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NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

ENSURING QUALITY QUALIFICATIONS

# Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes

Providers of short learning programmes have a critical role to play in the resource-efficient delivery of, and in facilitating flexible access to lifelong learning opportunities for the development of a 21st century workforce (p. 33)

**GUIDELINE DOCUMENT**

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# Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes



**THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY**



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## Acronyms used in this document

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DoE	Department of Education
DoL	Department of Labour
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance Body
HI-EDQC	(proposed) Higher Education and Training Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council
HRDS	Human Resource Development Strategy
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	(draft) A New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSB	National Standards Body
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NSP	National Skills Plan
OBE	Outcomes-based education
QC	Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDF	Skills Development Facilitator
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SGB	Standards Generating Body
SMME	Small-, Medium- and Micro Enterprise
SSP	Sector Skills Plan
TOP	(proposed) Trade, Occupational and Professional Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council
TUP	Training of Unemployed Persons
WSIP	Workplace Skills Implementation Plan
WSP	Workplace Skills Plan

# Executive summary

Short course provisioning is one of the most dynamic features of the emerging education and training system of South Africa. This kind of provisioning is particularly associated with ‘just in time’, and ‘just enough’ learning to meet a specific need in workplace environments. Therefore, it is considered a viable and common method for optimal workplace functioning in all contexts and greatly facilitates access to learning in a manageable manner in terms of cost, time, energy and resources, for both the employer and employee.

In addition, short course provisioning has a wider focus than workplace contexts: where research findings are disseminated and new knowledge is shared, it is also associated with continuing professional development.

A third area where short course provisioning is important is where learners require a targeted short learning programme, to upgrade skills and knowledge to ensure success in their chosen field of learning.

With the new approach to education and training, short course provisioning has a very particular place in the system and has an important role to play in the development, up-skilling and multi-skilling of human resources. It is clear that it is relevant to all sectors and bands and it is therefore critical that it should be subject to the accreditation and quality assurance processes already in place for education and training providers of ‘full’ qualifications; i.e. providers who are offering a learning programme that will ensure that a learner is awarded with a certificate, diploma, degree, etc.

Some of the contexts where this kind of provisioning occur include:

- teacher development through In-service training programmes;
- human resources management where updates to Acts have an impact on the human resource function of an organisation;
- ‘hands-on’ learning as part of a full qualification;
- ‘new’ knowledge generated in a particular situation where this will impact operationally on an organisation or profession and where this type of knowledge has not yet been included in a qualification; and
- refresher courses for professionals, etc.

Provisioning of this nature will assist workplaces to develop meaningful career and learning pathways for their employees in a highly accessible manner. However, there is the real danger that this type of provisioning may result in disjointed and fragmented approaches and it is therefore important that designers of such learning programmes include a focus on the teaching and learning assumptions and the proposed approaches, in the interest of the learner; and, where required, ensure that credits achieved through short courses are articulated and have currency in terms of registered qualifications and unit standards. If so, this may lead to improved workplace practice and to improved employability and mobility of the employee.

The need for this document stems from the lack of clarity about short course provisioning and the formalisation of a mode of delivery, which has been, up to now, an informal and unregulated area of education and training. However, this does not say that all short course provisioning necessarily needs regulation, but where such provisioning impacts on public money expenditure and on the awarding of credits towards registered unit standards and qualifications, it clearly needs quality assurance. Short learning programmes that will not carry credits towards registered unit standards and qualifications do not fall within the ambit of the responsibility of the South African Qualifications Authority.

This document therefore hopes to clarify and formalise short course provisioning so that it can take its rightful place in the development of this country's human resources.

The Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes is not a stand-alone document as it supports other SAQA documents dealing with accreditation and quality assurance of providers of education and training. The following documents are assumed to be familiar to the reader<sup>1</sup>:

- *ETQA Regulations*
- *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers*
- *Quality Management Systems for Education and Training Providers*

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<sup>1</sup> For more information and the full text of these documents, please visit [www.saqa.org.za](http://www.saqa.org.za).

# Chapter 1:

## Introduction

### 1.1 Status of recorded short courses

In 2000 the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) initiated the recording of short courses to enable providers of short courses to be brought into the standard-setting and quality-assurance processes set up for the education and training system as a whole.

Some of the aims of the recording process were to:

- gauge the current extent of short course delivery;
- provide Standard Generating Bodies (SGBs) with information about how and what type of education and training is currently being delivered in the system, thereby providing some idea of what appropriate unit standards and qualifications could be established;
- provide SGBs with insights into how articulation between unit standards and/or part qualifications and full qualifications could be structured; and
- reassure providers and learners that a process is being put in place to bring this area of provisioning into the new system in a coherent and systematic way.

The recording of short courses came to an end in November 2001. No new submissions were accepted and since then all short course providers have been referred to the relevant Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (ETQA) to initiate their accreditation processes.

It should be noted that at the time, SAQA made it clear that the recording process did not replace the need for registration with the Department of Education (DoE) or accreditation with a relevant ETQA. (Refer to Appendix A: the Memorandum of Understanding between the provider and SAQA). The recording of short courses was, at the most, an attempt to facilitate the development of processes to be more inclusive of different types of providers and modes of delivery in the emerging education and training system.

However, the recording process highlighted the following pertinent issues in the delivery of short courses:

A relatively small number of providers submitted their short courses for recording (approximately 700), but these ranged from consultancies run by a single person, to large public and private providers such as universities and technikons.

The most significant number of short courses was submitted in the sub-field of Business, Commerce and Management studies (a total of 2 077 courses of which 701 courses fell within the Generic Management sub-field). This was followed by courses within the field of

Education, Training and Development, Health Sciences and Social Services, Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences and Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology.

Short courses are being offered at all levels and in most fields of learning of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), ranging from courses for Continuing Professional Development to skills-based courses.

In terms of the aims of the recording process, SAQA felt satisfied that it achieved clarity on some areas of delivery. However, a large percentage of courses were not captured, notably those offered by the Department of Labour (DoL) in the form of its 'Training of Unemployed Persons' (TUP) courses and the public Further Education and Training Institutions (Technical Colleges) short courses that fall under the Department of Education (DoE).

Further, in terms of the extent to which standard and qualification generation was informed by current short course delivery, the success was limited, largely due to a lack of Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) in the particular sub-fields.

Lastly, in terms of reassuring providers and learners that this type of provisioning is being brought into the system, this process was hampered by the setting-up phase within which most of the ETQAs were still finding themselves, and the lack of clarity as to the processes required for the quality assurance of short course provisioning.

In the interim, providers of short courses were increasingly subjected to pressures created by employers for registration and accreditation as providers so that the repayment of a percentage of the levy grant (as per the Skills Development Levies Act) by Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) could be effected. There is a belief that employers can only claim their levies back when making use of accredited providers. This is not entirely correct. In the Government Gazette (No. 20865 of 7 February 2000) it is clear that the Skills Development Levies Act provides for recovery of the levy payment based on the submission of Workplace Skills Plans (WSPs), Workplace Skills Implementation Plans (WSIPs) and the submission of the names of skills development facilitators (SDFs). The Regulations to the Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998) stipulate that:

There are six types of grants that an employer might claim. These are:

- a workplace skills grant;
- a workplace skills implementation grant;
- a grant towards the costs of learnerships and learner allowances;
- a grant towards the costs of skills programmes;
- a grant towards the costs of providing apprenticeship training; and
- a grant towards a programme, project, or research activity that helps the relevant SETA to implement its Sector Skills Plan.

The first two grants for the submission of a Workplace Skills Plan, and for a subsequent implementation report on the training provided, **MUST** be paid by the relevant SETA as long as an employer submits the application correctly on time, as assessed by the appropriate SETA. The Regulations refer to these as **mandatory grants**.

**Discretionary grants** **MAY** be disbursed by a SETA based on the extent to which providers are facilitating the implementation of the skills plan for the particular sector.

*(Refer to Appendix B for the Skills Development Regulations Guidelines)*

These guidelines make it clear that the payment of grants hinges on the extent to which an employer implements the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) and the extent to which this is in line with the Sector Skills Plan (SSP).

This clearly gives the system the necessary space to develop and implement the new approach to education and training in the workplace, but it impacts on the way in which providers of short courses view and construct their short learning programmes. Many short learning programmes for example, that were traditionally seen as short courses, may be considered to be skills programmes. This will make it possible for employers to claim back the mandatory grant, as well as the grant allocated for 'skills programmes'.

However, the term 'skills programmes' may be too restrictive to deal with the variety of short learning programmes offered by different providers, particularly in Higher Education contexts. (In the chapter dealing with 'Defining Short Courses and Skills Programmes' this document proposes several interpretations of short course provisioning which may be helpful to clarify the approach.) For this reason, while it may not be possible to call such short learning programmes 'skills programmes', they clearly have a particular purpose and may also facilitate the implementation of WSPs and SSPs.

To re-iterate: in interpreting the Skills Development Act and the Skills Development Levies Act, many providers, particularly private providers, were placed under pressure from employers and government to be accredited and to have their courses registered. This is important and will remain a key objective for the quality assurance of short course provisioning, but it is clear from the two Acts mentioned above that this is not the basis upon which skills grants are disbursed. The need for registration and accreditation stems from the

need to award credits for learning, i.e. that learners who enrol for learning programmes be given formal recognition for their learning attained through a short learning programme. A balance between the two imperatives – delivering training against WSPs and SSPs and delivering learning programmes that will lead to credits towards unit standards and part qualifications – will ensure that short course provisioning takes its place in the development and implementation of the emerging education and training system.

