

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

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## List of Acronyms

AQP	Assessment Quality Partner
DQP	Development Quality Partner
FLC	Foundational Learning Competence
NAMB	National Artisan Moderation Body
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OFO	Occupational Framework of Occupations
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority

## Glossary of terms

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

<b>Achievement</b>	The recognition granted to a learner when all required learning outcomes have been successfully demonstrated.
<b>Appeal</b>	The formal petitioning by an individual against the decision made by the QCTO after the verification process regarding the assessment, standards and quality assurance processes and decision not to award a qualification.
<b>Assessment</b>	The process of collecting evidence of learners' work to measure and make judgements about the competence or non-competence of specified NQF registered occupational qualifications and part qualifications.
<b>Assessment centre</b>	A centre accredited by the QCTO for the purpose of conducting external integrated summative assessments for occupational qualifications and part qualifications registered on the OQSF.
<b>Assessment Quality Partner (AQP)</b>	A body delegated by the QCTO to develop assessment instruments and manage external integrated summative assessments for occupational qualifications and part qualifications registered on the OQSF.
<b>Certificate</b>	A document issued by the QCTO indicating attainment of an occupational qualification or part qualification registered on the OQSF.
<b>Development Quality Partner (DQP)</b>	A body delegated by the QCTO to manage the process of developing specific occupational qualifications, curricula and assessment specifications.
<b>External Integrated Summative Assessment (EISA)</b>	An assessment managed by a body appointed by the QCTO, using nationally developed assessment instruments at the end of sections of learning or the end of the whole learning process. This assessment facilitates demonstration of both theory and practical competence in achieving the outcomes of the occupational qualification or part qualification.
<b>Foundational Learning Competence</b>	A minimum level of competence in the context of occupational qualifications in Communication and Mathematical Literacy as needed for successful progression in occupational training at NQF Level 3 and NQF Level 4.

<b>Internal formative Assessment</b>	On-going assessments, reviews and observations, which would be a range of formal and informal assessment procedures applied during the learning process in order to modify teaching and learning activities and to improve learners' attainment.
<b>Learner</b>	An individual who is participating in a learning programme with the purpose of achieving an occupational qualification or part qualification.
<b>Monitoring</b>	A continuous process of review of quality that can be conducted internally and or externally to recommend quality improvements.
<b>National Artisan Moderation Body (NAMB)</b>	In terms of the QQFS, the body appointed by the QCTO as an AQP for all listed trades.
<b>National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)</b>	The electronic management information system of the NQF, which contains records of qualifications, learner achievements, recognised professional bodies, professional designations and all related information such as registration and accreditations.
<b>National Qualifications Framework (NQF)</b>	The comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications and part qualifications. The NQF is a single integrated system comprising three coordinated Qualifications Sub-Frameworks namely for: General and Further Education and Training, Higher Education and Trades and Occupations.
<b>NQF Level</b>	One of the series of levels of learning achievement arranged in ascending order from one to ten according to which the NQF is organised and to which qualification types are pegged.
<b>Occupational qualification</b>	A qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession resulting from work-based learning. It was developed and quality assured under the auspices of the QCTO and consists of knowledge, practical skills and work experience standards and requires an external summative assessment.
<b>Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO)</b>	A coded classification system to encompass all occupations in South Africa, used as QCTO limit overlap in occupational qualifications development.
<b>Part qualification</b>	An assessed unit of learning with a clearly defined purpose that is or will be registered as part of a qualification on the NQF.
<b>Quality Assurance</b>	The process of ensuring that standards and procedures are adhered to and that delivered products or services meet performance requirements according to the QCTO requirements.
<b>Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA)</b>	A body established in terms of the Skills Development Act to develop and implement sector skills plans and promote learning programmes; including workplace learning. The QCTO has delegated quality assurance powers to the SETAs.

<b>Statement of Results</b>	A document issued by an accredit skills development provider for theoretical and practical skills modules completed and successfully assessed.
<b>Verification</b>	Establishing the authenticity of a certificate issued by the QCTO or a qualification achieved by a successful learner.

## 1. Preamble

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

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

The QCTO is responsible for the development, maintenance and quality assurance of qualifications on the OQSF.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## **2. Purpose**

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

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

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

## **4. Audience and applicability**

- 4.1 This policy provides direction to the QCTO and values the AQPs responsibility to recommend valid and reliable data to the QCTO with regard to certification of learner achievements for trades and occupations registered on the QQSF.
- 4.2 A learner will be issued with a certificate if found to be competent and meets the rules of combination of the qualification through an external integrated summative assessment.
- 4.3 QCTO issues the following categories of certificates:
- 4.3.1 Trade Certificates for:
- 4.3.1.1 existing trades without associated occupational and part qualifications; and
  - 4.3.1.2 occupational certificates for listed trades with associated occupational and part qualifications.
- 4.3.2 Occupational Certificates for occupational and part qualifications with the minimum specified credits; and
- 4.3.3 Occupational part qualifications that may form part of an occupational qualification and are registered as such on the NQF.

