

Occupational Qualifications Framework

**Draft Policy for the Quality Council for Trades and
Occupations**

Department of Labour

First Version

26.07.2008

Department of Labour

Quality Council for Trades and Occupations

DRAFT

Occupational Qualifications Framework

Purpose of this document:

The purpose of publishing this draft policy document is to:

- Inform the Department of Labour's clients and stakeholders of the Department's proposed policy
- Provide clients and stakeholders the opportunity to engage in the policy development process and to submit comments

Submission of comments:

You are invited to submit your comments by 31 October 2008 to

qcto@labour.gov.za

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	ii
1. The Context	1
1.1 Definitions	1
2. The Occupational Qualifications Framework	2
2.1 The purpose of the framework	2
2.2 Characteristics of the framework	3
2.3 The relationship of this framework to other frameworks	4
2.4 Positioning this framework against the NQF levels	4
2.5 The scope of this framework	5
2.6 Types of Occupational Qualification	6
2.61 National Occupational Award	7
2.62 National Skills Certificate	7
2.7 Fundamental learning in occupational qualifications	9
3 Design and Registration of Occupational Qualifications	9
3.1 Registration requirements	9
3.2 The role of curriculum in the OQF	10
3.3 Assessment	10
4 The National Occupational Pathways Framework	11

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Relationship between the OQF and the other qualification frameworks	5
Figure 2: The scope of the occupational qualifications	6

Abbreviations

CAD/CAM	Computer Aided Design / Computer Aided Machining
CEPs	Communities of Expert Practice
CHE-HEQF	Council for Higher Education's Higher Education Qualifications Committee
GFETQF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
NOPF	National Occupational Path Framework
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OFO	Organising Framework for Occupations
OQF	Occupational Qualifications Framework
QC	Qualifications Council
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority

Occupational Qualifications Framework

Draft Policy

1. The Context

- [1] The revised implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) spells out changes in the institutional landscape. While the principle of an integrated approach to the NQF remains, it has been recognised that various forms of learning will require particular adaptations for qualifications with specific purposes. This policy document describes the requirements for a qualifications framework for occupational purposes for the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). It builds on the experiences of various role players in the labour market to engage with issues of qualification development within the NQF and provides the basis for the management of development and quality assurance processes associated with the occupational learning system.
- [2] This policy framework is required to enable the Minister of Labour to carry out his political responsibilities in terms of the NQF and Skills Development implementation.

1.1 Definitions

- [3] An occupational qualification represents the achievement of a planned combination of learning outcomes which is intended to provide qualifying learners with the applied competence to practice an occupation, to perform occupationally-related skills sets and to provide a basis for further learning. Occupational qualifications developed under the auspices of QCTO contain three components:
- Knowledge and theory component
 - Practical skills component
 - Work experience component.
- [4] Occupations, which also include trades and professions, are defined by their position (classification code) and their descriptors in the Organising Framework for Occupations, which is maintained by the Department of Labour.

2. The Occupational Qualifications Framework

[5] The OQF is designed to:

- Facilitate the development of qualifications relevant to the labour market and to promote responsiveness to changing skills needs;
- Be sufficiently flexible to accommodate innovative learning and teaching strategies to address skills needs;
- Facilitate the development of competent practitioners who will contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of South Africa and participate successfully in knowledge creation and the global economy;
- Enhance the acquisition of relevant skills in a responsive occupational learning system;
- Be compatible with international occupations in order to ensure international recognition and comparability of standards;
- Be suitably flexible to accommodate the development of new occupations and specialisations;
- Be simple, clear, easy to understand and user-friendly for labour market role players and education and training providers;
- Facilitate articulation across education and training systems and assist the learner to identify potential articulation and progression routes, particularly in the context of lifelong learning; and
- Articulate with the other qualification frameworks.

2.1 *The purpose of the framework*

[6] The Occupational Qualifications Framework (OQF) is an integral component of the NQF and structures qualifications which are designed to address labour market needs. The labour market includes both the economy and the social development sector. The OQF provides for the certification of:

- Occupational competence;
- Meaningful skills sets related to occupations.