## **1.2 Consultative process**

In keeping with the consultative processes followed by SAQA a workshop with ETQAs and DoE and DoL was held in February 2002. This was followed by a series of focus group meetings with ETQAs throughout 2002. In addition, the draft discussion document was made available for public comment from November 2002 to February 2003. The discussion document was published in the Government Gazette of 15 November 2002, Number 24042, Volume 459, and was placed on the SAQA website for the duration of the public comment period. These processes culminated in the development of the document: *Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes*. A second round of consultation was undertaken through focus group meetings in April 2003. The document was adopted by the SAQA meeting of 13 August 2003.

Chapter 2 will deal with defining short course provisioning and clarifying its position in terms of education and training.

# Chapter 2:

## Short course provisioning

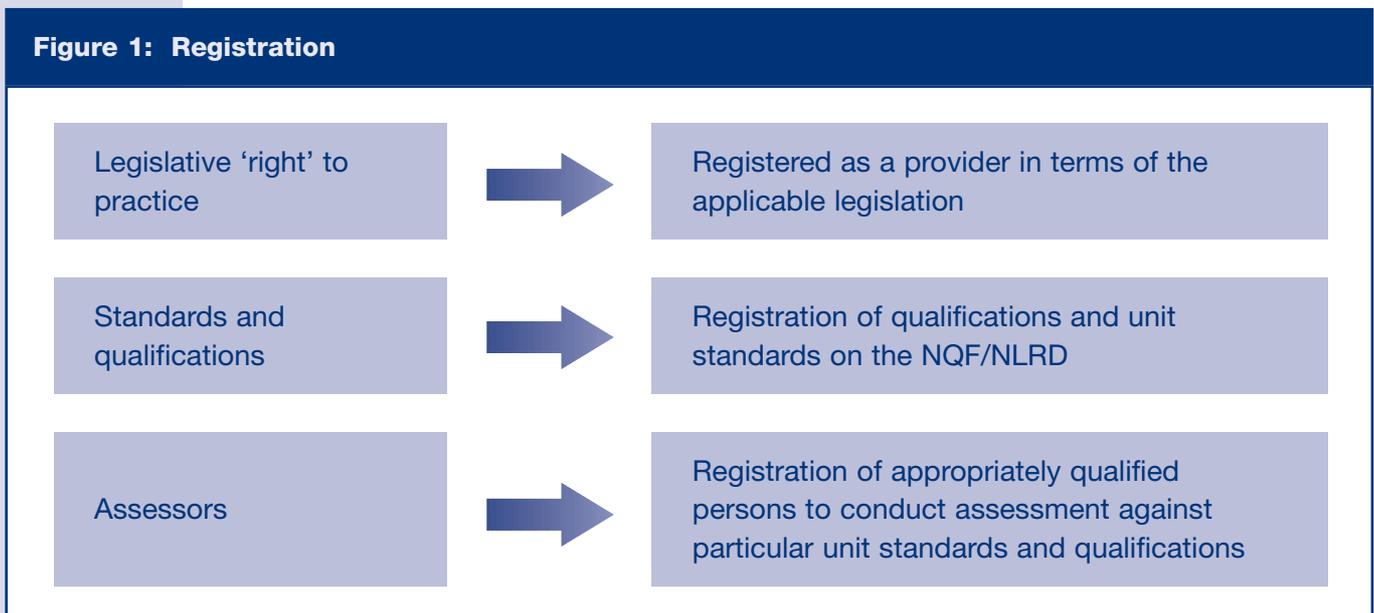
In the Executive Summary and Introduction (Chapter 1), ‘short course provisioning’ is used to describe the type of provisioning which is considered to be short learning programmes, including what are known as short courses and skills programmes. This section puts forward terms and definitions that will be used for the remainder of the document. Every attempt has been made to use terminology closely related to the current understanding of this area of provisioning. The term ‘skills programmes’, for example, is clearly defined in the Skills Development Act, but the term ‘short courses’ is almost a ‘catch-all’ description for everything else that does not necessarily fall within the description of skills programmes. There clearly is a need for a common understanding of the terminology to be used in relation to short course provisioning. This chapter will propose some workable definitions.

However, before the discussion details the descriptions of the variety of short learning programmes that may either fall within the ambit of skills programmes or short courses, there is a need to clarify the terms ‘registration’ and ‘accreditation’. These two terms are often used interchangeably but, in fact, relate to two different processes.

### 2.1 Registration and accreditation

The following diagram deals with ‘registration’:

**Figure 1: Registration**



The term ‘registration’ is therefore particularly associated with **the ‘right’ to practise**. This is true for providers, as well as for assessors.

In terms of the registration of unit standards and qualifications, the point needs to be made that **courses**, i.e. the learning content of a **learning programme**, are not registered on the NQF. What is registered on the NQF is a description of the outcome, or **the result of learning**. The course (content), therefore, is the vehicle whereby providers of education and training ensure that learners meet the requirements of the unit standard and/or qualification. Learning programmes/learning content may be subject to programme evaluation initiated by the ETQA, but will never appear as such on the NQF.

A formal definition of registration taken from the ETQA Regulations (No. R1127 of 8 September 1998) is as follows:

Registration means to be registered as a provider in terms of the applicable legislation.

However, currently, not all providers of short learning programmes are in the position to ‘register’. DoE will only register providers that offer ‘full’ qualifications and, therefore, also part qualifications derived from such ‘full’ qualifications. Until such time that DoE develops a system whereby providers of short learning programmes, i.e. providers offering programmes which will lead to credits towards ‘part’ qualifications, could be registered, providers cannot be prevented from developing and offering such short learning programmes.

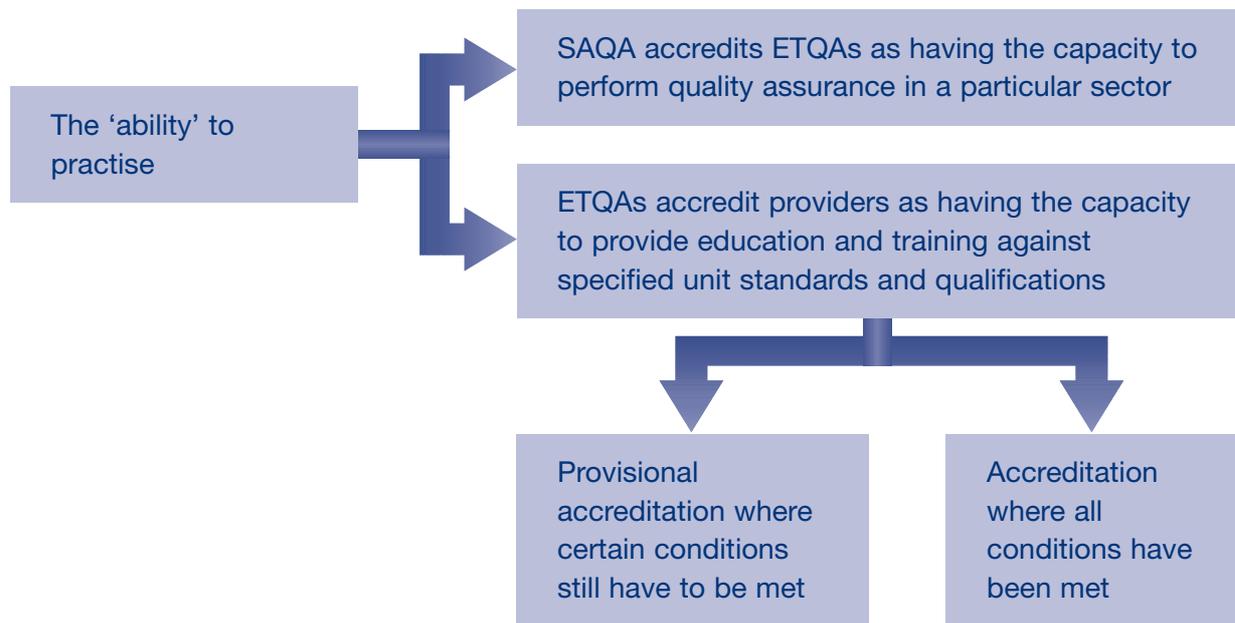
A critical issue that arises out of this situation is the extent to which credits can be awarded for learning outcomes achieved through short learning programmes. It may mean that we are unwittingly creating a situation where recognition of prior learning (RPL) will become a critical service to be offered at public and private institutions offering ‘full’ qualifications, in order to recognise learning achieved outside of formal institutions. Whilst it should be acknowledged that the education and training system is evolving, and that DoE may wish to focus on providers offering full qualifications at the moment, short course provisioning must be brought into the system. The issue of the registration of providers offering short learning programmes must be resolved (Refer to Appendix C).

**Note:** The term ‘**conditional registration**’ is particularly associated with the registration of a private higher education institution as specified in the Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997) and therefore also deals with the requirement to register to be given the ‘right to practise’ as an education and training provider.

The next issue, which seems to create much confusion, is ‘accreditation’ as an education and training provider, with the appropriate ETQA.

Consider the diagram for ‘accreditation’:

**Figure 2: Accreditation**



A formal definition of ‘accreditation’ taken from the ETQA Regulations (No. R1127 of 8 September 1998) is as follows:

‘Accreditation’ means the certification, usually for a particular period of time, of a person, a body or an institution as having the capacity to fulfil a particular function in the quality assurance system set up by the South African Qualifications Authority in terms of the Act (No. 58 of 1995).

The term ‘provisional accreditation’ is associated with providers that have met a set of minimum criteria as established by the ETQA, but have some conditions still to meet. This makes it possible for providers to continue offering their learning programmes but, within a particular time frame, to meet the outstanding requirements for accreditation.

