

Quality Assurance Framework

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

Department of Labour

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Department of Labour

Quality Council for Trades and Occupations

DRAFT

Quality Assurance 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

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Abbreviations

CEPs	Communities of Expert Practice
DoL	Department of Labour
ETQA	Education, Training and Quality Assurance body
GFETQF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
INDLELA	Institute for the Development of Learnerships, Employment Skills and Labour Assessments
ISOE	Institution of Occupational Excellence
NCPF	National Occupational Path Framework
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OQF	Occupational Qualifications Framework
QC	Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council
QCTO	Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDA	Skills Development Act
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority

Quality Assurance Framework

Draft Policy

1. Introduction

- [1] The Quality Assurance Framework for Occupational Qualifications outlines an effective and workable quality assurance system for training and skills development related to labour market skills needs and legislated through the Skills Development Act (SDA). Whilst building on current good practice it reorganises and refocuses resources to achieve greater consistency and more coherence in the design and provision of occupational qualifications.
- [2] Following the review of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) it has become apparent to all stakeholders that different kinds of learning in different contexts require a variety of qualification types, compliant with different rules of combination. Hence the emergence of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF), the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework (GFETQF) and the Occupational Qualifications Framework (OQF), linked to each other in our integrated National Qualifications Framework. This entails the establishment of three Quality Councils (QCs) to manage the three sub-frameworks.
- [3] This Quality Assurance Framework should be read in conjunction with the Occupational Qualifications Framework document, which outlines the purpose, scope and nature of the qualifications which will be quality assured by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). The OQF document also outlines the design features that provide the basis for quality assurance processes.
- [4] The overall quality assurance system for the QCTO focuses most resources on the quality of qualification design and the validity of learner achievements, both of which are supported by research and data analysis. This Quality Assurance Framework document focuses on the implementation of a fit-for-purpose curriculum and the quality assurance of learner achievements

2. Policy framework

- [5] The Joint Policy Statement issued by the Ministers of Education and Labour (September 2007) provides for the establishment of a Quality Council for Trades and Occupations by the Minister of Labour. The QCTO will manage and coordinate the development, provision, assessment and impact of the occupational qualifications in the OQF.
- [6] The Minister of Labour has developed legislation to establish a QCTO with quality assurance roles related to:
- the coherent design of occupational qualifications, curriculum and assessment in line with labour market skills needs;
 - the quality assurance of education and training provision related to occupational qualifications;
 - the conduct of integrated summative assessments for occupational competence;
 - the issue of National Occupational Awards and Skills Certificates; and
 - the monitoring and reporting of the impact of learning interventions and the implementation of measures to improve their effectiveness.
- [7] The QCTO may delegate specific quality assurance activities to suitable agencies, including Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), those statutory and non-statutory professional bodies which choose to work with the QCTO and the Institute for the Development of Learnerships, Employment Skills and Labour Assessments (INDLELA). However, the QCTO retains accountability for these functions.
- [8] The QCTO may appoint moderating bodies to perform agreed quality assurance functions for specific occupations or occupational families. Such moderating bodies will, in general, be professional bodies or occupational associations who have a strong and demonstrated interest in the particular occupations.
- [9] Assessment of occupational competence will be performed by constituent assessors. In the context of occupational qualifications, constituent means persons who members of the relevant community of expert practice, ie are practicing the occupation or in active in the occupational context. This will ensure contribute to the credibility of the assessment process.

3. Qualification Design as the Basis for Quality Assurance Processes

- [10] The QCTO will be responsible for the design of all qualifications in the OQF and their related unit standards. This will include all designated trades as well as occupational qualifications previously developed through SETA driven or supported standards generating processes.
- [11] The QCTO will utilise the National Occupation Pathways Framework (NOPF) as a management tool to identify related clusters of occupations, minimise duplication and ensure that occupational qualifications and curricula are designed in line with labour market skills needs. The NOPF will indicate articulation and progression options and thus facilitate recognition of prior learning (RPL) and fast-tracking skills development initiatives.
- [12] The design process for occupational qualifications will be expert-driven and will be based on the desired occupational profile.
- [13] The development of curricula will be integral to the qualification design process. The curriculum will cover the three curriculum components: theory/knowledge, practical skills and work experience. It will specify the requirements for accreditation of providers and approval of workplaces. It will include guidelines for learning provision.
- [14] The curriculum will include guidelines for the assessment of each curriculum component. This is referred to as internal assessment. The internal assessments carried out for the theory/knowledge and practical skills components of occupational qualifications are the responsibility of the provider. The internal assessment of the work experience component is the responsibility of the employer. Successful learners receive statements of results¹.
- [15] In addition to the curriculum, Qualification Assessment Specifications will be developed for each OQF qualification in relation to the integrated summative assessment of occupational competence. This is referred to as the external assessment. The specifications will set a national standard to ensure the consistency of the external assessments across

¹ In the workplace these could be a log book which provides some detail on the learning achievements

different sites and sectors. Successful learners receive Occupational Awards or Skills Certificates.

