sectors. For example, a professional body indicated, among other things, that SAQA forums had informed it of new developments in the field of the operation of professional bodies, strengthened its relationship with SAQA staff, and promoted relationships with peer institutions. The forums kept this professional body "up to date with SAQA requirements and expectations; [allowed for] networking with peers; and [provided] guidance, enrichment and growth". The forums kept bodies abreast of "changes in policy or requirements placed on professional bodies; information on any amendments to legislation and recognition matters". The forums also served as an engagement platform with other professional bodies on "challenges and opportunities inherent in the sector(s)". Another professional body noted that the forums also enhanced their "visibility, credibility and knowledge sharing" to keep up with SAQA policies and plans. The SAQA forums, another professional body responded, were an opportunity to "air their views" and bring to the attention of the management of SAQA any items that needed to be clarified, etc. This body also reported that the information supplied by SAQA and the talks by presenters were "very informative". The information shared at the forums also assisted in terms of explaining how records should be kept/submitted for SAQA purposes – one professional body added, in reference to the NLRD-focused forums, the matter of "uploading of professional body designations".

While the SAQA forums have served as an *engagement platform* with other professional bodies on challenges and opportunities they experience, they also allow for engagement with SAQA staff.

The forums also served as an opportunity *to hear about best practice examples* in terms of work done. A professional body indicated that some of the benefits included learning and benchmarking, acquiring additional information, participating in the discussions and setting up task teams. It was also through these forums that one established "best practice, to establish a common understanding of challenges and lobby for appropriate changes" within the professional space. At the same time, the forums encouraged "alignment with the professional body development, critical compliance matters and issues, CPD, [and the] critical role of industry transformation".

Other professional bodies indicated that they had attended SAQA forums for *participating/engaging in discussions* related to the NQF, [professional] designations, professionalisation, professional bodies and qualification practices in Africa. For example, one professional body attended the forums for "education and training related updates, leading policy discussions, networking with other bodies, access to expert opinions, and opportunities to liaise and share professional opinion with SAQA". Another professional noted that the forums also served as an opportunity to "influence policy [alignment] and procedures, [and] encourage peer-to-peer engagements and learnings [sic] from all stakeholders". Furthermore, as reported by another professional body, the forums were an opportunity to get "feedback and updates on the status of new and existing professional bodies, gain insight into SAQA's expectations and interact with other professional bodies and share experiences".

A few professional bodies pointed out the opportunity *to understand the NQF and related legislation* presented by the SAQA forums. For example, one professional body responded that SAQA forums helped it "to understand the SAQA legislation" while another professional body said it helped it to "improve [its] understanding of [the NQF] framework". The understanding of the NQF legislation and SAQA policies, another professional body added, would help "to align the [professional body] with [the] relevant National Qualifications Framework". Related to the information-sharing benefits that SAQA forums bring, another professional body responded that they could "stay informed of proposed legislative changes and understand the changing NQF landscape".

Also related to information sharing, a few professional bodies spoke to the issue of *effectively hosting SAQA forums*. The Covid-19 pandemic has seen much professional body forum work done through online platforms. One professional body praised SAQA for an online forum that was held – "the last one [forum] I attended was online, which was really great as it was easy to attend (and I am sure more people attended than at a live [face-to-face] venue?). It would be great if consideration would be given to hosting them online. They are informative and give a good guideline on what to do [in our professional body work]".

It is worth highlighting a response from a professional body that best captures the shared sentiment from the survey responses to the question as it relates to information sharing. SAQA-organised professional body forums are:

> a platform where like-minded professional bodies meet and catch up on important matters concerning education and professionalising the sectors/professions we serve. It is also an opportunity to hear from SAQA: what

SAQA is busy with and what we can assist with. Speakers/presenters arranged by SAQA at the forum[s] normally also [add] value to our thought processes around matters like 4IR, articulation, RPL etc. Sometimes, SAQA forums [incorporate] some form of a workshop that gives an opportunity to network with other attendees from quality councils who may or may not be in attendance. I must say - I find a lot of value in SAQA's colloquiums.