## 2.2 Short courses and skills programmes

In an attempt to understand the delivery of education and training via short learning programmes, it has to be taken into account that some terms have become embedded in the way in which we understand this form of provisioning. The following descriptions will try to retain

this understanding. However, short course provisioning has not been formally conceptualised. Therefore, this document proposes a number of definitions based on formally accepted SAQA terminology as it appears in regulations, policies, and criteria and guideline documents. It has also considered the understanding of concepts as they appear in the draft New Academic Policy (CHE, 2001). However, in order to fill the vacuum in terms of commonly understood concepts, new definitions have been developed. For this reason, it seems necessary to develop a definition that will encompass all programmes considered to be ‘short’. This overarching term is ‘**short learning programmes**’ (Refer to definitions below).

In the attempt to clarify the quality assurance measures needed for short learning programmes within the emerging education and training system, the key criterion for identifying whether a short learning programme needs regulation is the relationship of the programme in terms of the award of credits towards unit standards and/or qualifications. Short learning programmes are therefore differentiated by the extent to which they are ‘**credit-bearing**’. The diagram (Figure 3) on page 17 explains this concept.

### 2.2.1 Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Short Learning Programme</b>	The term <b>Short Learning Programme</b> describes all short programmes, whether credits are awarded or not, and is inclusive of skills programmes, credit-bearing short courses and non-credit-bearing short courses.
<b>Skills Programme</b>	A <b>Skills Programme</b> is occupationally based and when completed will constitute credits towards a qualification registered on the NQF. Provisioning is undertaken by a training provider accredited by an ETQA (Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998). A skills programme is a type of short learning programme.
<b>Short course</b>	A <b>short course</b> is a type of short learning programme through which a learner may or may not be awarded credits, depending on the purpose of the programme.
<b>Credit-bearing short course</b>	A <b>Credit-bearing short course</b> is a type of short learning programme for which credits, in relation to the course’s contribution to a unit standard and/or (part) qualification, are awarded. (Paraphrased from CHE, 2001:44). A credit-bearing short course usually contains less than 120 credits.

Term	Definition
<b>Non-credit-bearing short course</b>	A <b>non-credit-bearing short course</b> is a type of short learning programme for which no credits are awarded in relation to unit standards or (part) qualifications depending on the purpose and/or assessment of the programme.
<b>Course</b>	<b>Course</b> refers to the content of the short learning programme whereby learners may progressively attain the applied knowledge as described in unit standards and/or qualifications.
<b>Learning Programme</b>	<b>Learning Programme</b> means the sequential learning activities, associated with curriculum implementation, leading to the achievement of a particular qualification or part qualification (SAQA, 2000:5).
<b>Programme</b>	<b>Programme</b> means a coherent set of courses, leading to a certain qualification (SAQA, 2000:5).
<b>Accreditation</b>	<b>Accreditation</b> means the certification, usually for a particular period of time, of a person, a body or an institution as having the capacity to fulfil a particular function in the quality assurance system set up by SAQA in terms of the Act (No. 58 of 1995).
<b>Approval/recognition or any other term appropriate for the sector</b>	<b>Approval/recognition</b> refers to providers of short learning programmes that are offering learning programmes that are not aligned to unit standards and qualifications <sup>1</sup> .
<b>Unit standard</b>	A <b>unit standard</b> is a description of the outcomes of learning for which the learner will receive credit.
<b>Exit-level outcome</b>	An <b>outcome</b> is the demonstrable and assessable end products of a learning process. An <b>exit-level outcome</b> has the same meaning, but is expressed as the overall result of learning for a qualification.

<sup>1</sup> The terms 'recognised' and/or 'approved' are not prescribed. The ETQA will decide what is most appropriate in this regard. However, care should be taken to use a term that will not be confused with other recognised terms that appear in formal policy documents.

## **2.2.2 The notion of ‘short’ in relation to short learning programmes**

In an outcomes-based education and training system there exists a tension between the credit rating in relation to an outcome (or result of learning) and the notional hours associated with the achievement of such credits. It is well documented and commonly understood that to achieve 1 credit towards a unit standard or qualification will take the average person 10 hours to master the embedded knowledge, skills and understanding required. It is therefore commonly understood that 120 credits will take the average person 1 200 hours to meet the requirements of the qualification. In most cases, 120 credits is considered to be the minimum number of credits awarded for a full qualification and that, therefore, it would take the average person 1 year to complete such a qualification. A short learning programme therefore usually contains less than 120 credits.

However, in addition to the notional hours, a further important differentiation is made between qualifications and short learning programmes:

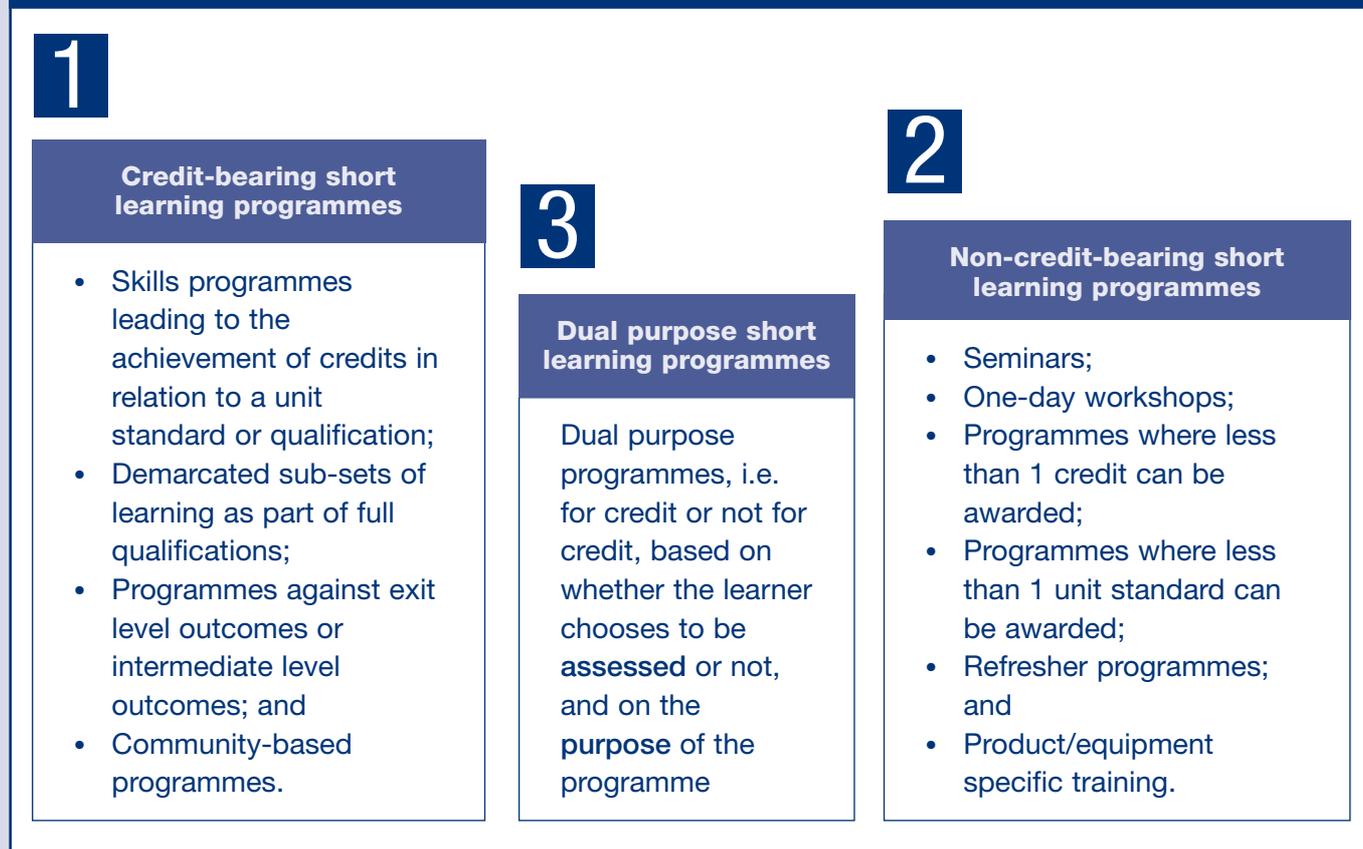
- A qualification must, in terms of the rules of combination, contain fundamental, core and elective learning.
- A short learning programme focuses on a particular part of a qualification, which may include learning in the fundamental or core or elective areas (or a combination thereof), but will not lead to the achievement of the full qualification.

Therefore, even if a short learning programme could award 119 credits, by adding 1 credit to make up 120 credits, it would still not be a qualification unless it meets all the requirements for a qualification; i.e. the planned combination of fundamental, core and elective learning. (For details on the construction and structure of qualifications, please refer to the NSB Regulations, No. R 452 of 28 March 1998.)

## **2.2.3 The place of short learning programmes in education and training**

Under 2.2, mention is made of the ‘credit-bearing’ nature of short learning programmes as a means to differentiate the diverse forms of education and training that are being delivered through this medium. The following diagram explains this concept.

