






**Policy for the certification of  
learner achievements for trades and  
occupational qualifications on the  
Occupational Qualifications  
Sub-Framework (OQSF)**

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**APPROVED BY:**

 <hr/> Chief Executive Officer  Name: Mr Vijayen Naidoo  Date: <u>19/11/2019</u>	 <hr/> Chairperson of the Council  Name: Prof. Peliwe P Lolwana  Date: <u>20/11/2019</u>	 <hr/> Chief Director: Occupational Qualification Management  Name: Mr Thomas Lata  Date: <u>18/11/2019</u>
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## List of Acronyms

AQP	Assessment Quality Partner
DQP	Development Quality Partner
EISA	External Integrated Summative Assessment
FLC	Foundational Learning Competence
NAMB	National Artisan Moderation Body
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OFO	Organising Framework of Occupations
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
QAP	Quality Assurance Partner
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDA	Skills Development Act, 2008 (Act No 97 of 2008), as amended

## Glossary of terms

In this document, any word or expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No 67 of 2008), as amended, and the Skills Development Act, 1998, (Act No 97 of 1998), as amended, has the same meaning unless the context otherwise indicates.

<b>Achievement</b>	The recognition granted to a learner when all required learning outcomes have been successfully demonstrated.
<b>Appeal</b>	The formal petitioning by an individual against the decision made by the QCTO decision, after the verification process regarding the assessment, standards and quality assurance processes, not to award a qualification.
<b>Assessment</b>	The process of collecting evidence of the learners' work to measure and make judgements about the competence or non-competence of the learner in respect of specified NQF registered occupational qualifications and part qualifications.
<b>Assessment centre</b>	A centre accredited by the QCTO for the purpose of conducting external integrated summative assessments for occupational qualifications and part qualifications registered on the QQSF.
<b>Assessment Quality Partner (AQP)</b>	A body delegated by the QCTO to develop assessment instruments and manage external integrated summative assessments for occupational qualifications and part qualifications registered on the QQSF.
<b>Certificate</b>	A document indicating formal recognition by the QCTO of an occupational qualification, part qualification, (including legacy trades or skills programme) awarded to a successful learner
<b>Development Quality Partner (DQP)</b>	A body delegated by the QCTO to manage the process of developing specific occupational qualifications, curricula and assessment specifications.
<b>External Integrated Summative Assessment (EISA)</b>	The final external integrated evaluation of a learner's occupational competence in the specified registered NQF occupational qualification, part qualification, (including legacy trades or skills programmes). A learner gains access to the EISA through meeting the requirement as stipulated in the qualification.
<b>Foundational Learning</b>	Learning that provides opportunities for the development of proficiency in one or more languages as well as in some form of mathematics or mathematical literacy and which is intended to

	support further learning or competency required to pursue work in a professional environment
<b>Internal formative Assessment</b>	On-going assessments, reviews and observations, using a range of formal and informal assessment procedures during the learning process in order to modify teaching and learning activities and to improve learner attainment.
<b>Learner</b>	An individual participating in a training programme with the purpose of achieving an occupational qualification, part qualification, or trade.
<b>Monitoring</b>	A continuous process of review of quality that can be conducted internally and/or externally to recommend quality improvements.
<b>National Artisan Moderation Body (NAMB)</b>	The National artisan moderation body contemplated in Section 26A of the Skills Development Act
<b>National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)</b>	The electronic management information system of the NQF under the authority of SAQA, which contains records of qualifications, part qualifications, learner achievements, recognised professional bodies, professional designations and associated information such as registrations and accreditations
<b>National Qualifications Framework (NQF)</b>	<p>The comprehensive system, approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the classification, co-ordination, registration and publication of articulated quality-assured national qualifications and part-qualifications.</p> <p>The South African NQF is a single integrated system comprising three coordinated qualification sub-frameworks for General and Further Education and Training, Higher Education, and Trades and Occupations respectively</p>
<b>NQF Level</b>	One of the series of levels of learning achievement arranged in ascending order from one to ten according to which the NQF is organised and to which qualification types are pegged.
<b>Occupational qualification</b>	A qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession developed and quality assured under the auspices of the QCTO and consisting of knowledge/theory and application (practical skills/work experience/simulated work experience) components and an external integrated summative assessment
<b>Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF)</b>	The sub-framework of qualifications developed and managed by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)
<b>Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO)</b>	A coded classification system to encompass all occupations in South Africa, used as DHET's key tool for identifying, reporting and monitoring skills demand and supply in the South African labour market
<b>Part qualification</b>	An assessed unit of learning with a defined outcome that is or will be, registered as part of a qualification on the NQF