- [16] SAQA will register OQF qualifications on the NQF.
- [17] There will be an emphasis on fitness for purpose, relevance, flexibility, articulation, progression and portability in the design of occupational qualifications.
- [18] The design process therefore lays the basis for the quality assurance of learning achievements and other quality control processes which are outlined in the following sections.

4. Quality Assurance of the External Assessment of Occupational Competence

- [19] The external integrated summative assessment of occupational competence is the key focus for the QCTO in relation to the quality assurance of learner achievements. For each OQF qualification registered on the NQF, Qualification Assessment Specifications will be published with the curriculum on the NOPF. It is the responsibility of the QCTO to ensure that the external assessments of occupational competence are carried out in line with the relevant Qualification Assessment Specifications.
- [20] The Qualification Assessment Specifications will specify the overall assessment strategy for the external integrated assessment required to demonstrate occupational competence for each qualification. It will specify any interim external assessments² required before the final assessment. It will specify the criteria for the registration of constituent assessors and moderators and the requirements for accreditation of assessment centres or registration of assessment sites in terms of physical and human resources, and health and safety.
- [21] Learners who have successfully completed all the required curriculum components will be eligible for the external assessment. Those who are found competent will qualify for certification.
- [22] External assessments will be conducted at sites registered and monitored by the relevant appointed national moderating body. Such

² eg phase tests in apprenticeships

assessment sites may include accredited assessment centres, workplaces registered as assessment sites or other venues which meet the requirements contained in the qualification assessment specifications.

- [23] Trade tests will be conducted at accredited assessment centres which will fall under a single national artisan moderating body. Statutory and non-statutory professional bodies and other suitable organisations will be invited to play a similar role in relation to other groups of related occupational qualifications.
- [24] The QCTO will identify potential quality partners and invite them to apply to be appointed as national moderating bodies for identified groups of related occupations. These bodies may be appointed to carry out specified quality assurance functions in line with the relevant QCTO Criteria and Guidelines, providing they meet the criteria outlined in the curriculum and qualification assessment specifications. The QCTO may delegate certain functions but will retain overall responsibility as well as ownership of the relevant data.
- [25] Moderating bodies' delegated functions could include the registration of constituent assessors and maintenance of the register; the adjudication of appeals, complaints and irregularities identified through the analysis of learner data conducted by the QCTO; the verification and cross-moderation of a percentage of external assessments to ensure consistency in application of the national standard.
- [26] The qualification assessment specifications document will provide exemplar assessments to set a national standard. Moderating bodies may be delegated responsibility for the design and validation of external integrated summative assessments of occupational competence, and the development and maintenance of banks of assessment items or tasks where this is desirable and feasible.
- [27] The external integrated summative assessment will not duplicate the internal assessments already carried out by providers and workplaces. It will focus on the ability of learners to integrate their general and specialised theory, knowledge, application, acquired skills and work experience to demonstrate applied competence in the context of their occupation. The achievement of relevant critical cross-field outcomes will be integrated into the assessment tasks.

5. Quality Assurance in Relation to Data Analysis and Impact Assessment

- [28] The QCTO will monitor and assess the impact of the OQF qualifications in relation to the long- and short-term skills needs of the labour market.
- [29] It will analyse data on learner enrolment, throughput, achievement and certification in terms for example, providers and workplaces, assessment centres, learners and learning programmes. The QCTO will use the findings of this analysis together with feedback from stakeholders and reports from its quality assurance agents to detect and rectify irregularities and shortcomings in areas which fall within the scope of its activities.
- [30] Additional research will be commissioned on areas of concern. This could include, for example, employer satisfaction surveys in relation to the occupational competence of qualifying learners.

6. Quality Control in Relation To Provider Accreditation and Workplace Approval

- [31] The quality assurance model recognises the fact that all OQF occupational qualifications are composed of theory/knowledge, practical skills development and work experience.
- [32] The QCTO will accredit providers which demonstrate the capacity to offer one or more of the theory/knowledge and practical skills development curriculum components of an OQF qualification. The minimum requirements for each component will be specified in the relevant curriculum.
- [33] Where a provider already accredited by another QC wishes to offer a curriculum component of a qualification on the OQF, the QCTO will check that the provision meets the curriculum component requirements. It will list the providers that comply as 'accredited' and link the provider to each of the relevant OQF qualifications, so as to avoid duplication of processes.
- [34] The scope of the accreditation will be clearly stated, with all offerings covered by the accreditation listed and linked to the relevant curricula and qualifications.
- [35] If a provider wishes to extend the scope of the accreditation, an application will have to be submitted and its capacity to offer the

additional curriculum components will be evaluated before the scope is extended.