Figure 3: Credit-bearing versus non-credit-bearing short learning programmes

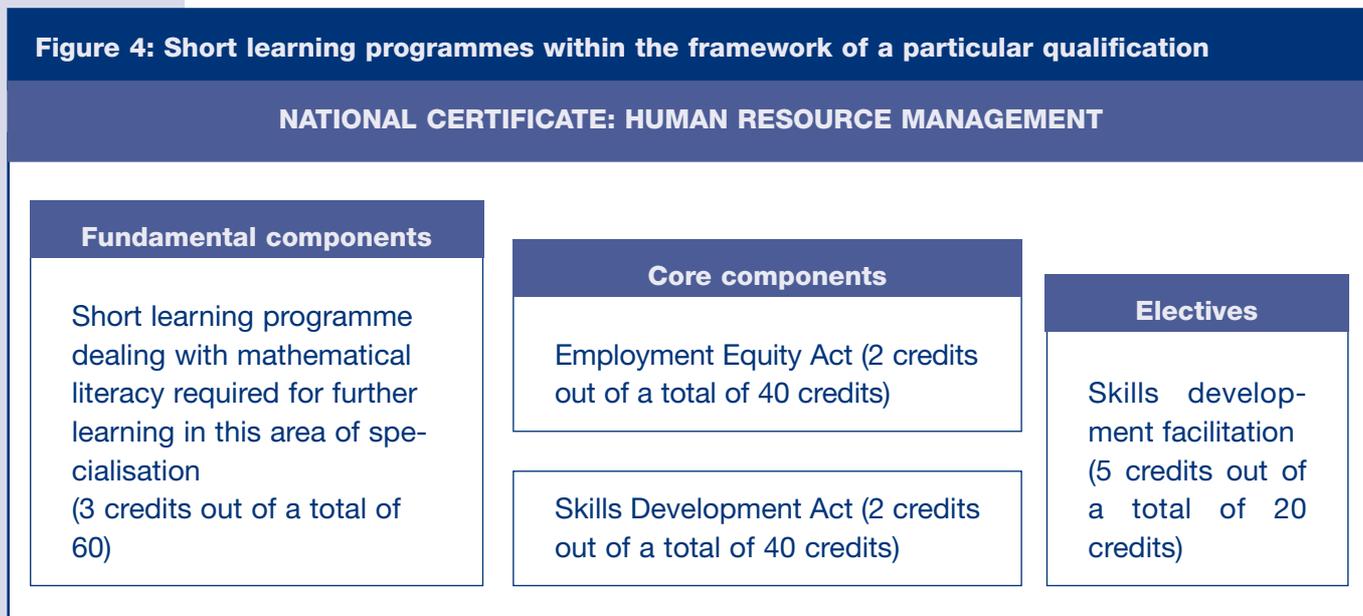


## 1 Credit-bearing short courses

Credit-bearing short courses include all short learning programmes that will make it possible to award credits towards particular unit standards or part qualifications, whether they are considered to be occupationally based or not. A credit-bearing short course therefore includes skills programmes (which are particularly associated with learning programmes developed in accordance with unit standards and have an occupationally directed nature), but it also includes clearly demarcated parts of non-unit-standard-based qualifications, which may or may not have an occupationally directed nature and purpose. This opens up the scope for short learning programmes to be developed and offered by all types of providers against a part of the qualification for which they are formally accredited.

Refer to the framework below of a hypothetical qualification within which short learning programmes may be developed and offered.

**Figure 4: Short learning programmes within the framework of a particular qualification**



An important point here is that a short learning programme should be conceptualised within the framework for a particular qualification to ensure that articulation with that qualification may take place. This could include inter-qualification articulation, which is situated within a particular field of learning, but should most certainly also include inter-institutional articulation. These two types of articulation will have an impact on the transferability of credits between qualifications and providers.

Some examples of this type of provisioning include:

**Example 1:**

A skills programme leading to credits towards the qualification: **National Certificate in Tourism: Reception**

For the **National Certificate in Tourism: Reception**, on NQF level 4, the following are some of the unit standards that have been identified and for which short learning programmes have been developed:

- Operate a personal computer (Fundamental unit standard) – 6 credits
- Care for Customers (Core unit standard) – 3 credits
- Maintain Occupational Health and Safety (Core unit standard) – 2 credits

Any of these unit standards can be utilised for the development of a short learning programme (in this case it may be a skills programme), which potentially can improve workplace practice and deals with ‘just in time’ learning required in a workplace environment while, at the same time, being part of the learning pathway and career planning of the employee.

**Example 2:**

A credit-bearing short course leading to credits towards the qualification: **Bachelor of Commerce: Management**

For the **Bachelor of Commerce: Management** on NQF level 6, the following clearly demarcated sub-sets have been identified and programmes developed:

- Quality management systems
- Budgeting
- Resource (human and infrastructure) management

Any of these sub-sets of the qualification can be utilised for the development of a short learning programme that can potentially improve workplace practice and deals with ‘just enough’ learning required in a workplace environment while, at the same time, being part of the learning pathway and career planning of the employee.

Both these examples seem to be very occupationally based in nature, but short learning programmes could also include short courses that will lead to the award of credits against the fundamental component of a qualification, namely “that learning which forms the grounding or basis needed to undertake the education, training or further learning required in the obtaining of a qualification” – refer to Figure 4 (SAQA, 1998:4). The point is that short learning programmes can be developed against any part of a qualification, but it is critical that the credits awarded through the short course will have currency in terms of the full qualification. Look at example 3:

**Example 3:**

Modules from the **Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE)**, could be utilised as stand-alone short learning programmes for teachers in need of exposure to an outcomes-based approach to assessment. The module identified as being critical for this up-skilling exercise is *Assessment Strategies for Outcomes-based Education (OBE) (10 credits)*. On successful completion of this module, learners are awarded, based on an appropriate assessment, the 10 credits at NQF level 6. Should learners later decide to formally register for the full programme, these credits are transferred and acknowledged.

In the example given above, a full module, as a sub-set of a qualification, was utilised, but it is also possible to make use of less than a module for customised ‘just enough’ type of learning. Refer to example 4:

#### **Example 4:**

The module **Entrepreneurship** (total credit value of 10) includes topics such as:

- Feasibility studies
- Business plans
- Marketing operations
- Financial, purchasing and administrative plans

A need was identified for the development of a short learning programme dealing with 'business plans'. On successful completion of this part of the module, the number of credits relating to 'business plans' could be awarded. Should learners later be exposed to the remainder of the module, or wish to register for the full programme, these credits are transferred and acknowledged.

The examples given above, to some extent, assume that the provider offering the short learning programme is also accredited for the full qualification. However, this is not necessarily the case. Many providers offer only short learning programmes based on unit standards and/or clearly demarcated sub-sets of learning. This clearly has implications for the award of credits and the transferability of such credits between providers.

Where a provider is accredited for the full qualification, the articulation with short learning programmes offered by them and the credits awarded is straightforward. It could be regulated by internal moderation processes and articulation agreements.

It is where a learner has achieved credits outside of that institution where articulation of credits becomes difficult. It is therefore critical that credit-bearing short courses use the registered unit standard and/or qualification, as the overarching standard, as the basis upon which the learning programme is developed (refer to Figure 4 on page 18). It is also critical that the assessment is credible, valid and reliable. It is here that the ETQA has a major role to play; i.e. in ensuring consistency of delivery and assessment in terms of the internal logic and coherence of programmes between its constituent providers.

## **2 Non-credit-bearing short courses**

Non-credit-bearing short courses include a variety of short learning programmes for which no credits are awarded. The differentiation of such learning programmes is based on the following:

- The short learning programme is too short in terms of notional hours to meet the minimum requirements for 1 unit standard; for example, a one-day seminar where an attendance certificate is issued.
- The short course covers less than 1 credit towards a unit standard or qualification where only one specific outcome is covered by the learning programme rather than all the specific outcomes as stipulated in a unit standard or sub-set of learning in non-unit-standard-based qualifications.

- The purpose of the short course does not lend itself to the award of credits, i.e. personal enrichment, where learners are not formally assessed.
- The courses are highly customised short courses developed for a particular purpose (not for credit), possibly dealing with learning programmes on so-called 'soft skills'.

Some examples of these types of short learning programmes include:

**Example 5:**

A one-day seminar on eating disorders, with a particular focus on 'anorexia nervosa'. The target audience may include social workers, health practitioners, or parents of teenage children.

This short course does not have as a purpose the award of credits towards unit standards or (part) qualifications, but is intended to share information and, perhaps, to update practitioners on the latest developments and research. An attendance certificate is awarded.

It is important to note that the short courses market does not just demand short learning programmes, which are building blocks towards a qualification, but often demands a highly flexible and responsive approach to an identified need. This is often based on a WSP as identified by an employer. Customised short courses, using a small part of a learning area, are often in demand.

Look at the following example:

**Example 6:**

An employer has identified the need for training in 'diversity management' in a multi-cultural organisation. The managers of the organisation will be exposed to a small part of the module Business Management.

Two aspects are relevant in this regard:

- The short course may not cover enough of 'management' to warrant awarding credits.
- The learners may not meet the requirements for formal admission to the full qualification.

The examples given above are not exhaustive. One of the reasons why short course provisioning is so prevalent is because it is such an appropriate mode of delivery within many different contexts. The highly flexible nature of this form of provisioning is an advantage, particularly for the client, and it should not be lost.

### 3 Dual purpose short learning programmes

Some short learning programmes may also have a **dual purpose**; i.e. some short learning programmes may be undertaken with the purpose to achieve credits towards unit standards or qualifications, while the same learning programme may be undertaken for personal enrichment purposes. Look at the following example:

### **Example 7:**

A group of pre-school teachers attend a short course focusing on the milestones and developmental tasks in each phase of the pre-school child's development. This learning programme will lead to some credits towards the module Child Development (total credits of 5). Credits will be awarded based on appropriate forms of assessment.