## 5. Objectives of this Policy

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

The standards for certification have been established to:

- 5.1. Ensure that the standard of certification has been established through rigorous quality assurance processes which include:
  - 5.1.1 qualifications are registered on the OQSF;
  - 5.1.2 Development Quality Partners and Assessment Quality Partners are established and their processes are quality assured;
  - 5.1.3 external integrated summative assessments are conducted at QCTO accredited assessment centres and sites;
  - 5.1.4 moderation and monitoring of assessment ensures that it is valid, reliable and of acceptable standard;
  - 5.1.5 NAMB ensures trade tests are conducted as required by the SDA and related policies and regulations; and certification of trades and occupations occurs no later than 21 working days after a recommendation is received.
- 5.2. Develop and manage the certification of qualifications on the OQSF through an appropriate certification system that will:
  - 5.2.1. ensure that the learner records submitted for certification are in the appropriate format and comply with policies and directives.
- 5.3. Determine the norms and standards for certification through its directives and outline the certification process that will:
  - 5.3.1. guide AQPs on the submission of data for certification as required by the QCTO.
- 5.4. Advise the Minister of Higher Education and Training on matters related to certification by
  - 5.4.1. recommending to the Minister all QCTO certification types as determined by recommendations from the industries and the Council.
- 5.5. Ensure compliance of assessment data for certification with policies and relevant legislation to:
  - 5.5.1. evaluate data against approved directives for certification and confirm compliance of learner records submitted for certification against approved qualification policies and regulations.

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

6.1 The certification process commences when a learner registers/enrols for a qualification or enters into an agreement with a service provider who offers an occupational qualification, part qualification or a specific trade. The provider is obligated to upload learner enrolments to the QCTO.

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

Occupational qualifications and part qualifications registered on the OQSF require that a learner must comply with work-based, practical and theoretical requirements before sitting for the external integrated summative assessment or trade to qualify for certification.

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

The directives are to:

- outline the specific directives regarding the submission of learner information for certification for occupational qualifications, part qualifications and trades;
- provide the format in which information is to be submitted by AQPs for certification; and
- further clarifies certification requirements as outlined in the policy which governs the qualifications it certifies.

6.3 The Assessment Quality Partners associated with the QCTO are responsible for the quality assurance and finalisation of assessment results. Furthermore, the AQPs submit recommendations of learner results for certification to the QCTO in terms of first issues, re-issues and replacement certificates for learner records.

The Sector Education and Training Authorities remain responsible for the certification of qualifications as quality assured under the delegation to QAPs, excluding the trades, until such date that the delegation of power is repealed.

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

6.5 The Minister of Higher Education and Training may issue regulations after consultation with the QCTO with regard to the issuing of certificates for qualifications and part qualifications on the OQSF.

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

7.1 The QCTO manages the certification of learner records through the following processes:

- developing and managing a certification IT-system that complies with policy requirements and QCTO directives for certification;
- developing and managing suitable system processes and procedures for certification;
- ensuring learner certification;
- maintaining an updated database of all certificates issued and an audit trail on transactions executed by users on the system;
- controlling access to the system and training users to undertake the processing of information for learner certification;
- ensuring proper back-ups of the certification database; and
- verifying learner records on request.

7.2 The certification of learner records is managed in conjunction with the AQP that has the responsibility of recommending records for certification. This is done in line with the policy and directives for certification.

7.3 The Council may consider and review tariffs for certification and verification.

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

## **8. Certification**

8.1 Certification of qualifications on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework

8.1.1 The policy and directives for the certification of qualifications are informed by the SDA and QQSF and are further explicated in the relevant directives for certification.

To that end, each qualification that is registered on the sub-framework is developed in conjunction with DQPs, as per the approved criteria for the development of qualifications as issued by the South African Qualifications Authority.

8.1.2 The QCTO will review the Certification Policy annually.

8.1.3 The QCTO maintains the right to reject a recommendation for certification by an AQP for non-compliance to the rules of combination and qualification requirements, certification requirements outlined in the SDA, regulations or QCTO policies and directives.

8.1.4 In accordance with the rules of administrative justice, a qualification holder has the right to be informed of the rationale underlying the certification decision and exercise the right to appeal in accordance with the QCTO appeal policies.

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

9.1 The relevant AQP must:

- a. verify learner information and details;
- b. verify qualification or part qualification information;
- c. request certification for competent learners in trades within 14 working days after receiving the assessment results from an assessment centre. Requests for other occupational qualifications must be submitted within 21 working days after QCTO verification and approval;
- d. submit information electronically to the QCTO in the prescribed format;
- e. distribute certificates to learners;
- f. keep records of all assessment results; and
- g. establish processes for requesting the re-issue of certificates.

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

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

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

10.1. The QCTO will:

- a. issue certificates within 21 working days after receipt of verified learner achievement information from the relevant AQP;
- b. distribute certificates to the relevant AQP once certificates have been issued;
- c. upload learner achievement data to the NLRD according to the NLRD load specifications; and
- d. re-issue and replace certificates on request of the relevant AQP.

10.2. The QCTO may issue certificates for the FLC.

10.3. The QCTO may verify learner results and information.

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

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

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

The principles for ensuring security include:

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

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

The QCTO manages the printing of certificates against these criteria.

- 11.3 The QCTO has a zero tolerance approach to fraudulent and corrupt practices and therefore urges AQP's and members of the public to:
- report any suspect irregular activities to the QCTO;
  - refrain from irregular behaviour with the intention to compromise QCTO staff; and
  - report any irregular behaviour by QCTO staff to the Chief Executive Officer.

## **12. Complaints and Appeals**

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

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

- 13.1 The QCTO will monitor the certification process in terms of this policy.