[7] The purpose of the OQF is to achieve:

- Clear articulation with labour market needs – the labour market being understood to include both the economic sector as well the social development sector; and
 - Clear articulation with qualifications in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework (GFETQF) and the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF).
- [8] The function of the OQF is to provide greater clarification of and support for Objective 2 of the NQF: “facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths” with particular emphasis on career paths. The OQF builds on the experiences of the past 12 years of developing occupational qualifications within the NQF.
- [9] The OQF will also provide greater consistency and coherence in the development and implementation of learning programmes linked to occupations and occupational qualifications. The new framework is intended to be the basis of all further policy development on qualifications, curricula and assessment for programmes regulated by the Skills Development Act such as learnerships, apprenticeships and skills programmes.
- [10] This new framework will be finalised in discussion with representatives from SAQA and from the Quality Councils for General and Further Education and Training and for Higher Education.

2.2 Characteristics of the framework

- [11] Occupational qualifications define the learning components required for occupational competence. The outcomes are specified in unit standards for each component of learning:
- Knowledge and theory standards
 - Practical skills standards
 - Work experience standards.
- [12] Knowledge and theory represents not only the knowledge of the practicalities of the occupation but also the disciplinary knowledge relevant to the occupation which has been recontextualised for occupational purposes and has been framed in terms of appropriate delivery mechanisms and modalities. The disciplinary knowledge and theory component is what connects the Occupational Qualifications

Framework to the other qualification frameworks. In addition, knowledge and theory also includes the knowledge and theory related to an occupational specialisation or the specific context in which the occupation is practiced.

- [13] Learnerships and skills programmes were introduced through the Skills Development Act to address the historical and structural barriers to the acquisition of relevant occupational skills. The acquisition of occupational competence has in the past been largely restricted to trades (via apprenticeships) and professions (via internships, articles of clerkship, cadetships, pupillage and other forms of occupational or professional experience). There is an increasing need to extend this to other occupations and occupational skills sets. A specific requirement of registering a learnership¹ is that it relates to an occupation and that it contains both structured learning and work experience.

2.3 *The relationship of this framework to other frameworks*

- [14] The National Qualifications Framework Act provides for the establishment of three Quality Councils (QCs). The purpose of these QCs is to streamline standards setting and quality assurance and to reduce the number of bodies currently involved in these processes. Standards setting and quality assurance now resides under one roof. There are three such QCs, namely for:

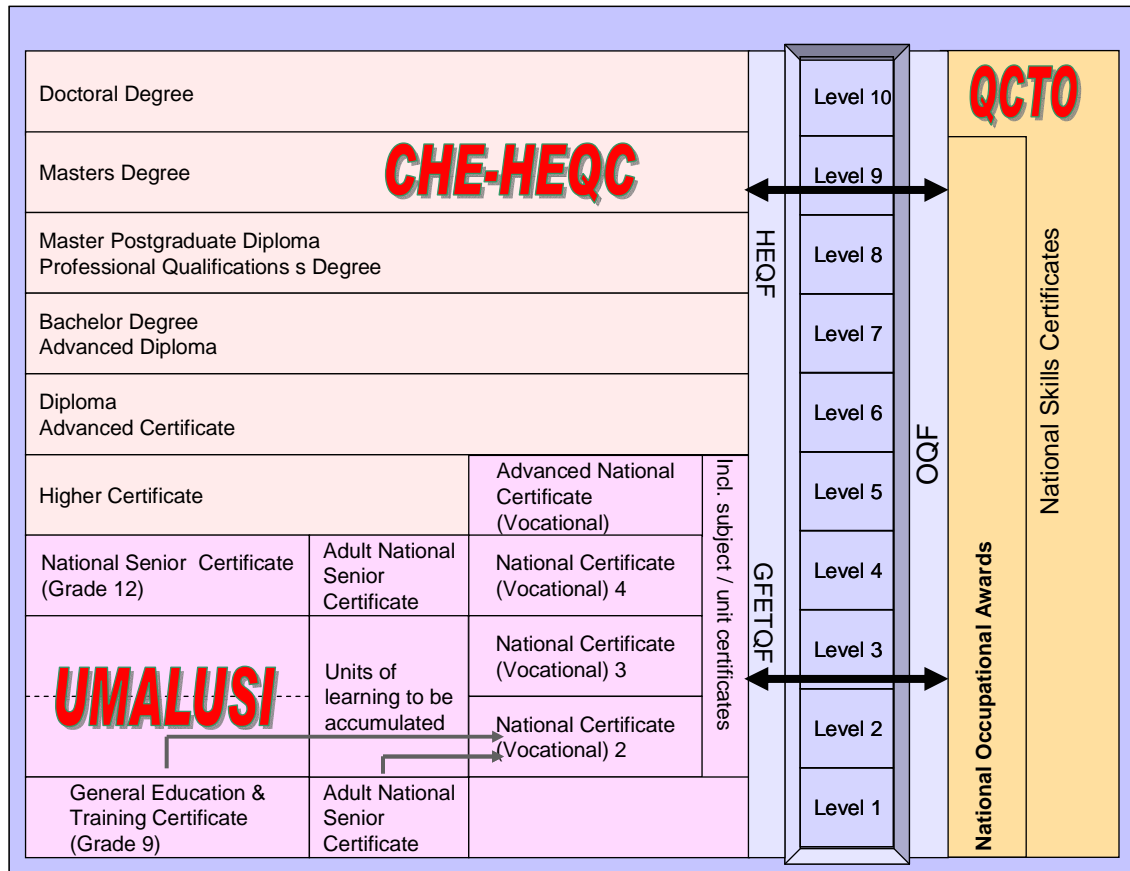
- General and Further Education and Training Qualifications
- Higher Education Qualifications
- Occupational Qualifications.