Networking

In addition to information sharing, professional bodies reported that SAQA-organised and hosted forums provided them with networking opportunities to improve on their respective work/professions.

For example, the forums provided an understanding of issues related to professional bodies and an opportunity for bodies to have a "voice", to "learn", and "network". The forums were seen as a "platform for your concerns to be heard". Beyond that, the forums were, as one professional body noted, an "opportunity to network and engage with SAQA and other professional bodies, and raise issues of general interest". The forums were described by one professional body as an "academic space" that encouraged "networking with other professional bodies and related organisations". This is where, according to another professional body, "networking and learning" meet. Moreover, another professional body indicated that, through SAQA forums, professional bodies get the opportunity to establish and maintain "cross-sectoral collaborations". Networking opportunities, as another professional body reported, brought about "clarity on issues affecting the sector we are responsible for, information sharing and sharing of best practices", which lead to productive cross-sectoral collaborations.

Awareness

Some professional bodies pointed to the forums as an opportunity to create awareness around developments in the sector. For instance, a professional body indicated that "these forums ensure that we are aware of the latest developments that affect us".

While they accommodated networking, the forums enabled professional bodies to "raise positive remarks and have a healthy debate" about issues that they jointly could work together on, to "improve the South African [education, training, development, and work] landscape". One professional body responded that the forums provided them with the "understanding that all [professional bodies] have the same issues [or challenges]". The forums therefore also brought about an understanding of the "diversification of other industries", which laid the foundation for the cross-sectoral collaborations alluded to above.

One professional body (non-statutory) indicated that the forums were "not always beneficial" specifically with regard to their industry, but pointed out that it was "always good to hear from other professional bodies and the struggles they might have". Another professional body (non-statutory) said it was always beneficial to continue "gaining knowledge of [or about] SAQA and other professional bodies".

No responses to the question

All things considered, three (3) responses (4%) were "Not applicable", "None", and "N/A".

3.10 Usefulness of SAQA's Professional Body Forums

As a precursor to SAQA's understanding of how to improve professional body forums, professional bodies were asked about the extent to which they had found the forums to be useful. The survey asked: Overall, how useful have you found SAQA's professional body forums? There were 83 responses to this item and the results are illustrated in Figure 4.
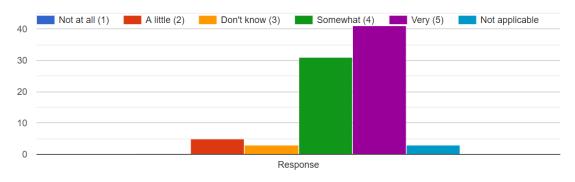

Figure 4: Usefulness of forums

Almost half of the responses (41; 49,4%) pointed out that the forums were 'Very useful', while 31 (37,3%) responses noted that forums were 'Somewhat useful'. Adding these two results provided an overall indication of the usefulness of the forums and showed that the vast majority (86,7%) of responses indicated that SAQA forums were useful. Five (5) responses pointed to the forums being 'A little' useful (6%), three (3) were 'Don't know' (3,6%) and three (3) were 'Not applicable' (3,6%).

3.11 How to Improve Professional Body Forums

In addition to gauging the usefulness of professional body forums, SAQA was also keen to understand how it could improve such forums. This understanding was achieved through an open-ended question that received 83 responses.

Table 7: Improving forums

How could these forums be improved?	
Number of responses to the question	83
Type of question	Open-ended/responses typed-in

Asked about how the SAQA-organised professional body forums could be improved, professional bodies shared various suggestions. They encouraged "more sharing of best practices" that SAQA saw in the various professional bodies, and indicated that this aspect "should be part of a process leading up to a forum event". Against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, one professional body suggested

"more online forums and provision of relevant information" while another said "online-only works up to a point – [there is a] need [for] face-to-face engagements".