However, the same short course may be used for young parents as part of a parenting-skills initiative offered by the pre-school where their children are cared for. These participants will not be awarded credits, neither will they expect credits to be awarded – it is not the purpose of the course. No assessment will take place.

Both these learning programmes are based on the formal curriculum of the full qualification, but **the purpose of the programme** is the deciding factor as to whether credits are awarded or not.

Other 'dual purpose' short learning programmes may include 'refresher courses', 'continuing professional development' courses and 'community based' courses where such learning programmes are offered as a service by an institution but, depending on whether the learner requires **formal assessment and/or is eligible for a formal assessment**, they will be credit-bearing or non-credit-bearing programmes.

In conclusion, the purpose of short learning programmes could be any, or a combination of, the following:

- to provide learners with practical (hands-on) learning where appropriate;
- to increase employability, self-employment possibilities and mobility within a workplace and a sector;
- to provide access to learning opportunities towards nationally registered unit standards and qualifications;
- to provide occupationally directed and focused learning; and
- to contribute towards closing the skills gap as identified in the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP), the Sector Skills Plan (SSP) and National Skills Plan (NSP)

(Paraphrased from: Criteria for Approving Skills Programmes, DoL, 2001).

In addition, a short learning programme could also have as its purpose to:

- update learners on new developments and insights in their professions;
- upgrade foundational knowledge for successful completion of a chosen field of learning;
- earn credits towards formal programmes should learners wish to build on the learning attained through short learning programmes; and/or
- be intended for personal enrichment.

# Chapter 3:

## Models for accreditation

### 3.1 Criteria for accreditation

This document has as its intention not only to clarify short learning programme provisioning, but also to put forward possible models for accreditation and quality assurance of providers offering such programmes. The document does not propose that separate (and different) accreditation processes and quality assurance procedures be developed for providers of short learning programmes, but rather that ETQAs make use of the same processes and, as far as possible, align such processes with accreditation of providers whose main focus is to deliver only full qualifications. The criteria for accreditation therefore remain intact, but may need to be contextualised in relation to small-, medium- and micro enterprises (SMME) as emerging providers. This approach is in line with another of SAQA's documents: *The Equitable Accreditation of Small-, Medium- and Micro Enterprises Providers of Education and Training*.

The core criteria for accreditation of providers are summarised in *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers* (SAQA, 2001) as follows:

An accredited provider must:

- define and describe the purpose of the organisation, including a description of the vision and the mission of the provider;
- develop and document a quality management system (QMS), including policies and procedures for programme delivery, staff, learners and assessment;
- develop and document review mechanisms in terms of the implementation of policies and procedures; and
- maintain management systems, including financial and administrative resources and physical infrastructure of the provider.

### 3.2 Categories of providers

According to the ETQA Regulations (No. R1127 of 8 September 1998), a 'provider' is a body who delivers learning programmes which culminate in specified National Qualifications Framework (NQF) standards or qualifications and manages the assessment thereof.

This definition is further refined in *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers* (SAQA, 2001:19) as follows:

An education and training body, in other words a provider, is not limited to an institution or organisation. Providers can include companies, work-based training centres, a collaboration amongst a range of partners (organisations, institutions, companies, tuition centres, RPL centres, assessment centres, trade testing centres, individuals, community structures) and even some forms of consultancies.

The recording of short courses discussed in Chapter 1 (1.1 Status of Recorded Short Courses) confirms this description; providers – including providers of short learning programmes – come in all shapes and sizes.

In the *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers*, one categorisation of providers includes:

- providers who only deliver learning, but not summative assessments;
- providers who only deliver summative assessment, not formative and/or diagnostic assessment; and/or
- providers who deliver learning and manage the assessment thereof.

Another categorisation is based on the programmes offered by the provider:

- Multi-purpose providers offering a wide range of programmes covering a variety of learning areas and fields. Typically, these providers would be public and private universities, technikons and further education and training institutions.
- Single-purpose providers including providers that focus on one field of learning (and related fields). This group typically includes large and small providers and consultancies offering, for example, computer-related training, and in-house and work-based learning.

A third type of categorisation emerging from the short learning programme area comprises:

- providers that offer **full qualifications and short learning programmes** based on unit-standard-based qualifications and/or non-unit-standard-based qualifications for which they are accredited;
- providers that offer short learning programmes only, based on parts of unit-standard-based and/or non-unit-standard-based qualifications for which they are accredited;
- providers that offer **short learning programmes only, not based on unit-standard-based** and/or non-unit-standard-based qualifications; and/or
- providers that offer a combination, or all, of the above options.

### **3.3 The ‘one provider, one ETQA’ principle**

All providers, regardless of the sector in which they are active, can be accredited by only one ETQA. It is the responsibility of this constituent ETQA, where the need arises, to establish Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with other ETQAs if their providers are offering programmes that fall outside of the primary focus of that ETQA. MoUs may be concluded, for example, in terms of the following:

- programme approval for programmes offered by their constituent providers which fall within the area of responsibility of other ETQAs;
- joint quality assurance of programme delivery where such programmes overlap with the primary focus of two (or more) ETQAs; and/or
- sharing of responsibilities and expertise.

Establishing an MoU is a critical step that must be undertaken by ETQAs to ensure a seamless and integrated education and training sector and should have as its aim to facilitate articulation of learning between sectors and between providers and qualifications. Not only must these partners ensure that short learning programmes are ‘organically linked’ to meaningful career pathing and lifelong learning; they must do so to prevent an unmanageable proliferation of disjointed interventions. **Credits awarded through short learning programmes will have no currency unless ‘partner’ ETQAs and providers acknowledge and recognise their value in relation to programmes** delivered through multiple modes and at different sites of delivery (Refer to Appendix C).

### 3.4 Models of accreditation

Accreditation models must be kept as simple as possible. This stems from the acknowledgement that learners, and the public at large, may become confused (and may even be misled), by non-standardised approaches and procedures. Therefore, this document proposes that the accreditation and quality assurance of providers offering short learning programmes remain closely aligned with accreditation and quality assurance processes established for providers offering full qualifications only.

However, it has to be acknowledged that the contexts, as well as the sectors, within which short learning programmes are delivered, differ substantially. There is no one-size-fits-all and each sector and each band have to contextualise their needs within the broader framework for accreditation as expressed in the ETQA Regulations (No. R1127 of 8 September 1998).

#### 3.4.1 Accreditation models

- **Providers that offer full qualifications and short learning programmes based on unit-standard-based qualifications and/or non-unit-standard-based qualifications** are accredited through the normal processes and procedures as established by the ETQA. In other words, providers that are accredited for full qualifications do not need to be accredited separately for short learning programmes derived from full qualifications. Such short learning programmes may include skills programmes, credit-bearing short learning programmes, and non-credit bearing short learning programmes.

Quality assurance of such providers by the ETQA may include the quality-monitoring measures undertaken by the provider in terms of the relevance of short learning programmes to the qualifications for which they have been accredited. This may take the form of self-evaluation and self-regulatory measures as prescribed by the relevant ETQA.

This means that where providers offer short learning programmes against a part of a qualification for which they have been accredited, the arrangements in terms of teaching and learning, assessment and internal moderation, must be in line with the arrangements for the full qualification. This is to ensure that the credits awarded through such programmes are transferable.

- **Providers that offer short learning programmes only, based on parts of unit-standard-based and/or non-unit-standard-based qualifications** are accredited through the normal processes and procedures as established by the ETQA. Such short learning programmes may include skills programmes, credit-bearing short learning programmes and non-credit-bearing short learning programmes depending on the purpose of the short learning programme.

Quality assurance of such providers may include the establishment of clear linkages and relevance of their short learning programmes in relation to full qualifications. As in the case of the previous provider, this is to ensure that credits awarded through such programmes are transferable and recognised by other providers.

**Note:** The term ‘accreditation’ is inclusive of ‘provisional accreditation’. Provisional accreditation is associated with a particular time limit within which a provider must meet all the ETQA requirements for ‘full’ accreditation and is therefore a developmental step towards accreditation. Even though provisional accreditation is not separated from accreditation, building in this developmental step makes it possible to accommodate providers that are offering short learning programmes where no unit standards are available yet, or where short learning programmes have not yet been aligned to formally registered unit standards and/or qualifications.

### 3.4.2 Non-accreditation models

- **Providers that offer short learning programmes only, not based on unit-standard-based and/or non-unit-standard-based qualifications**

A large number of providers of short learning programmes may fall within this category. This may include providers that offer product-specific or equipment-specific training or an entire range of other short learning programmes that fall outside of unit standards and qualifications. These programmes are non-credit-bearing in relation to unit standards and qualifications, but are integral to effective workplace practice and a host of other contexts. Generally, it would not be the intention of these learning programmes to award credits, because they have been developed to fulfil a particular need. This need may very well emanate from WSPs and SSPs. Refer to the following examples:

#### **Example 8:**

A training programme is developed for the medical profession, where medical practitioners make use of highly sophisticated pieces of equipment that, if not used correctly, may endanger lives. This type of training is therefore critical for effective workplace practice, but will not bear any credits in relation to unit standards and/or qualifications.

**Example 9:**

In the information technology sector, product-specific training is offered. Employers want to have the assurance that trainees will come out of the learning programme with real workplace-related skills and knowledge. Such training is not directly linked to unit standards or qualifications, but clearly has an important place in workplace practice.

These short learning programmes do not fall within the ambit of the mandate of the NQF. The NQF is responsible for registered unit standards and qualifications and, therefore, ETQAs are mandated to monitor the provisioning of any qualifications for which they have been accredited themselves (refer to 2.1 in Chapter 2 of this document). Regulation and, therefore, ‘accreditation’ of providers offering non-NQF-aligned short learning programmes, are not necessary. However, ETQAs may feel the need to establish processes whereby provisioning of this nature is quality assured within their sectors.