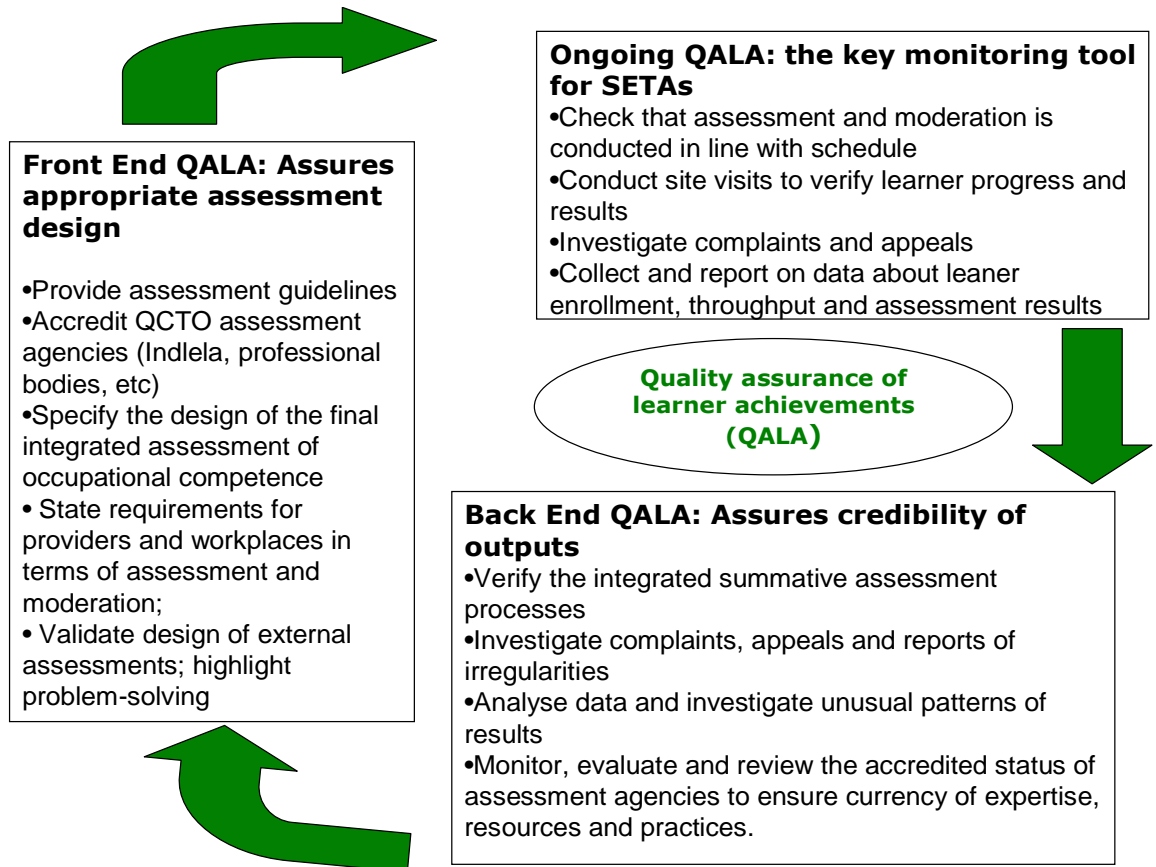
- [36] The QCTO will also take responsibility for the evaluation and approval of workplaces as learning sites for the work experience component of the curriculum; this may be delegated to SETAs or other suitable agents.
- [37] Accreditation and approval requirements against each of the curriculum components will be outlined in the curriculum, and will be fit-for-purpose. These will include ensuring that the provider/employer can demonstrate that the following are in place, and are appropriate to the context:
- human and physical resources;
 - learning and assessment processes and materials;
 - health and safety procedures; and
 - managerial and administrative support.
- [38] The QCTO's approach to accreditation will be based on self-evaluation (in terms of the curriculum requirements) for established providers with a good track record. Frequency of compliance audits will depend on the risk profile of the provider. They will always be required for emerging providers and small and micro enterprises workplaces and in cases where complaints have been lodged or analysis of learner data raises questions.
- [39] The QCTO will encourage a culture of self-regulation and strong links to relevant professional and occupational bodies and associations to maintain and raise standards. It will provide best practice guidelines and will encourage providers to work towards the achievement of excellence. Accreditation is seen as a quality control mechanism.