For meaningful forums, another professional body suggested "engagement with professional bodies prior to forums being scheduled" to determine if there were matters that professional bodies would like to discuss. This could also be achieved by "establishing a Steering Committee comprised of professional body representatives and SAQA staff".

Recommendations made by a non-statutory body were for SAQA to:

> recognise and support professional bodies that are also QCTO AQPs [Assessment Quality Partners] and have designations linked to the qualifications for [which] they are AQPs; engage [the] CHE to recognise and engage with professional bodies regarding the applicability (to the profession) of qualifications being registered on the HEQSF [Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework]; educate the public about professional bodies, [both] statutory vs. non-statutory professional bodies and what the responsibilities/mandate of each are; and attend and speak at events and forums hosted by professional bodies.

A professional body (non-statutory) acknowledged the importance of discussions led by SAQA but said that some of the topics (such as NLRD uploads) were repeated frequently while most professional bodies were familiar with them. The suggestion was to use time slots to also "get feedback and input from professional bodies" on matters that were important to them, such as projects they are involved in to improve their professions, etc.

There was a need to "invite Quality Councils to these forums" to facilitate an understanding and recognition of what professional bodies were doing.

The forums, according to one professional body (non-statutory) should also focus on "assisting non-statutory bodies to have 'teeth", while another body (also non-statutory) suggested that all professional bodies (statutory and non-statutory) should have an "influence on agenda items" and the ability to "call such meetings to discuss specific matters".

It was suggested, by one professional body (statutory), that forums "keep the language jargon-free and simple for laypeople to understand", while another body (non-statutory) suggested that the forums should be "shorter, more focused, create centres of excellence, [and] facilitate sharing of good practice".

There was also a call for "improved planning on topics and content [and] inviting inputs from statutory and non-statutory bodies to make the content more relevant to the key challenges facing these bodies". Relatedly, there was a need, as one professional body suggested, for "more communication opportunities between professional bodies during the forums" which could help create an inter-discipline network where knowledge could be shared.

The sentiment shared by professional bodies was that it would be advantageous to make inputs into the agenda of the forums to highlight specific problems they faced

and seek advice from other professional bodies. It was for this reason that one professional body (statutory) suggested that "a survey of possible topics for discussion could be done before a meeting is set".

A further suggestion by another professional body (statutory) was that different forums could be held "by coupling a few disciplines", e.g., Banks, Attorneys, and Controlling Bodies, amongst others, and then having a separate forum for practical groups such as Artisans and First Aid groups. Similarly, another professional body (non-statutory) stated that:

> Although time and money do not allow for smaller forums, more training sessions where [sic] actual policies or documents used and successfully applied by other professional bodies of the same nature, i.e. non-statutory, small etc. [and] where experience and knowledge could be applied, would be advantageous.

This sentiment was shared by another professional body (non-statutory), which noted that the forums should include:

> more break-away group discussions around topics that concern all: how do we reach NDP2030 deliverables as a collective? How can professional bodies contribute to the vision/mission of SAQA? We need to make the forums a bit more strategically focused. We are looking to SAQA to lead us on this front. It should not be a task-orientated forum but an outcomes-based forum - SAQA needs to understand what it wants to achieve with each forum as you have the ears and minds of attendees for that moment - make the best of it.

Along similar lines, one professional body (non-statutory) suggested having "occasional streams to differentiate content for new professional bodies and professional bodies who have more experience". Put differently by another professional body (non-statutory), we should have "statutory bodies in one group and the voluntary associations separate when discussing [professional] body-specific issues and have joint sessions where general info is shared". Another professional body (non-statutory) called for forums to, "separate the statutory bodies from the non-statutory bodies as their challenges are different".

Another body responded that the forums should "add more learning opportunities - talks, seminars, and webinars on specific subjects that professional bodies grapple with, e.g. RPL".

