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DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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**NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK ACT, 2008 (ACT No. 67 of 2008)
GUIDELINES ON STRATEGY AND PRIORITIES FOR THE NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (NQF), 2018/19**

I, Grace Naledi Mandisa Pandor, Minister of Higher Education and Training, in terms of section 8(2) (c) of the National Qualifications Framework Act (67 of 2008), hereby publish *Guidelines on Strategy and Priorities for the National Qualifications Framework, 2018/19*.

The *Guidelines* give direction to the work of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Quality Councils during the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.



Ms GNM Pandor, MP

Minister of Higher Education and Training

Date: 8-3-2018

MINISTERIAL GUIDELINES ON STRATEGY AND PRIORITIES FOR THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (NQF) 2018/2019

INTRODUCTION

1. The Minister of Higher Education and Training has overall executive responsibility for the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the three Quality Councils, namely the Quality Council on Higher Education and Training (CHE), the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) and the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi). Part of the Minister's executive role is to advance the achievements of the objectives of the NQF, to uphold the public credibility of the NQF, and to encourage collaboration among the QCs and SAQA. The NQF Act provides for Minister to publish guidelines which set out the government's strategy and priorities for the NQF. These guidelines may be published annually.
2. There is growing acknowledgement and understanding of the NQF as *a system* which overarches the entire education and training system of South Africa (White paper for Post-school education and training, 2013). The NQF is described in the NQF Act as a comprehensive system approved by the Minister for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications. This means that teaching, learning, assessment and certification of education and training are incorporated within the context of an enabling NQF, and its policies and regulations.
3. The objectives of the NQF are broad policy statements which underpin the strategies and activities to implement and further develop the NQF. The 2018/2019 Guidelines are focused particularly on the NQF objectives which set out the government strategies and priorities for the NQF in this period. These strategies and priorities must drive the implementation agenda of the NQF to support the implementation of government's Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) which is a high-level strategic document for Cabinet to use to monitor the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP). The DHET is responsible for Outcome 5 of the MTSF which is to ensure the development of a skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path.
4. The objectives of the NQF are designed to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large, and they clearly support Outcome 5. Therefore these Guidelines in particular must require SAQA and the QCs to re-focus their agency towards the achievement of the objectives of the NQF. The objectives of the NQF are to:
 - a) Create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;
 - b) Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths;
 - c) Enhance the quality of education and training; and
 - d) Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.
5. The recent publication of the draft research report on the *Evaluation of the Implementation of the NQF Act from 2008 to 2016* reveals that there is wide-spread

acceptance in South Africa of the NQF as the overarching system for education and training, and this is particularly welcome. The report also reveals implementation challenges which are not sufficiently enabling for the host of public and private education and training and skills development providers, and are hampering effective implementation of transformation and redress, access, mobility and quality teaching and learning for the beneficiaries of the NQF system.

6. The National Plan for Post-school Education and Training (NPPSET), which is derived from the White Paper for Post-school Education and Training will in all likelihood give more direction or substance to possible amendments to the NQF Act and possibly the Determination of the sub-frameworks, and the agency required of SAQA and the QCs. At the stage of the final publication of the NPPSET SAQA and the QCs will be required to be guided by the recommendations of the NPPSET. The National Skills development Plan IV, the SETA Landscape document, and the final Evaluation report on the implementation of the NQF Act, all still need to be finally published. It is expected that these reports will all impact the current work of SAQA and the QCs. In the meantime, there are overarching requirements for the NQF-related organisations which must continue, and these 2018/2019 *Guidelines* give direction to the work of SAQA and the three QCs at this time.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

7. Transformation of education, training and skills development opportunities for all South Africans remains a key strategy of the government. Too many people are still left out of opportunities to participate equally in quality, relevant and credible teaching, learning and assessment opportunities. The *National Development Plan 2030: Our Future – Make it Work (November 2011)(NDP)* and the *White Paper for Post-school Education and Training (White Paper)* are policy statements for better planning, targeted provision and improved support services over the period to 2030 in order to eliminate progressively the worst deficits in provision. Social, economic, and community development and growth have to be yardsticks against which the policies and activities of each of our policies and interventions need to be measured.
8. Articulation and the progressive implementation of enabling mechanisms such as recognition and validation of prior learning within the NQF system, accreditation of credible and capable providers, and quality-assured certification remain priorities. They must be geared up to accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities. Opportunities for access, mobility and progression underpins the achievement of a skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path and therefore these strategic drivers remain a core focus of the implementation of the NQF through the activities of SAQA and the QCs in the 2018/19 period .