Providers that offer non-credit-bearing and non-aligned programmes could be given an alternative status; i.e. be classified as ‘**approved**’ or ‘**recognised**’ providers.

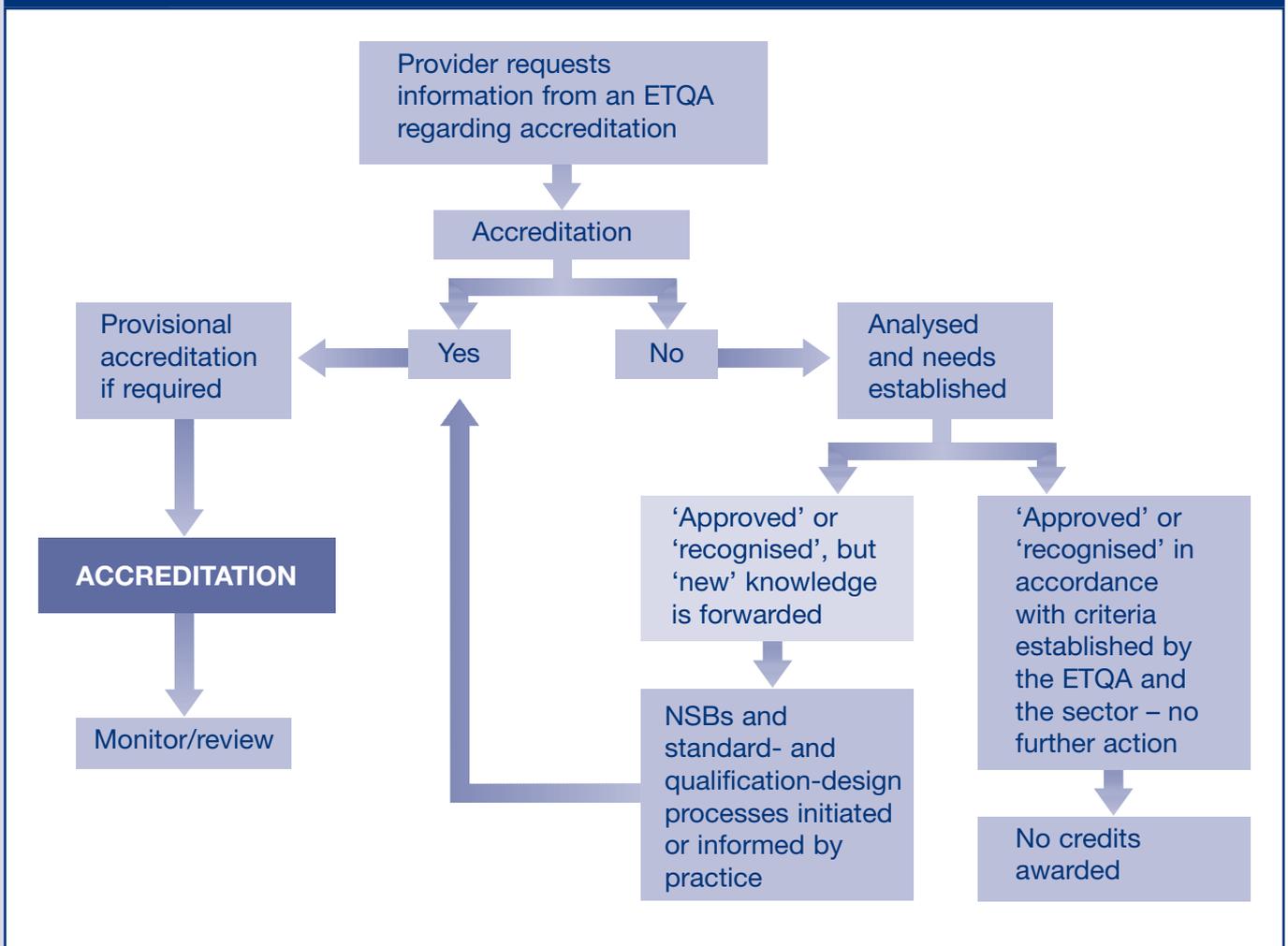
The term used to describe the status of such providers is not important as the ETQAs will decide what is most appropriate for their sectors. However, care should be taken not to use terms that may have other meanings in the context of education and training. The criteria whereby such approval or recognition is granted will be established by the particular ETQA. Such criteria may be closely associated with criteria used for the accreditation of formal providers, but this is dependent on the context of the sector. For example, in a sector where a large number of providers offering short learning programmes offer training courses that will not lead to credits, there will be a larger number of providers that are ‘approved’ or ‘recognised’ and not accredited. In other sectors there may not be a need for this type of classification.

There will always be providers of short learning programmes that are offering learning programmes or training courses for which no credits in relation to unit standards and/or qualifications can be granted and which are also not linked to particular WSPs and SSPs. As mentioned above, there is no need to regulate such provisioning. It is up to the client (who may include an individual, an organisation or an employer) to decide whether a particular provider’s services are needed or not. This would constitute a private transaction between the provider and the client and would have no relationship with the granting of public money in terms of skills levies.

However, one important lesson that was learnt through the Short Course Recording process initiated by SAQA in 2000 is that many informal short learning programmes may have relevance to the development of new unit standards and qualifications. Also, because short learning programmes are often associated with ‘new’ learning emanating from innovative workplace practices, research and studies, a process whereby this ‘learning’ could be incorporated in unit standards and qualifications is required.

For this reason, it is critical for ETQAs and the NSBs associated with the scope (or primary focus) of a particular ETQA, to join forces to ensure that the ‘new’ learning, which may at that stage fall outside the parameters for accreditation, is brought into the quality assurance cycle if required. The diagram below describes how this may take place:

**Figure 5: Accreditation/approval**



# Chapter 4:

## Policy framework

### 4.1 Introduction

The translation of the NQF objectives into measurable success indicators is increasingly becoming clearer as the system develops. The NQF objective to “create an integrated framework for learning achievements” finds expression in the place of skills programmes and short courses in the system; i.e. that such learning programmes should lead to credits towards unit standards and qualifications. Likewise, the objective to “facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths” links very closely to the purpose of developing and implementing skills programmes and short courses, namely to:

- increase employability, self-employment possibilities, and mobility within a workplace and sector; and
- provide flexible access to learning opportunities towards nationally registered unit standards and qualifications.

Providers of short learning programmes will be playing a critical role in the achievement of these objectives and will make it possible for employers to train their workforces in a resource-efficient manner. This will enable an individual to flexibly enter and exit further learning for a range of reasons, including up-skilling, multi-skilling and personal enrichment. To gain credits in relation to registered unit standards and qualifications, short learning programme delivery must be quality assured. If not, mobility and articulation of skills and knowledge and access to further education will not be possible.

The 2001 statistics (Household Survey: Statistics South Africa: October 2001) regarding the levels of education of economically active adults (population aged 20 and above) clearly point to the fact that workplace education and training are critical in closing the skills gaps in this country:

- 8,4% have education levels above grade 12;
- 20,4% have grade 12;
- 30,8% have some secondary schooling;
- 6,4% have completed primary schooling;
- 16,0% have some primary schooling; and
- 17,9% have no schooling.

Further, within the context of globalisation, and the demand for higher skills, it was found that “between 1970 and 1998 high skilled jobs increased by nearly 20 per cent and during the same period the number of unskilled jobs fell by a similar proportion” (NSDS booklet: April 2001:7). It is therefore imperative that strategies are put in place to address the need for up-skilling and multi-skilling in a cost-effective way. Short learning programmes, including skills

programmes and credit-bearing short courses, will be able to meet the challenge to supply a better-educated workforce.

The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) and Human Resource Development Strategy (HRDS) therefore foreground the following objectives:

- To develop a culture of quality lifelong learning;
- To foster skills development in the formal economy for productivity and employability;
- To stimulate and support skills development in small businesses;
- To promote skills development for employability and sustainable livelihoods through social development initiatives; and
- To assist new entrants into employment.

*(NSDS booklet: April 2001:6)*

It goes without saying that the large numbers of people currently active in the economy cannot be removed from the workplace for extended periods of time to be re-trained and up-skilled. Short learning programme provisioning, if it is brought into the quality assurance loop in a systematic and coherent fashion, is pivotal in achieving the objectives of the NQF and of the NSDS. It is therefore important that this type of provisioning is acknowledged and valued. The attention and thought given to the construction of unit-standard-based and non-unit-standard-based qualifications must include an equal amount of thought to the development of modes of delivery whereby such qualifications may be achieved. This includes short learning programme delivery. In occupationally based environments, the Skills Development Act makes provision for alternative modes of delivery through its learnerships and, particularly in the context of this document, its skills programmes. Providers offering education and training which cannot strictly be considered to be 'skills programmes' must contribute to such a coherent system whereby all credit-bearing short courses will make it possible for learners to embark on further learning without the need to re-do the part(s) of the qualification for which they have already attained credits.