Operational/forum delivery issues

A professional body suggested a "split between formal and informal sessions, allowing greater opportunities to network", and that session links should be shared in an email where presentations and other information could be found. There was also a feeling among the professional bodies that "the agenda tends to be too long. [Try and] stick to two or three subject matters because most of the time conversations tend to be cut short due to lack of time". Hosting these forums virtually "reduces the travel costs of people outside of the Gauteng regions". A related suggestion by another professional body was that the forums "should be open for public participation", and that "visibility

in South African provinces was critical - serving Gauteng only is limiting and depriving those outside metros".

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that meetings were easily held virtually. For this reason, another professional body said, "having more of these [virtual] meetings would allow for more regular contact between professional bodies and SAQA". There was also a shared view that the forums should be short, frequent and succinct to maintain good attendance throughout.

In terms of preparations, one professional body indicated that while the forums were already well run, it would be "best if [they were] set up well in advance including [sharing of] agendas and the documents to be discussed". Similarly, another professional body pointed out that the "publishing of the calendar to allow proper planning and alignment" with its own internal activities would be key. An issue that was highlighted above was creating "more breakaway sessions to consider developments in the professions".

Finally, and yet importantly, the sentiment amongst the professional bodies was that the presentations of sessions should be shared immediately after the forums. A professional body said, "send recordings so that we can watch in our own time". Another indicated that sharing presentations "would be beneficial to those attendees that may have network/connectivity issues, experience load-shedding or cannot attend and then miss out on important professional body information".

No responses to the question

A few professional bodies did not comment on the question and responded with "N/A"; "no improvement needed"; "in the current format, they serve the purpose"; "N/A as I am new to the position"; "no comment"; "unsure"; "I don't know"; and "no specific recommendations".

3.12 Seeking Statutory Professional Body Status

SAQA's survey also sought to determine whether professional bodies would seek statutory professional body status should the opportunity to do so become available. The survey asked: Would the professional body seek to become a statutory professional body in the future, should the opportunity to do so become available? This question yielded 83 responses and the results are shown in **Figure 5**.
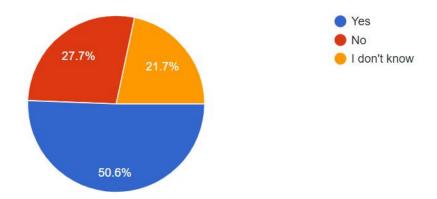
Figure 5: Statutory body status

Half of the number of responses (42;50,6%) pointed to seeking statutory body status if the opportunity presented itself. Disaggregating the results revealed that, as expected, it was the non-statutory bodies that were interested in seeking statutory body status. It was also evident that 23 responses (27,7%) were 'No' and these consisted of a mix of non-statutory bodies who perhaps had not seen any benefit in gaining statutory status, and bodies who were already statutory bodies and therefore had no need to seek statutory body status. Furthermore, 18 responses (21,7%) expressed uncertainty with 'I don't know'.

3.13 Seeking Statutory Professional Body Status – If yes, why?

As was evident from the results of the previous question, many non-statutory professional bodies sought professional body status, and the survey sought to explore the reasons for this. Overall, this question received 60 responses.

Table 8: Why statutory body status?

If yes, why would the professional body seek to become a statutory entity?	
Number of responses to the question	60
Type of question	Open-ended/responses typed-in

In response to why the professional body would seek statutory status in the future, those bodies that answered 'yes' had the following to say.

Becoming a statutory professional body "would increase our standing further and drive increased membership. It would support and enforce the standardisation of best practice in the compliance industry and weed out poorly performing individuals and compliance practices".

One professional body responded in detail to explain why it would like to become a statutory entity, as follows:

> The […] profession is intricately linked to, and involved in the governance of organisations; however, any person can practice as [a professional in this sector]. This in effect means that a person can currently practice as a

[professional] without being a member of a professional body, and they do not need to adhere to a code of conduct/ethics if they are not a member of a professional body resulting in them not being held accountable if they behave in an unethical manner. This has often brought the profession into disrepute (specifically in recent times). The public also does not recognise that there is a difference between statutory and non-statutory professional bodies and that non-statutory bodies cannot take action against non-members for misconduct. Additionally, there are no compulsory minimum education requirements for [these professionals] practising in South Africa. Organisations currently do not have to adhere to [professions'] practice standards and frameworks, which results in varying levels of quality in practice. We would seek to become a statutory body in order to effect changes to the above for the advancement and professionalisation of [this profession] in South Africa.