2.4 *Positioning this framework against the NQF levels*

- [15] The OQF will cover all NQF levels. The level at which occupational qualifications will be registered on the NQF will be determined by the NQF level descriptors as determined by SAQA. The following diagram depicts the Occupational Qualifications Framework against the NQF levels and the other qualification frameworks.

¹ This also applies to apprenticeships

Figure 1: Relationship between the QOF and the other qualification frameworks



[16] Occupational qualifications will be registered at a particular level of the NQF based on the following:

- The NQF level descriptors (as determined by SAQA)
- The skill level of the occupation in the Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO).
- International practice.

The level will form part of the qualification title.

2.5 The scope of this framework

[17] The QCTO will certify QOF qualifications where:

- competence is demonstrated against all three learning components in qualifications registered on the NQF in terms of this policy – typically where learnerships or apprenticeships are registered against the occupation or trade;

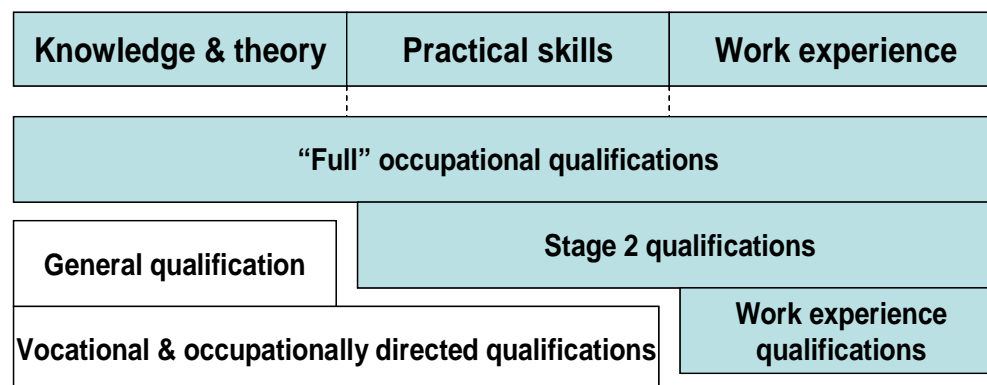
- competence is demonstrated against specialised and occupational knowledge, practical skills and work experience components – typically these are undertaken by learners who have already achieved relevant, general qualifications in the other qualifications frameworks;
- competence is demonstrated against specialised and occupational knowledge and the work-experience component – typically these would be linked to vocational or occupational-directed feeder qualifications.

[18] Specifically excluded from the Occupational Qualifications Framework are:

- Qualifications which include work-integrated learning and are registered on one of the other qualification frameworks
- Qualifications which lead to professional designations and are subject to specific legislation.