PRIORITIES FOR THE PERIOD TO MARCH 2019

9. These priorities are informed by the strategic considerations outlined above. The more detailed elements outlined in these priorities are drawn from the emerging findings and recommendations from the *Evaluation Research into the Implementation of the NQF Act, from 2008 to 2016*, and by the *Monitoring Report on progress with the mandatory*

role of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Quality Councils: Council on Higher Education and Training (CHE), Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) and Umalusi for the 2016/17 Financial Year.

10. A well-functioning system achieves its outcomes only if its components inter-connect, and inter-relate efficiently, working together for a common purpose. The priorities and timelines for completion of the work by SAQA and the QCs signals a renewed determination to eliminate the institutionalised obstacles to redress, transformation, mobility, access and progress in our teaching and learning system. The priorities listed here are matters of particular importance in the current period. They represent a select number of activities and do not describe the full range of statutory functions for which SAQA and the QCs are responsible.
11. The Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training established the Inter-departmental NQF Steering Committee (IDNQFSC) with the agreement of the Director-General of the Department of Basic Education in order to ensure that NQF responsibilities are properly co-ordinated. A key component of the work of the IDNQFSC, as per the Terms of Reference of the IDNQFSC is to give particular attention to ensure that (i) SAQA and the QCs implement the NQF Act as prescribed in the respective sections which deal with their roles and responsibilities; (ii) they implement all aspects of the agreed Implementation Plan 2016 to 2020; (iii) they complete the transition from the SAQA Act, 1996 to the NQF Act, 2008; and (iv) deal with any other matters which arise as a result of government strategies and priorities related to the NQF as a system, and its implementation. SAQA and the QCs are required to work cooperatively and in collaboration with the IDNQFSC to address the following issues:

Priority 1: The current RPL, Credit Accumulation and Transfer, and Assessment Policy of the CHE and the RPL Policy of the QCTO must be aligned to the Minister's RPL Coordination Policy and to SAQA's RPL policy. The DHET's RPL Coordination Unit must be assisted by SAQA to ensure the alignment is done within three (3) months of the publication of these Guidelines.

Priority 2: SAQA must work collaboratively with the QCTO to ensure that the OQSF is finalised and published by 30 June 2018.

Priority 3: SAQA and the QCs must work collaboratively to ensure that progress is made in all areas of further development and implementation of the NQF, as set out in the *NQF Implementation Plan 2015 to 2020*, and report thereon to the Minister by 31 March 2019.

Priority 4: SAQA and the QCs must work collaboratively to ensure that previously registered skills programmes are converted into part qualifications and registered as such on the NQF. Progress reports must be submitted quarterly to the Minister.

Priority 5: The QCs must finalise and implement their part qualifications policies and processes, and communicate and advocate their policies and approaches widely to their stakeholders, other relevant constituents (such as the NSA, organised business and organised labour) and the beneficiaries of the NQF system.

Priority 6: SAQA and the QCs must consult with the relevant branches in the DHET, in order to prepare advice for the Minister about types of qualifications which will be offered in the TVET and CET Colleges. These qualifications must ensure the establishment and implementation of meaningful learning pathways for TVET and CET learners into further and higher education learning pathways. This advice should reach the Minister by 30 September 2018.

Priority 7: The QCs must upload all data about misrepresented qualifications and providers which misrepresent themselves and their offerings to SAQA with immediate effect. SAQA is to provide data upload requirements. This will ensure that the reports that SAQA sends to the Minister every two months are accurate, honest and reliable, and mitigate the current risks associated with incorrect and incomplete data.

Priority 8: SAQA must engage with professional bodies, the CHE, the QCTO and the DHET, as a matter of urgency to ensure a process is put in place to eliminate all exclusionary and non-transformational practices of the professional bodies. A report must be provided to the Minister within three (3) months of the publication of this Guideline.

Priority 9: The QCs should provide SAQA with quarterly reports about accreditation and certification backlogs. SAQA should compile a consolidated report on the status of these elements of the quality assurance system, and compile honest and credible information to the Minister on a quarterly basis.

Priority 10: A contract between SAQA and Umalusi was signed recently which requires SAQA to pay Umalusi for verification data; and to pay each time for verification data for the same candidate's information. This must be re-negotiated through DHET mediation, as the system cannot contain such duplication inefficiencies.

CONCLUSION

12. These 2018/19 *Guidelines* are directives to SAQA and the QCs to further develop and implement the South African NQF, and to ensure that the NQF objectives are met and implemented across the education and training spectrum. The NQF as a system has been part of the education, training and skills development landscape in South Africa since 1995. The time has now come to address all the issues which have long been spoken about, but which still hamper the implementation of the NQF, as envisioned in the objectives of the NQF.