Explaining the reasons for seeking statutory status, another professional body indicated that it "has the resources, mechanisms and capability to leverage global knowledge and best practices, and enhance it [sic] by partnering with local stakeholders to serve the [profession in South Africa]". Moreover, the professional body added that:

> NQF [Levels] 5-8 Occupational Qualifications can be developed [and] aligned with the latest framework, including RPL paths; additional designations can be registered to support and drive CPD of procurement and supply professionals; the professional body will be enabled to legally enforce the Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics to all registered members within the profession, and take the required actions against transgressions; members who do not adhere to the minimum requirements to practice as [professionals] (e.g., annual Ethics Learning and Test, and CPD hours, etc.), are removed from the professional register.

One professional body's professionals were appointed in terms of the Pensions Funds Act.

> They oversee the billions of Rands in assets and savings of their members. Funds pay a levy to the FSCA (Regulator). The Regulator oversees compliance with the Pension Funds Act, prescribes training requirements, sets fit and proper standards, oversees the appointment of the [professionals], etc. A statutory body should provide the necessary support to free the Regulator to focus on regulation and not getting involved in the operations. Furthermore, as a statutory body [the professional body] could ensure that industry standards are maintained, persons are fit and proper, do CPD, actively contribute to policy development, etc. Lastly, the retirement fund industry is geared towards compliance in a big way and a statutory body model will work well. It will also contribute towards financial sustainability.

Another professional body indicated that, "as a non-statutory body, one is unable to use legislation to enforce the required standards and requirements currently required to become a member of the professional body". As a result, "people who claim to have the necessary skills and expertise" get into the system and "practice without recourse

if the required minimum standard is not achieved". Therefore, "having statutory status, the professional [body] can insist on minimum best international standards and practice, ensuring the safety and well-being of both the practitioner as well as the public. This would ensure that the […] industry would maintain international recognition and status".

One professional body indicated that membership was voluntary and that the professional body "did not have the authority to regulate access" to sites (of the profession/discipline) by non-members, especially those doing research in South Africa on a short-term/temporary basis, and was not able to intervene in disciplinary action. Moreover, the professional body did not have the authority to "accredit training courses" related to the discipline. Becoming a statutory body would enable the professional body to have a "larger footprint" in its professional context.

A professional body indicated that membership to a professional body meant that disciplinary action could be taken against members who breached the codes of ethics and conduct, but that at this point, disciplinary action only applied to members. Non-members were outside of the reach of disciplinary processes.

Another professional body stated that they would like to become a statutory entity because the risk under which their members work was high while the resource (water) which they manage was critical to preserve. It was noted that, elsewhere across the world, the profession was regulated through some form of statutory or regulating process, yet in South Africa, it was not.

In response to the question, a professional body indicated that the industry was unique to some degree and "needs to regulate practice with more authority". Membership was still optional for practitioners and service providers, so the "reach and influence of professional association status was still limited". The association was limited in its scope because of "fluid revenue from membership".

Some of the common reasons for seeking statutory status were to "increase compliance, improve the professional conduct of the members and ensure adherence to the highest ethical conduct by all registered and accredited [professionals]". The objective was to ensure that "consumers and the broader stakeholders only engage with registered and ethical [professionals]".

Becoming a statutory entity would "benefit the country and the buyers of such services if regulated. There are unfortunately so many [individuals] who are not accredited and yet [they are] practising. This, unfortunately, damages the reputation of the profession".

Being a statutory body would "protect the public, and uplift the standards of the industry. However, under the current system, members who resigned were still allowed to "practice without oversight". Another professional body noted that becoming a statutory body would increase its standing and improve its membership numbers, and "would support and enforce the standardisation of best practice in the industry".