Paragraphs 16 and 17 are summarised in the following figure. The scope of the occupational qualifications is indicated in colour.

Figure 2: The scope of the occupational qualifications



2.6 Types of Occupational Qualification

[19] Occupational qualifications will be described as follows:

- The descriptor – the qualification type
- The designator – the occupational title
- The NQF level
- Any specialisations achieved.

[20] The descriptor refers to two types of occupational qualification:

- National Occupational Award
- National Skills Certificate.

2.61 National Occupational Award

[21] The National Occupational Award certifies the achievement of competence in relation to an occupation. The National Occupational Award designator will be the occupational title and the specialisation or context in which the qualification was obtained as laid out in the following examples:

- National Occupational Award: Ship's Master Level 6
 - Specialisation: Harbour Pilot
- National Occupational Award: Metal Fabricator Level 3
 - Specialisation: Boilermaker
 - Context: Mining and Extraction
- National Occupational Award: Environmental Health Officer Level 5
 - Specialisation: Health Inspector.

[22] Credit values for occupational qualifications are determined by the range, content, duration (inclusive of work experience), and the complexity of the learning processes. The exit outcomes of the occupational qualifications must address all aspects of the occupational descriptor in the OFO.

2.62 National Skills Certificate

[23] The National Skills Certificate certifies a distinct but occupationally relevant skills set. The designator describes the:

- Occupational skills in the form of a competence linked to the specialisation or context in which the skill set has been acquired (if required), e.g.
 - National Skills Certificate: Manage Loan Portfolios Level 4
 - National Skills Certificate: Design machined products using CAD/CAM software Level 5

or the:

- Specialised occupational role - which is the outcome of the learning and assessment process, eg
 - National Skills Certificate: Safety Representative Level 3

- Context: Chemical industry
- National Skills Certificate: Six Sigma Black Belt² Level 6

or the:

- Occupational title of occupations reflected at Skills Level 1 on the OFO.

[24] The National Skills Certificate will also reflect the three learning components and must consist of at least 20 credits. In addition these certificates must reflect a national need and require external assessment by a registered constituent assessor. National Skills Certificates can represent:

Type	Notes
1. Part of an award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • linked to a role in the occupation • a narrow set of tasks that comprise a distinct component of an occupational profile • it could stretch over multiple NQF levels, in the same way as an occupation does • assesses one or more occupational tasks <p>Example: 552101 Bank Worker - <u>Teller</u></p>
2. Specialisation within an occupation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adds on to an occupational award and qualifies a person to perform a specialised task/s related to the occupation <p>Example: 221204 Internal auditor – <u>Customs Auditor</u></p>
3. Skill level 1 occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will be certificates not awards • skills requiring little theory and primarily taught on-the-job <p>Example: Stable hand, fast-food cook, shelf filler, porter, bicycle mechanic</p>
4. A skills set that is required for licensing purposes or other legislative requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a specific task required by legislation or regulations or international quality standards • but less than an occupation <p>Example: Wireman's licence, Third Party Inspector, Crop Sprayer</p>

² This example has been included to illustrate how international certifications can now be reflected on the OQF. Such certifications are seldom currently registered on the NQF for credit-bearing or provider-accreditation purposes. It illustrates the type of skills certification which is increasingly being required by regulatory authorities and by global market requirements.

2.7 Fundamental learning in occupational qualifications

- [25] The design of occupational qualifications at NQF levels 2 – 4 will be based on the assumption that learners have sufficient foundational competence in communication and mathematical literacy to cope with the occupational learning demands and to benefit from the learning process. Additional communication and mathematical literacy learning will be determined by the needs of each specific occupation and will be fit-for-purpose. These will be incorporated into the common/core learning requirements of the qualification.
- [26] The assessment of foundational learning competence will be based on the specifications contained in a designated curriculum component. The assessment of foundational learning competence can be completed prior to, or be integrated into the start of, any occupational learning programme for NQF level 2, 3 and/or 4 occupational awards. Foundational learning competence may also be specified in NQF level 1 occupational awards where deemed necessary. Foundational learning competence will be a requirement for certification in relation to OQF qualifications but will not constitute credits on the NQF nor be assigned to a particular level on the NQF.

