

Fact Sheet on the evaluation of foreign qualifications

The evaluation of foreign qualifications is the process followed by SAQA to verify the authenticity of foreign qualifications and to compare foreign qualifications with South African qualifications.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is used as the benchmark for recognition of qualifications in South Africa:

- 1) Foreign qualifications, whether held by South Africans or foreign nationals, are evaluated to inform further study, employment, registration and professional licensing in South Africa;
- 2) Foreign nationals must comply with the visa requirements of the Department of Home Affairs; and
- 3) The evaluation of foreign qualifications by SAQA is a statutory requirement as stipulated in the South African immigration regulations.

The evaluation and advisory service provided by SAQA forms part of a value chain for the recognition of foreign qualifications. SAQA partners with other bodies and entities to recognise foreign qualifications. Their responsibilities are as follows:

- a) SAQA: the evaluation (verification and comparison) of foreign qualifications to determine authenticity and locate the foreign qualification within the NQF;
- b) Department of Home Affairs: permission to enter South Africa, the issuing of visas relating to study and work; and addressing scarce and critical skills needs of the country;
- c) Professional Bodies: registration and professional licensing;
- d) Employers: employment, promotion and remuneration; and
- e) Learning and related institutions: admission to study.

A foreign qualification will be recognised as authentic after SAQA has determined that all the verification requirements are met:

- a) The awarding institution was recognised, or accredited (whichever term applies) by the relevant authority in the home system at the time of enrolment of the learner, in accordance with relevant policy or generally accepted practice in that country;
- b) The qualification was part of the formal education and training system in the country of origin;
- c) The institution had the right to offer that qualification at the time of enrolment of the learner;
- d) The documentation in respect of the foreign qualification submitted to SAQA is authentic, without evidence of tampering or inconsistency; and
- e) The qualification holder has successfully completed all the requirements for the award of the qualification as confirmed by the awarding body.

A qualification will proceed to the comparison phase of evaluation and qualify for the issuing of a *SAQA Certificate of Evaluation* if all verification requirements are met.

Where recognition agreements exist between South Africa and foreign countries, SAQA's recognition decision will reflect the provisions of such agreements consistent with the South African NQF.

In the absence of a recognition agreement, the foreign qualification will be located within its national system in order to understand how the foreign system compares with the South African NQF:

- a) Where the foreign national system is a qualifications framework, the foreign qualifications framework will be compared with the South African NQF in order to locate the foreign qualification on the South African NQF – that is the Sub-Framework, NQF Level and organising field. The recognition decision will be based on learning outcomes, both level descriptors and qualification descriptors;
- b) Where the country does not have a qualifications framework, the foreign national system will be compared with the South African NQF in order to locate the foreign qualification on the South African NQF. The recognition decision will be based on qualification descriptors and the comparable level will be inferred; and
- c) Where the foreign qualifications were issued before the introduction of a qualifications framework, SAQA will ascertain whether provision was made for the inclusion of earlier qualifications into the qualifications framework and consider that in the comparison.

Number of new foreign qualifications evaluated:

2014/15 financial year: 29 870

2015/16 financial year: 25 022

The possible reason for the decline in the number of new applications is that clients are better educated about the process of verifying and comparing qualifications as well as the consequences of being found to have a misrepresented qualification(s) – that one's name will be placed on the *List of Misrepresented Qualifications*.

Number of foreign qualifications found to be misrepresented qualifications:

2014/15 financial year: 257 qualifications were found to be misrepresented by 254 people

2015/16 financial year: 111 qualifications were found to be misrepresented by 108 people.

This is because one person can have more than one qualification.

What is a misrepresented qualification?

Misrepresentation is defined as an incorrect statement of fact or law made by one person to another (natural or juristic). Qualifications have been misrepresented if:

- The qualification claimed by an individual was not awarded by the provider;
- A claimed *SAQA Certificate of Evaluation* was not issued by SAQA;
- The qualification documents or the *SAQA Certificate of Evaluation* was altered in any way;
- The provider is not registered and/or accredited by the relevant Authority; or
- The qualification is not registered by the relevant Authority, or does not form part of a national system of education.

What happens to a person found to have a misrepresented qualification?

An individual or provider's name will be placed on the *List of Misrepresented Qualifications* after the misrepresentation has been confirmed by SAQA or one of the three Quality Councils. Information on this list is confidential and is mainly for internal use only.

DHET Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, tasked SAQA with developing and publishing a *Register of Fraudulent Qualifications*. Seeing that only a court of law can declare a qualification as fraudulent, work started towards establishing a *Register of Misrepresented Qualifications* and a *Register of Fraudulent Qualifications*.

SAQA drove the process of developing a *Draft Policy on Misrepresented Qualifications* and presented it to the Minister of Higher Education and Training for further action. Furthermore, changes to the NQF Act have also been proposed. These changes will provide the legislative frame for the *Policy on Misrepresented Qualifications* to be approved. Once the policy is approved and comes into effect, the *Register of Misrepresented Qualifications* and the *Register of Fraudulent Qualifications* will be established. Both these registers will be accessible to the public.

What is the Register of Misrepresented Qualifications?

The *Register of Misrepresented Qualifications* comprises two parts:

- Part A comprises a list of individuals who hold qualifications that are not authentic, or are from institutions that are not accredited or registered.
- Part B comprises a list of providers that are not registered and/or accredited to offer the qualification in question, or mislead the public in their claims about their programmes or institution.

An individual or provider's name will be entered into the *Register of Misrepresented Qualifications* after the misrepresentation has been confirmed by SAQA or one of the Quality Councils.

What is the Register of Fraudulent Qualifications?

It is a register containing the names and details of the offence of individuals and providers who have been found guilty by a court of law of holding or issuing (a) fraudulent qualification(s).

Does SAQA have a list of bogus institutions or unaccredited institutions internationally?

Yes, SAQA does have the list of foreign blacklisted institutions (a combination of both unaccredited institutions as well as bogus entities). This is a growing list and is not published as it is frequently updated.

Check the status of overseas institutions

Every country has laws and regulations that control the establishment, recognition and status of academic institutions. Before applying and enrolling, prospective students are advised to verify the status of academic institutions by emailing overseasinstitutions@saqa.org.za