## **4.2 Acts, regulations and policies**

The following Acts, their regulations, policies and criteria and guideline documents have informed the development of this document:

- The South African Qualifications Act, (No. 58 of 1995), its NSB Regulations (No. R452 of 28 March 1998) and the ETQA Regulations (No. R1127 of 8 September 1998)
- The Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 20 October 1998), the Skills Development Levies Act (No. 9 of 1999) and the Skills Development Regulations and Guidelines (2001)
- The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act (No. 58 of 29 November 2001)
- The Further Education and Training Act (No. 98 of 2 November 1998)
- The Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 19 December 1997) and its amendments
- The draft New Academic Policy (CHE, 2001)
- Guidelines for applying for accreditation as a private provider of higher education qualifications registered on the NQF (CHE, 2002)
- Criteria and Guidelines for Providers (SAQA, 2001)
- Quality Management Systems for Education and Training Providers (SAQA, 2001)

# Chapter 5:

## RPL and lifelong learning

### 5.1 Short learning programmes and RPL

A baseline survey of industrial training in South Africa, commissioned by the Labour Market Skills Development Programme in 2000 (and undertaken by the HSRC), highlights the following statistics for training initiated by DoL between 1982 and 1998.

**Table 1: Training activities of the DoL between 1982 and 1998**

**MACRO OVERVIEW OF TRAINING ACTIVITIES AS RECORDED BY THE  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR, 1982 – 1998**

Type of Training	Total number of trainees 1982 -1998
In-service training:	
Regional training centres	189 146
Private training centres	1 946 509
Training schemes where levies apply	182 993
Training schemes (Sect 48 of LRA)	92 869
Training of unemployed and workseekers	1 282 045
<b>Total number of trainees</b>	<b>3 693 562</b>

*(Baseline Survey: Oct 2000:14)*

These figures do not include what was traditionally known as ‘short courses’ in terms of management, office and related training, professional development and other forms of training not within the scope of DoL’s initiatives.

A large percentage of the training indicated in the table above includes non-credentialed training; i.e. training for which no formal recognition was given (non-credit-bearing programmes within the context of this document). Certainly, where formal recognition was given, in most cases this did not meet the requirements of a full qualification. However, this approach was not only adopted for training programmes offered by DoL initiatives. Most public and private higher education and further education and training institutions offer ‘non-formal’ courses. Such courses may have been developed with a particular purpose in mind, but did not award credits towards unit standards and qualifications in the past. Learners who have completed such programmes are increasingly requesting that credits be awarded for their learning achieved through these short learning programmes. Therefore, the figures above, as

well as the requests for credits for certificates awarded for ‘non-formal’ courses, indicate a desperate need for recognition of prior learning (RPL) whereby people who have undergone in-service and other forms of non-formal training would be given credits towards formally registered unit standards and qualifications on the NQF.

This document does not suggest that 3 693 562 people must be given recognition for prior learning, but it does indicate the extent to which short learning programme provisioning is part of our education and training landscape and that if such provisioning is not brought into the system, the emerging education and training system will fail a large percentage of current and new entrants to employment (Refer to Appendix C).

## **5.2 Short learning programmes and lifelong learning**

Lifelong learning is a key objective of the NQF and the NSDS. In the NSDS booklet (April 2001:11), it is expressed as follows:

“The notion of life-long learning is one of the key principles of the South African Qualifications Authority. It is recognition that individuals should have opportunities for self-improvement at any stage of their lives, be they employed, unemployed or seeking a first job. As the economy grows and develops, so new skills will be demanded and people will need to retrain for them. The provision of opportunities to learn at any age also guarantees second chance opportunities for people, who for a variety of reasons may have ‘missed out’ [the first time round].”

Opportunities for lifelong learning are therefore a key principle of the emerging education and training system of South Africa. Where this principle is linked to career paths and learning pathways, it becomes even more meaningful for the employer and employee.

# Conclusion

Short learning programmes have a very particular place in the NQF and in the achievement of its objectives. Some of the benefits of bringing this type of provisioning into the quality assurance cycle are:

- The articulation of learning and mobility of learners within education and training are enhanced.
- Access to education and training is facilitated through flexible pathways to the achievement of qualifications.
- Learners who access education and training through skills programmes are protected through the quality assurance processes of ETQAs.
- The possibilities for RPL for thousands of learners who completed non-credentialed (non-credit-bearing) programmes in the past are opened up.
- Short learning programmes are developed and delivered with articulation possibilities in mind, thereby developing a ‘seamless’ system of access and articulation.
- The dynamic nature of short learning programmes could support the setting of standards and the development and review of qualifications meaningfully.
- The accreditation of providers of short learning programmes does not differ substantially from the accreditation of providers of full qualifications, which obviates the need for the establishment of ‘different’ accreditation processes.

This document has put forward a systemic approach to the provisioning of short learning programmes. Provisioning of this nature is now seen as a necessary and flexible tool to support the Human Resource Development and National Skills Development Strategies that have as their objectives the development of our workforce, in line with worldwide trends, to meet the requirements of globalisation and the demands of the twenty-first century.

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# Appendix B:

## An extract from the skills development regulations guidelines

([www.labour.gov.za/docs/legislation/skills/regulations/grants/guidelines.htm](http://www.labour.gov.za/docs/legislation/skills/regulations/grants/guidelines.htm); 25 Feb 2003).

### Skills development regulations

#### Guidelines

##### Introduction

1. The Minister of Labour is publishing regulations about the skills grants to be paid by Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). The guidelines set out here seek to explain the regulations and provide advice to employers and others on how to claim grants.

##### Claiming grants: general information

2. Employers who are up to date with the payment of the skills levy can claim skills grants from their SETA. Their SETA is the one to which employers pay their levies.
3. Each SETA will decide the dates by which applications for grants must be made. They will let employers know about these arrangements. Employers may also approach their SETA for information.
4. Training providers and workers may also seek grants from a SETA. These grants may be given to projects, programmes and research activities if these support the implementation of the Sector Skills Plan that each SETA has developed. Each SETA will publish details about the grants and how to apply for them.

##### Grants

5. There are six types of grants that an employer might claim. These are:
  - a workplace skills grant;
  - a workplace skills implementation grant;
  - a grant towards the costs of learnerships and learner allowances
  - a grant towards the costs of skills programmes;
  - a grant towards the costs of providing apprenticeship training; and
  - a grant towards a programme, project or research activity that helps the relevant SETA to implement its Sector Skills Plan.
6. The first two grants – for the submission of a Workplace Skills Plan, and for a subsequent implementation report on the training provided – MUST be paid by the relevant SETA as

long as an employer submits the application correctly and on time, as assessed by the appropriate SETA. The regulations refer to these as mandatory grants.

7. The workplace skills planning grant is fixed as a percentage of the levies paid by an employer. An employer who makes an application on time and in the proper way will receive 15 per cent of the total of the levies s/he has paid. Similarly, the workplace skills implementation report will be, in 2001/2, 50 per cent of the total levies paid and in 2002/3, 45 per cent of the total levies paid.
8. The other grants are discretionary and a SETA MAY pay these. It will decide the grants it will pay on the basis of the contribution that the skills development activities being proposed will contribute to the implementation of the SETA's Sector Skills Plan. For example, there may be a number of requests for grants to support learnerships. If a choice has to be made between a number of different applications for such grants, the SETA will make its decisions on the basis of the priorities set out in its Sector Skills Plan.
9. Each SETA will determine the amounts of all the other grants. Applications for these grants MUST be made and approved by the SETA before any training or other activity starts.

#### **Consultation arrangements**

10. Before describing each of the grants it is important to stress that, although the majority of grants are made to employers, the need exists for meaningful consultation between employers and workers prior to grant applications. This is fundamental to the success of the National Skills Development Strategy.
11. It is important that employees are consulted about the person(s) to be designated as skills development facilitators, the Workplace Skills Plan, and the report on the implementation of the Workplace Skills Plan. It is strongly recommended for organisations with more than 50 employees that a Skills Development Committee be established for the purposes of consultation on training matters. This committee, as a whole, should reflect the interests of employees from all occupational categories in the organisation's workforce. All trade unions that represent 10 per cent or more of the workforce or represent a significant occupational group should be invited to take part in this committee. A trade union that represents 80 per cent or more of the workforce may be the sole representative.

### **Mandatory grants**

#### **Workplace skills planning grant**

12. Each up-to-date levy-paying employer may expect a grant from the relevant SETA, if:
  - at least one skills development facilitator is designated by the employer and the name is submitted to the SETA; and
  - a Workplace Skills Plan is correctly submitted to the SETA at the appropriate time (see Annexure A of the Regulations)

13. A Workplace Skills Plan is important to:

- employers to provide a strategic basis for planning the development of the workforce and organisation;
- workers to provide opportunities for enhanced job satisfaction and promotion prospects;
- SETAs to assist in the identification of imbalances in the supply of, and demand for, skilled labour. This information can also be used by school leavers and unemployed people to inform choices about training options; and
- the Government to assist in the development and review of the National Skills Development Strategy that must be demand-led and sensitive to labour market needs.

#### **Skills development facilitator**

14. Each employer, after consultation with the workforce, must designate at least one skills development facilitator. For multi-site or large organisations, more than one facilitator might be appropriate. Small employers, with less than 50 employees or with a sales turnover less than that specified in Schedule 4 to the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998), may wish to designate a skills development facilitator jointly. Employers should provide the skills development facilitator with the resources, facilities and training to enable her/him to perform the role.

15. The functions to be performed by a skills development facilitator are to:

- assist the employer and employees to develop the Workplace Skills Plan;
- advise the employer and employees on the implementation of the Workplace Skills Plan;
- assist the employer to draft the annual report on the implementation of the Workplace Skills plan (see the details of the next grant);
- advise the employer of any quality standards set by the SETA;
- act as a contact person between the employer and the SETA; and
- serve as a resource with regard to all aspects of skills development.

16. If a skills development facilitator leaves the organisation, or for any other reason ceases to perform the role, the employer should designate another skills development facilitator and inform the appropriate SETA of this.