3 Design and Registration of Occupational Qualifications

3.1 Registration requirements

- [27] The Minister of Labour will develop criteria for the registration of occupational qualifications.
- [28] SAQA will register occupational qualifications which conform to these criteria on the NQF.
- [29] Occupational qualifications will be linked to occupations listed on the OFO. The starting point for the design and the development³ will be the occupational role and the skills and tasks associated with the occupation. Where currently competence in an occupation may require the completion of several related qualifications at different levels of the NQF, these will now be consolidated into a single qualification. Only one qualification per occupation will be registered.

³ Development is understood to include revision. The large number of occupational qualifications currently registered on the NQF will require revision and adjustment rather than development from scratch.

3.2 *The role of curriculum in the OQF*

[30] The development of occupational qualifications and related unit standards will be based on the simultaneous development of a curriculum. The curriculum will specify the inputs required in developing the required occupational competence or skill set. The purpose of the curriculum will be to simplify and strengthen the development and implementation processes of the qualification, specifying each of the three learning components

[31] The curriculum will provide guidance to the various role players on:

- access requirements
- exemptions from particular curriculum components
- articulation with other learning pathways such as vocational qualifications obtained in education institutions
- the content (scope and depth), the learning activities and the guidelines of internal assessment
- the physical and human resource requirements for delivery.

3.3 *Assessment*

[32] Assessment will be conducted against the outcomes related to the three components of learning, which will be expressed in unit standards. To ensure meaningful learning the minimum credit value of unit standards will be set at 6 credits.

[33] Related occupational qualifications will be clustered for the purposes of qualification and curriculum development processes. This will ensure that common elements in qualifications are identified and developed for use across all relevant qualifications. This will also assist the provider system to develop more generic programmes and flexible learning materials to address a range of occupations.

[34] The award of an occupational qualification will be based on an external integrated summative assessment of occupational competence. This assessment will be conducted in terms of the criteria contained in the Qualification Assessment Specifications. These specifications will be developed as part of the qualification development process.

- [35] The rules of combination for occupational qualifications will be revised to respond to labour market needs. Occupational qualifications will consist of common/core learning and specialised learning components⁴. Each occupational qualification will consist of a minimum of 20% of credits for each learning component. The balance of the credits (40%) can be allocated in a proportion appropriate to the needs of the particular occupation.

4 The National Occupational Pathways Framework

- [36] The QCTO will use the National Occupational Pathways Framework (NOPF) as a management tool for the clustering of occupations to minimise duplication and to ensure that occupational qualifications are designed or revised in line with labour market needs. The clustering of occupations will promote articulation and progression and thus also facilitate recognition of prior learning (RPL) and the fast-tracking of skills development initiatives.
- [37] All occupations will be included in one of the occupational clusters.
- [38] The design and development process for occupational qualifications, curricula and qualification assessment specifications will be expert-driven and conducted by Communities of Expert Practice (CEPs). This will ensure that occupational qualifications remain relevant and are responsive to changing needs in the labour market. Selected experts will be convened to develop the qualifications and other members of the CEP will be provided with the opportunity to make comments.
- [39] Where there is a professional body, institute or occupational association to represent practitioners these can be used to convene and manage the processes in line with QCTO regulations. Where no such bodies exist or where there are competing bodies, the QCTO will set up and maintain a database of practitioners who are willing to contribute to the delivery of the outputs. Practitioners captured in the database must be knowledgeable about the current practices of their respective occupations. In addition, experts may be drawn from members of Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs).
- [40] The process will also include participation, where appropriate, from other QCs and from relevant education and training institutions to promote

⁴ This replaces SAQA¹ categories Fundamental, Core and Elective

occupational progression, portability and articulation with the other qualification frameworks. Where required, the CEP will involve assessment experts to provide assistance to ensure the validity of the assessment design.

- [41] Development of occupational qualifications will be prioritised in terms of skill needs and expiry dates.
- [42] Qualifications that are not linked to occupations on the OFO will expire at the end of their term.
- [43] Qualifications which address specialisations within an occupation will be consolidated with the relevant occupational qualifications.