7. Quality Monitoring of Learning Programme Implementation

- [40] SETAs will continue to act as agents for the DoL and carry out their responsibilities for ensuring that apprenticeship contracts and learnership agreements are adhered to. They will monitor implementation and link the allocation of funds to the meeting of the agreed targets recorded in the implementation schedule. The implementation of skills programmes will also be monitored.

- [41] SETAs (or other identified bodies) will be able to place more emphasis on the quality of learning programme implementation. Their role will include:
- approving workplaces against the work experience component of the curriculum
 - recording approved workplaces and monitoring the quality of the work experience offered;
 - conducting physical audits and verification visits to check the ability of the QCTO accredited providers to implement the specific curriculum component effectively;
 - monitoring learner progress and keeping records of enrolments, completion rates, certification rates, etc, per programme;
 - responding to any complaints or problems related to providers, learners and employers
 - reporting information as appropriate to the QCTO and the DoL.
- [42] The monitoring function will be ongoing, and as the QCTO receives reports on programme implementation, the accreditation/ approval status of providers/ workplaces may be reviewed.
- [43] Relevant professional bodies or other suitable agencies may enter into voluntary agreements with the QCTO to assist in monitoring and evaluation functions.
- [44] The monitoring of on-going summative assessment for the issue of statements of results will form an integral part of the quality monitoring function.
- [45] Guidance relating to the conduct of ongoing summative assessments will be included in the curriculum. In addition the QCTO will publish best practice assessment guidelines which will address both formative and summative assessment. A sampling approach focusing on fewer assessment tasks, addressing combined outcomes in an integrated manner, will be encouraged. This will reduce the quantity of paperwork, unnecessary duplication as well as the time required and the costs attached to the assessment process.
- [46] The diagram below illustrates the QCTO assessment model. It summarises the inputs into the system, the on-going monitoring and the final outputs in terms of the quality assurance of learner achievements.

Figure 1: The QCTO Assessment Model



8. Quality Assurance in Relation to the Provision of RPL Services

[47] The qualification assessment specifications published with each qualification within the OQF will indicate clearly the recognition of prior learning (RPL) relating to the curriculum components which are offered through institutions accredited by Umalusi or the CHE-HEQC. The offerings listed in this context will be accepted (without any RPL process requirements) as affording the learner exemption from the curriculum components indicated as equivalent.

[48] The qualification assessment specifications will also list expired unit standards and qualifications from the NQF which have been identified as matching parts of curriculum components and which can therefore be

accepted as affording the learner exemption for the specified component(s).

- [49] The qualification assessment specifications will also provide broad guidance on the evidence requirements and RPL processes for candidates who seek recognition in relation to the work experience and practical skills curriculum components.
- [50] Where providers of assessment and RPL services have been accredited by the QCTO in the context of a specific qualification, the assessment guidelines which form a part of the curriculum will include a list of such providers so that learners, employers and other providers can avail themselves of the services as required.
- [51] The QCTO will actively promote the provision of RPL advice and services including RPL assessments in the context of human resource development initiatives.
- [52] One of the criteria for the accreditation of assessment centres to offer the external summative assessment of occupational competence will be a requirement to employ staff competent to offer RPL advice and/or identify relevant RPL service providers.
- [53] The QCTO will provide RPL process guidelines for the planning and implementation of RPL initiatives, aimed at providers, managers responsible for planning and coordinating the implementation of RPL in the workplace, and workplace committees. It will also provide a detailed implementation guide.

9. Quality Assurance in Relation to the Issuing of Certificates

- [54] The QCTO will be responsible for issuing the following certificates:
- National Occupational Award (registered on the NQF)
 - National Skills Certificates (registered on the NQF)
- It will also issue statements of results in relation to the Foundational Learning assessment.
- [55] A National Occupational Award will state:
- the title of the occupation as listed on the Organising Framework for Occupations and its NLRD number
 - any specialisation achieved.

- [56] A National Skills Certificate will state:
- the skills set(s) achieved and their related unit standards.
- [57] A Foundational Learning Assessment statement of results will state:
- Title; and
 - Competence in Mathematical Literacy for occupational learning; or
 - Competence in English for occupational learning.
- [58] QCTO certificates will carry the QCTO logo and be numbered. Security mechanisms will be implemented in line with SAQA guidelines. Certain qualifications may be jointly certificated with other QCs, accredited institutions or professional bodies. The QCTO may delegate the function of certification for specified qualifications. Delegation will be dependent on the QCTO being satisfied that quality management systems and security features meet the QCTO's criteria.