<b>Quality Assurance</b>	The process of ensuring that standards and procedures are adhered to and that delivered products or services meet the QCTO performance requirements.
<b>Quality Assurance Partner (QAP)</b>	A body approved by the QCTO to manage and co-ordinate the external integrated summative assessments of specified NQF-registered occupational qualifications and part-qualifications.
<b>Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)</b>	The principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated and assessed for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development
<b>Revocation</b>	Means the withdrawal of a decision to issue an occupational certificate or Trade Certificate to a learner and to cancel and recall the Occupational Certificate and/or Trade Certificate, to render such certificate to have no legal status or effect.
<b>Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA)</b>	A body established in terms of the Skills Development Act 1998, (Act No. 97 of 1998), as amended, to develop and implement sector skills plans and promote learning programmes; including workplace learning.
<b>Skills Programme</b>	A learning programme which is occupationally based and for which a learner may obtain a certain number of credits towards a registered qualification or part-qualification
<b>South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)</b>	The statutory authority, established in terms of the repealed SAQA Act No. 58 of 1995 and continuing in terms of the NQF Act, 2008 (Act No 67 of 2008), as amended, which oversees the further development and implementation of the NQF, the achievement of the objectives of the NQF and the co-ordination of the three sub-frameworks.
<b>Statement of Results</b>	A document issued by an accredited skills development provider for theoretical, practical and workplace skills modules completed and successfully assessed.
<b>Trade</b>	An occupation for which an artisan qualification is required as stipulated in the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act No. 97 of 1998)
<b>Verification</b>	Establishing the authenticity of a certificate issued by the QCTO or a qualification achieved by a successful learner.

## 1. Preamble

### 1.1 Certification in the context of ensuring standards for qualifications on the Occupational Qualifications sub-framework (OQSF):

The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) was established in 2010 in terms of section 26 (G) of the Skills Development Act of 1998 as a juristic person. It was listed as a public entity in Government Gazette No 33900 of 31 December 2010 effective from 1 April 2010 to establish the Sub-Framework for Trades and Occupations.

The QCTO, SAQA and the other two quality councils as contemplated in section 5(3) of the NQF Act, 2008, must seek to achieve the objectives of the NQF by:

- a. developing, fostering and maintaining an integrated and transparent national framework for the recognition of learning achievements;
- b. ensuring that South African Qualifications meet appropriate criteria, determined by the Minister and are internationally comparable; and
- c. ensuring that South African qualifications are of an acceptable quality.

The QCTO is responsible for the development, maintenance and quality assurance of qualifications on the OQSF. This includes occupational qualifications, part qualifications, skills programmes, historically registered occupational qualifications and trades listed on the NQF.

The OQSF formally demarcates the QCTO's area of responsibility. The standards for any qualification are prescribed in the qualification, curriculum and assessment specification documents for the particular qualification, part qualification. The standards for the qualifications that the QCTO certifies, requires ongoing quality assurance and monitoring of the functions delegated to QCTO quality assurance partners.

In terms of the Skills Development Act, 1998, (Act No 97 of 1998) the QCTO has the responsibility of issuing trade certificates and for the quality assurance of occupational qualifications, which includes the certification of those qualifications registered on the OQSF.

Although the QCTO was established in 2010 the function for the issuing of trade certificates was only taken over by the QCTO in October 2013. This function was previously the responsibility of the then Department of Manpower, thereafter the Department of Labour and, most recently, the Department of Higher Education and Training.

The certification process is intricately linked to the assessment and quality assurance processes of the QCTO.

In its role as a quality assurer, the QCTO is committed to issuing learners with valid and credible certificates. Such a commitment consequently requires that the QCTO ensures that the certified data is valid and reliable and that learner achievements are verifiable.



According to Section 26 D (5) (g) and 26 (j) (f) of the SDA, the Minister may, after consultation with the QCTO, make regulations on the format of certificates issued to artisans who successfully undergo a trade test, as well as for the certification of occupational qualifications. The QCTO will advise the Minister of the need for such regulations as determined by the Council.