One professional body indicated that in order "to restore service delivery to the citizens of South Africa and to gain respect for the public sector", officials should belong to a professional body.

Another indicated that the majority of its members' designations and licenses were "in response to statutory requirements". It becomes "mandatory", the professional body elaborated, "to belong to the professional body and the industry [is] regulated more strictly [by legislation]".

Another body noted that given that it was "working within the regulation of [this] environment" and had its activities referred to in legislation, "it would provide greater credence" if it was a statutory body.

"As per the current NQF Act, professional bodies were all operating under law anyway and the process should be formalised to only allow professionally certified Individuals to formally work in such industries" (response from a professional body).

It was reported by one professional body that it was necessary to "see the benefit of [the professional body] being a recognised statutory entity".

Another professional body said that due to the nature of the profession in South Africa, statutory status would "improve efficiency in the public sector", and the professionals in the public sector/service would be "held to account".

It was important to become a statutory body, one professional body said, to ensure the industry has "certain criteria that are regulated by government to ensure more accountability by professionals and organisations". Similarly, another professional body indicated that statutory status would "enforce compliance with standards and ensure there is a meaningful consequence for individuals who fail to behave in a responsible and ethical fashion".

Various professional bodies noted that becoming a statutory body would allow for the enforcement and regulation of the profession to ensure "fly by night [bogus] operators are forced out of the industry", to "professionalise the industry and set proper operating standards", and to "ensure people's (professionals') safety".

Other professional bodies indicated that they would like to become a statutory body "to promote and secure professionalisation for [the profession] and establishments within the industry", and "create a barrier to entry to eliminate unqualified practitioners from setting up [illicit] business".

3.14 Further Comments

SAQA closed the survey with a general question that allowed professional bodies to provide further comments. Overall, 43 responses were received.

Table 9: Comments

Do you have any comments?	
Number of response to the question	43
Type of question	Open-ended/responses typed-in

In response to the above question, professional bodies made various comments, many of which pointed to how SAQA could improve what it does. A few responses (13; 30%) were "No" or "Not Applicable". The comments pertained to the acknowledgement of SAQA's work/leadership; the advancement of the constitution; the need to improve SAQA's efficiency and reduce the cost 'burden' on professional bodies; and streamlining SAQA's work and assisting professional bodies.

Acknowledgement of SAQA's work/leadership

A few professional bodies acknowledged the work SAQA does. For example, one professional body praised the Directorate: Registration and Recognition (DRR) for their sterling work – "your dedication and professionalism is much appreciated within our organisation". Similarly, another professional body said, the "SAQA professional body directorate is doing a great job. I really appreciate the support we get whenever the need arises". In the same spirit, activities led by SAQA were valuable to professional bodies, as one indicated that they "look forward to the outcome of the three [professional body] task-teams" and thanked SAQA for all the work done for the members of their professional body.

Advancement of the Constitution

Another professional body alluded to the advancement of the Constitution as an extension of SAQA's mandate as it pertains to redress, access and equality, etc. This professional body suggested that, as a cardinal component of the South African qualification framework, SAQA should "make efforts to serve all South Africans even in other provinces…" and not just those based in the metros.

Need to improve SAQA's efficiency and reduce cost 'burden' on professional bodies

Some professional bodies raised the issue of 'lack' of efficiency on the part of SAQA. For example, one professional body indicated that SAQA needs to improve its "response turnaround time to emails" and reported that that the qualification verification process is "very cumbersome and expensive for new graduates". The professional body in question suggested that SAQA needs to consider collaborating with universities, and perhaps the verification certificate could accompany students' transcripts (to possibly reduce costs).

Other professional bodies shared the sentiment that it was important for SAQA to "recognise the additional burden (and costs)" it placed on professional bodies and to "streamline such processes". It would be great, one professional body stated, if SAQA recognition "had some value in terms of the skills development levy for recognised

training from the professional body". There are "no resources to implement statutory requirements/ expectations", another professional body added.