#### **Workplace Skills Plan**

17. On the basis of an analysis of business requirements and the skills needs of current staff, the Workplace Skills Plan must define the skills priorities that each workplace will pursue, the training programmes that are required to meet and deliver those priorities and the staff who will be targeted for training - 'the beneficiaries'.

18. Each SETA will provide employers with the application forms to claim this grant, together with details of the dates by which completed forms must be submitted to the appropriate SETA. A SETA may also publish more detailed guidance on how to apply for this grant.

19. Each SETA is able to amend the outline design of forms included in the regulations so that it can collect more sector-specific data. A SETA may also simplify the form for organisations with fewer than 50 employees.

### **Workplace skills report grant**

20. Employers who are up to date with their levy payments can claim a grant from the appropriate SETA if they submit a report each year on the implementation of their workplace skills plan before the date stipulated by the SETA. The form of this report is Annexure B of the regulations, but a SETA is able to modify this to take account of sector differences. The implementation report is important to:
- employers and workers to assess the progress that is being made;
  - SETAs, to review progress and problems and to assist employers, workers and the sectors as a whole to determine any additional support and advice that might be required; and
  - Government, to inform the monitoring of progress in addressing skills development priorities and in identifying any problems that might need to be addressed.
21. Each SETA will inform employers of the dates by which applications for this grant must be submitted and each may issue additional guidance to assist employers to complete the implementation report.
22. Attached to these guidelines is a list of occupations that may assist organisations to complete the workplace skills plan and the workplace skills report.

### **Discretionary grants**

#### **Learnerships**

23. Any employer may seek a grant from a SETA to support the implementation of learnerships. Each SETA will determine the level of the grant and details of the grant will be registered with the Department of Labour when each learnership is registered.
24. There are two possible types of grants to support learnerships. The first is a grant to offset the costs of implementing a learnership, (e.g. off-the-job education and training provider fees). The second is a grant that may be paid to subsidise the learner's allowance if the learner was unemployed immediately before starting the learnership (a section 18(2) learner). The learner allowance must be in terms of the Learnership Determination published by the Minister of Labour on 15 June 2001.
25. It is a matter for each SETA to decide how many and which applications it will support. Each SETA will need to make its decisions in the light of the priorities of its Sector Skills Plan and the amounts of money it has available to support learnerships.
26. A SETA must inform an employer whether or not it will make a grant before the learnership starts. The SETA will agree with the employer when the grant will be paid; e.g. if this will be in staged payments or only once the learnership is successfully concluded.
27. Each SETA will establish and publicise its criteria for approving the learnership grants.

**Skills programmes**

28. Any employer may claim a grant towards the costs of providing skills programmes. It is for each SETA to determine arrangements for the applications for grants and the amounts. Any application for a grant must be submitted to the appropriate SETA, and approved by it, before the skills programmes start.
29. It may be that a person completes a series of skills programmes that result in a full learnership qualification. If the employer receives grants for the skills programmes, the total of the grants that the employer receives must be no greater than the grants s/he would have got had the employee undertaken a learnership programme resulting in the same final qualification.

**Apprenticeships**

30. There are, and will continue to be, apprenticeships, until the Minister of Labour declares a date after which all apprenticeships will become learnerships. It is still open to employers to seek to register apprenticeships.
31. Unless otherwise agreed, the appropriate SETA must honour any commitments to pay grants to employers that were agreed by a former Industry Training Board. It is for each SETA to determine and publish the level and criteria for new apprenticeship grants. Any grant must be agreed between the employer and the SETA before a new apprenticeship begins.

**Sector priorities**

32. A major function of the SETAs is the implementation of their Sector Skills Plans. In order to do this a SETA may make a grant to an employer, to a training provider, or to an individual. For example, a grant might be to finance research or to develop the training infrastructure in a sector. The grants will be determined by each SETA, which will also publish details of how to apply.

# Appendix C:

## Extracts from ‘an Interdependent National Qualifications Framework System: Consultative Document’

The following extracts from the above-mentioned consultative document, released in July 2003, as a joint response from the Departments of Education and Labour to the *Report of the Study Team of the National Qualifications Framework* (Pretoria, April 2002), are relevant to the short courses debate. It is included in this document to highlight the fact that this critical area is still under discussion and that if the recommendations of the *NQF Consultative Document* are accepted, a refocus in terms of short learning programme provisioning may take place. It should be noted, however, that the recommendations in this latest report do not differ substantially from the position taken in the *Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes*.

### Short courses

For several reasons the extensive provision of short courses has proved to be a difficult matter for the NQF system, and SAQA has justifiably given the issue considerable attention. In 2000 – 01 SAQA compiled an electronic record of short courses from information voluntarily notified by providers, in order to understand the nature of short course provision and so far as possible bring it within the ambit of the NQF standards generation and quality assurance processes. A helpful discussion document on *Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes* followed. The following observations are not intended as a detailed response.

The issue of short course provision is unquestionably important. As the SAQA exercise emphasized, this is a very extensive and exceptionally varied component of the national learning system. It makes a significant contribution to the enhancement of personal learning and the national skills base. Many sectors of the economy rely on short courses for the upgrading of employees’ skills and professional development. There is therefore a direct link between short course provision and workplace skills plans. Countless citizens take short courses to enhance their own understanding or for cultural enrichment. At the same time, especially in an unmonitored area of provision, citizens may be being taken advantage of by unscrupulous and incompetent providers. SAQA’s actions should result in an acceptable taxonomy of short course provision and should ensure that short course providers are assisted to engage appropriately with the NQF quality processes and enable providers to align themselves with the requirements of the Skills Development Act, 1998.

The debate will continue on this complex aspect of NQF implementation. It would be appropriate for SAQA to consider instruments that might be used to improve the protection of consumers against unscrupulous providers. Three matters warrant particular attention.

Firstly, short course provision is linked to the minimum requirement for a national qualification on the NQF since SAQA's current definition of a short course is a course that has a credit value of less than 120 credits (which is considered equivalent to a year of full-time study). By regulation, SAQA requires that a registered qualification should generally comprise 120 or more credits, of which 72 or more must be obtained at or above the level at which the qualification is registered. The Study Team commented:

[F]or many possible qualifications, especially those achieved in the workplace, the 120-credit requirement is an unnecessary constraint that could impede the design of a qualification that was 'fit for purpose'.

The Study Team noted that SAQA's regulations permitted the registration of qualifications of less than 120 credits provided they complied with the general criteria specified in the regulations and with the objectives of the NQF. They suggested that this should be made more explicit and less discretionary, and that bodies responsible for qualifications design be made aware of it and encouraged to design qualifications based on the needs and purposes of learners and stakeholders.

The draft NAP document proposed that SAQA consider registering certificates of 60 credits (equivalent to one semester of full-time study) in the articulation column. The document argued that this would speed up the articulation process for experienced learners, including adults, who could benefit from short, intensive periods of study; it would be consistent with international practice; and it would allow providers to offer short, focused programmes that met the in-service or upgrading needs of adult learners.

The draft NAP document reminds us that:

...progress on the NQF is not directly linked to time served in the education system or to the number of credits attained, but rather to the level of complexity of the learning outcomes attained, irrespective of how long it takes a learner to achieve these, *provided that a prescribed minimum number of credits (notional hours of learning) have been 'clocked up'*.

The departments [of Education and Labour] support the idea of a prescribed minimum. The status of the term qualifications would be devalued if there were no threshold or a variable lower threshold than the current norm of 120 credits. A credit value in excess of 120 credits (which many qualifications require) does no harm to the status of a qualification, but a permissive approach to credit values lower than 120 would detract from the public awareness that a qualification required a serious commitment of time and sustained engagement in a complex learning task resulting in significantly enhanced learning achievement. Where appropriate, short courses should lead to the achievement of credits toward qualifications (or to complete articulation requirements) but should not by themselves merit the award of a qualification. This matter should be considered by the three QC's [Trade, Occupational and Professional Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council, General and Further Education and Training Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council, Higher Education and Training Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council] when they are established in order to advise SAQA and the Ministers.

Secondly, it is difficult to exaggerate the significance in modern economies of the phenomenon of vendor- and product-specific short courses, especially in the information technology and communications industry. These comprise a distinctive system of provision, a 'parallel universe' of training, competency-based assessment and certification that has developed outside formal state provision and regulatory systems. The branded qualifications of vendors such as Microsoft, Oracle and Novell are examples of this phenomenon. These qualifications are outside the NQF and are unlikely to be included in the short term.

A key issue for further discussion would thus be how all-encompassing should the NQF attempt be? The NQF should not and could not be all-encompassing. Learning programmes that do not need to meet national standards are by definition outside of the NQF. That criterion covers a very wide range of cultural, recreational, religious and self-improvement courses, as well as fast-changing vendor-specific courses that are quality assured by the corporate proprietor or licensee.

Vendor- and product-specific short courses appear to represent an important avenue for access to employment, upskilling and job mobility. As a phenomenon it deserves closer study in its own right, both to gauge its impact on the South African economy and to assess its significance for South African education and training. TOP QC and HI-ED QC should take particular interest in these matters, in collaboration with the relevant SETAs.

Thirdly, short course learning may be a valuable route to the acquisition of credits toward qualifications registered on the NQF through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). QCs will need to encourage their aligned ETQAs to fashion RPL protocols relevant to their sectors on the basis of SAQA's RPL policy. They will also need to ensure that each short course that leads to a nationally registered credit is linked to a qualification ladder within a learning pathway, with a credit value representing its contribution to the achievement of the qualification.



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