## **2. Purpose**

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to promote consistency and transparency in the certification of occupational qualifications or trades and to make the information publicly available.
- 2.2 It further provides for the certification of learner achievement for occupational qualifications on the QQSF.
- 2.3 It also forms the basis for developing a co-operative relationship with the QCTO quality partners, the South African Qualifications Authority and other stakeholders with a commitment to the occupational qualifications offered under the QQSF.

## **3. Legislative and regulatory framework**

- 3.1 This policy is based on the QCTO policies and relevant legislation listed below:
  - Skills Development Act, 1998, (Act no 97 of 1998), as amended;
  - National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, 2008 (Act No. 67 of 2008), as amended and
  - QQSF policy as published in Government Gazette No 37879 of 31 July 2014.
- 3.2 This policy must be read in conjunction with the following QCTO policies:
  - Policy on Qualification Development Facilitators;
  - QQSF policy (Government Gazette No 37879);
  - QCTO policy on accreditation of assessment centres;
  - Policy for the Approval of Results;
  - Policy on revised delegation of qualification assessment to AQPs; and
  - Directives for certification issued by the QCTO.
  - Policy for Verification of Trades and Occupational Qualifications
  - Policy on certificate printing and storage of certificate background paper

## **4. Audience and applicability**

This policy provides direction to the QCTO and determines the AQPs responsibility to recommend valid and reliable data to the QCTO with regard to certification of learner achievements for occupational qualifications

- 4.1 A learner will be issued with a certificate if found to be competent and meets the rules of combination of the qualification through an external integrated summative assessment or applicable trade test.

4.2 QCTO issues the following categories of certificates:

- 4.2.1 Trade Certificates for:
  - 4.2.1.1 existing trades without associated occupational- and part qualifications; and
  - 4.2.1.2 occupational certificates for listed trades with associated occupational- and part qualifications.
- 4.2.2 Occupational Certificates for occupational- and part qualifications with the minimum specified credits; and
- 4.2.3 Occupational part qualifications and relevant skills programmes that may form part of an occupational qualification that are registered as such on the NQF.

## 5. Objectives of this Policy

The objectives of this policy document are to determine standards for the certification of qualifications, on the OQSF.

The standards for certification have been established to:

- 5.1. Ensure that the standard of certification has been established through rigorous quality assurance processes which include:
  - 5.1.1 Qualifications are registered on the OQSF;
  - 5.1.2 Development Quality Partners and Assessment Quality Partners are established and their processes are quality assured;
  - 5.1.3 external integrated summative assessments are conducted at QCTO accredited assessment centres and sites or in the case of trade tests, they are conducted at accredited trade test centres;
  - 5.1.4 moderation and monitoring of assessment ensures that it is valid, reliable and of an acceptable standard;
  - 5.1.5 NAMB ensures trade tests for legacy listed trades are conducted as required by the SDA and related policies and regulations; and certification of trades and occupations occurs no later than 21 working days after a recommendation is received.
  - 5.1.6 QAPs with the delegated certification responsibility ensure that standards set in this policy are adhered to.
- 5.2. Develop and manage the certification of qualifications on the OQSF through an appropriate certification system that will:
  - 5.2.1. ensure that the learner records submitted for certification are in the appropriate format and comply with policies and directives.
  - 5.2.2. QAPs managing the certification function ensure that they maintain a credible learner management information system and that all learner achievements are reported to SAQA for upload to the NLRD as required.
- 5.3. Determine the norms and standards for certification through its directives and outline the certification process that will:
  - 5.3.1. guide AQP's on the submission of data for certification as required by the

## QCTO.

- 5.4. Advise the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Science and Technology on matters related to certification through the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework Policy.
- 5.5. Ensure compliance of assessment data for certification with policies and relevant legislation to:
  - 5.5.1. evaluate data against approved directives for certification and confirm compliance of learner records submitted for certification against approved qualification policies and regulations.
  - 5.5.2. Ensure that learner-assessment is approved and recorded within a turnaround time of 21 working days after assessment was conducted and reported and approved by the QAP.
  - 5.5.3. Ensure that learner certification is done within 21 working days against approved policies and that learner records certificated meet the minimum requirements for achievement of the qualification as set out in the requirements as registered on the OQSF.
  - 5.5.4. Ensure in the issuing of the certificate that the standards with regard to the security measures are adhered to as detailed in the relevant policy.

## **6. Developing and managing certification of learner achievements through an appropriate certification programme**

- 6.1 The certification process commences when a learner registers/enrols for a qualification or enters into an agreement with a service provider who offers an occupational qualifications. The provider is obligated to upload learner enrolments to the QCTO in the QCTO approved format.