With the question of costs in mind, another professional body suggested that "the role to be played by professional bodies needs more support from government; it often seems an afterthought. As a new professional body, we are restricted in what we can do by a lack of funding". A professional body indicated that "as the statutory body and non-profit organisation, [they] will not be able to pay fees to SAQA because it will be against [their] mandate".

In relation to the forums and related costs, one professional body stated that the "forums can take place without incurring significant costs, and can take place virtually (even after the [Covid-19] pandemic subsides)".

Streamlining of SAQA work and assistance to professional bodies

Other professional bodies indicated that they needed SAQA's assistance in their respective roles. For example, one professional body reported that a Quality Council had still not finalised its qualification that was submitted in May 2018, "despite ongoing requests for feedback". This brought the "whole process of registering qualifications into disrepute". SAQA needed to "provide some oversight of the quality councils, which the NQF Act provides for".

Similarly, it would be of great value, another professional body said, if SAQA could assist it in "taking legal action against learning centres that advertise their qualifications [that] are not registered with [the] CHE or DHET and don't meet the NQF criteria".

Related to the question of whether a professional body would seek statutory status in the future, one professional body stated that:

> […] It took time to establish ourselves and to raise our profile. We will consider statutory body status but only after long and serious consultations with all stakeholders involved. There is value in being a voluntary body since our voice is independent and objective or at most perceived to be.

Another professional body elaborated on why they did not respond to the question about the advantages that SAQA recognition had brought to the professional body. This professional body stated that, in meetings with various entities (government departments, commercial entities, local authorities etc.), it did "not enjoy much recognition". Therefore, "if SAQA promoted [the professional body] and what it means working with [it], then this battle would have been easier". "The point is, it [is] SAQA who should be proactively promoting [professional bodies] and the value propositions that they bring".

Furthermore, another professional body noted the following: "notwithstanding lack of national support irrespective of continuous engagements, [the] professional body finds two additional challenges most impacting [on] achieving its objectives, namely the rigid understanding and implementation of qualifications with an NQF, which places greater emphasis on academic knowledge than the workplace requirements and skills

competencies for the career". The suggestion was, therefore, to "make knowledge (NQF) and application (Skill) […] meet", according to the professional body concerned. Moreover, the professional body approached national offices to position itself as a recognised professional body and put on record the finalisation of [an occupational qualification] (NQF 4), "requesting advocacy and some form of Gazette/publication that advances the professionalisation concept that permeates all strategic plans at all spheres of government". However, feedback or support in this regard was not forthcoming. According to this professional body, the continuation of the NQF of "old" and "out of date" industry related qualifications in the concerned profession is a "stumbling block" that the professional body has tried to address for years.

One professional body was keen on SAQA assisting non-statutory bodies to become statutory bodies. Another professional body indicated that the SAQA RPL process required "updating" as professional bodies could offer feedback from applications.

Other professional bodies raised different but related issues. For example, one noted that "the alliance between SAQA and [professional bodies] is key to establishing credibility and minimum standards in the professional sectors and lends great credibility to all such efforts". Another professional body said, "we are happy acting as a voluntary [professional body] but are concerned that there is no requirement for minimal compliance with standards, particularly when members of the public are placed at risk by individuals claiming a competence they don't have".

4. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

This report discusses the results of SAQA's online survey on the Roles and Responsibilities of Professional Bodies in South Africa. The Introduction to this report also mentions two separate but related activities that preceded the survey and informed the conceptualisation of the survey instrument, namely, the legislation overlap analysis [report available] and the workshops with professional bodies [minutes available]. The details of these two activities are available from SAQA.

SAQA thus has three sources of data pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of professional bodies. Looking ahead it will be necessary for SAQA to engage with this survey report, and thereafter to engage with professional bodies regarding the report. The possibility also exists of triangulating this report, and those on the legislation overlap analysis and the professional body workshops. The triangulation of these different data gathering approaches may lead to a deeper and more refined understanding of the roles and responsibilities of professional bodies, and could result in a small set of focused recommendations, or implications for SAQA, and possible actions related to either, if necessary.