Where qualifications are managed by the QAP as registered on the OQSF where no occupational qualification has replaced the legacy qualification or it has not phased out, the QAP must ensure that learner enrolments and data are managed to ensure that before learner assessments are conducted the learner enrolments are confirmed at the QAP and that assessment outcomes are reported to the QAP and uploaded within a 21 day working day period.

The requirements to achieve the qualification; including the rules of combination as outlined in the specific occupational qualification, curriculum and assessment policies, informs certification. To achieve an occupational qualification a learner must comply with the rules of combination associated with the occupational qualifications.

Occupational qualifications registered on the OQSF require that a learner must comply with the theoretical and practical learning as well as the workplace skills, components associated with the occupational qualification before the learner is allowed access to the external integrated summative assessment or trade test to be certificated.

For legacy occupational qualifications registered on the OQSF, the QAP must ensure that a learner complies with all components for the award of the qualification as stipulated in the rules of combination for the qualification.

6.2 The QCTO is responsible for ensuring that, through rigorous quality assurance processes, the certificate it issues meets the minimum requirements for the occupational qualifications. In this respect, the QCTO publishes directives for certification that must be adhered to by all quality assurance partners.

The directives are to:

- 6.2.1 outline the specific instructions regarding the submission of learner information for certification for an occupational qualification/part qualifications;
- 6.2.2 further clarify certification requirements as outlined in the policy which governs the qualifications to be certified.

6.3 The Assessment Quality Partners associated with the QCTO are responsible for the quality assurance and finalisation of assessment results, after which this is approved by the QCTO as stipulated in the policy for the approval of results. Furthermore, the AQPs submit learner assessment results for certification to the QCTO in terms of first issues and re-issues where there was an administrative error...

The Quality Assurance Partners (QAPs) remain responsible for the certification of qualifications as quality assured under the delegation to QAPs, excluding the trades, until such date that the delegation of power is repealed or the qualification is phased out.

6.4 A qualification registered on the OQSF, which is no longer offered or without a current registration status, is nevertheless retained on the OQSF and remains valid for certification (issuing of a replacement certificate or non-certified record submitted for certification after the phase out date).

6.5 Application for a replacement certificate in lieu of a lost certificate must be submitted to the QCTO with associated payment for consideration and processing. This also includes transactions for re-issues not associated with an administrative error by the AQP in line with the directives for certification.

6.6 The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Science and Technology may issue regulations, after consultation with the QCTO, with regard to the issuing of certificates for qualifications registered on the OQSF.

## **7. Managing the certification process**

- 7.1 The QCTO manages the certification of learner records through the following processes:
- developing and managing a certification IT-system that complies with policy requirements and QCTO directives for certification;
  - developing and managing suitable system processes and procedures for certification;
  - ensuring learner certification;

- maintaining an updated database of all certificates issued and an audit trail on transactions executed by users on the system;
- controlling access to the system and training users to undertake the processing of information for learner certification;
- ensuring proper back-ups of the certification database; and
- verifying learner records on request.

7.2 The QAP must adhere to the principles of the QCTO as stipulated above in its certification process.

7.3 The certification of learner records is managed in conjunction with the AQP that has the responsibility of recommending records for certification, following the approval of results by the QCTO. This is done in line with the policy and directives for certification.

7.4 The Council approves and may consider the review of tariffs for certification and verification.

7.5 AQPs are responsible for the collection of the certificates from the QCTO and distribution to certificate holders.

## **8. Certification**

### **8.1 Certification of qualifications on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework**

- 8.1.1 The policy and directives for the certification of qualifications are informed by the SDA and OQSF and are further explicated in the relevant directives and policies for certification.
- 8.1.2 The QCTO will review the Certification Policy every second year.
- 8.1.3 The QCTO maintains the right to reject a recommendation for certification after approval of results by the QCTO as submitted by an AQP. This rejection may be due to a number of reasons, but can include non-compliance to the rules of combination and qualification requirements, certification requirements outlined in the SDA, regulations or QCTO policies and directives.
- 8.1.4 In accordance with the rules of administrative justice, a qualification holder has the right to be informed of the rationale underlying the certification decision and exercise the right to appeal in accordance with the QCTO appeal's policy.
- 8.1.5 A learner that applies for Recognition of Prior Learning against an Occupational Qualification and meets the requirements associated with the qualification, will be granted access to the External Integrated Summative Assessment (EISA). On successful completion of the EISA and meeting the requirements of the qualification, the learner may be certificated.

## **9. Responsibilities of Assessment Quality Partners/Quality Assessment Partners in certification**

### 9.1 The relevant AQP must:

- a. verify learner information and details;
- b. verify qualification information;
- c. request certification for competent learners that successfully completed a trade test or and External Integrated Summative Assessment within 14 working days after receiving the assessment results from an accredited assessment centre. Requests for occupational qualifications is submitted as part of the request for the approval of results and will be processed and a certificate issued where applicable, within 21 working days after QCTO approval of results;
- d. submit information electronically to the QCTO in the prescribed format;
- e. distribute certificates to learners;
- f. keep records of all assessment results; and
- g. establish processes for requesting the re-issue of certificates where an administrative error occurred.

### 9.2 The relevant QAP must:

- a. verify learner information and details;
- b. verify qualifications,
- c. issue certificates of learner achievement within 21 working days of the approval of results (e.g. External Moderation)
- d. Distribute certificates to learners
- e. Establish processes for requesting the re-issue of certificates where an administrative error occurred
- f. Establish processes for requesting replacement certificates where an original certificate has been lost, misplaced or damaged.
- g. submit information electronically to the NLRD as required
- h. keep records of all assessment results

9.3 The AQP for the Foundational Learning Competence (FLC) will issue statements of results to competent learners.

9.4 The National Artisan Moderation Body (NAMB), which is the accredited AQP for trades will recommend the certification of all trades currently recorded on the NLRD but without associated occupational qualifications, as well as for occupational qualifications where the final external integrated assessment is a trade test.

## **10. Responsibilities of the QCTO**

### 10.1. The QCTO will:

- a. issue certificates within 21 working days after receipt of verified learner achievement information following the approval of results;
- b. distribute certificates to the relevant AQP once certificates have been printed;
- c. upload learner achievement data to the NLRD according to the NLRD data load specifications; and

d. re-issue and replace certificates on request by the relevant AQP or individual.

10.2. The QCTO may issue certificates for the FLC.

10.3. The QCTO may verify learner results and information.

10.4. The QCTO may revoke an occupational or trade certificate if it has established that it was issued under irregular circumstances or where a person has not met the qualification requirements for the awarding of the qualification.

## **11. Ensuring security in the certification process**

11.1 A credible certification environment requires quality and security to be constantly foregrounded.

The principles for ensuring security include:

- a. users with controlled access to the system;
- b. all activities on the system log an audit trail;
- c. accountable officers such as System Administrators maintain and manage user access to the system;
- d. the storage and printing of certificates take place in a secure environment;
- e. a record of all certificates issued is maintained;
- f. credible certification forms are used, which have security features that are regularly enhanced; and
- g. backup and storage of data is maintained.

11.2 The QCTO ensures that the format for the certificate background paper for qualifications it certifies includes security features and improves its security features frequently to include the newest developments in the field of security printing. These steps are taken to reduce the possibility of fraudulent certificates being produced. QAPs must note the QCTO policy with regard to the security in certification.

11.3 The QCTO has a zero tolerance approach to fraudulent and corrupt practices and therefore urges AQPs and QAPs and members of the public to:

- a. report any suspect irregular activities to the QCTO;
- b. refrain from irregular behaviour with the intention of compromising QCTO staff; and
- c. report any irregular behaviour by QCTO staff to the Chief Executive Officer.

11.4 The QCTO Fraud Prevention Policy, Procedures and Plan Acts apply to all members of the QCTO staff and associates. The QCTO quality partners are required to uphold the same standards. Acts of dishonesty by a provider or assessment partner, submitting data to the QCTO may result in the learner achievement and certificate being nullified.

11.5 The Occupational Certificate remains the property of the QCTO and the QCTO reserves the right to revoke and withdraw the Occupational Certificate if any evidence

comes to the light that confirms that the issuing of the certificate was compromised.

## **12. Complaints and Appeals**

The QCTO will investigate complaints about fraudulent certificates and non-issuing of certificates.

## **13. Quality assurance and monitoring of policy implementation**

The QCTO will monitor the certification process in terms of this policy which are also applicable to QAPs under the delegated certification responsibility.

## **14. Transitional Arrangements**

Different dates of commencement may be determined for different sections as dictated by the commencement date of the NQF Act as amended in 2019.