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SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

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SAQA LANGUAGE POLICY
DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

In accordance with the Use of Languages Act, 2012, 4(1), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), as a national public entity, has developed a proposed Language Policy regarding the use of official languages for government purposes that it will adopt after a public consultation process.

SAQA encourages the public to engage with this *Draft SAQA Language Policy* and submit comments to SAQA within 30 days of its publication in the Government Gazette.

Comments should be sent to: Mr Lucas Malambe at lmalambe@saqa.co.za.

Kindly provide the following contact information when submitting comments: name, organisation (if applicable), address, telephone and fax numbers and email address.

SAQA's view is that this draft policy will contribute to the quality of SAQA services.



Joe Samuels

SAQA Chief Executive Officer

Draft for Public Comment: SAQA Language Policy

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PROPOSED SAQA LANGUAGE POLICY

In accordance with the Use of Languages Act, 2012, 4(1), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), as a national public entity, has developed a proposed Language Policy regarding the use of official languages for government purposes that it will adopt after a public consultation process.

1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- 1.1 The purpose of this Language Policy is to give details of the following:
- 1.1.1 The use, by SAQA, of English for its day-to-day activities including communicating with the general public;
 - 1.1.2 Communication with individuals who use an indigenous South African language other than English and who are not proficient in English; and
- 1.2 The SAQA Language Policy is based on the following Acts, Regulations and Guidelines:
- 1.2.1 **The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (1996)** in terms of:
 - Section 6(i) which affords official status to 11 languages and South African Sign Language;
 - Section 6(3) which states that, "*The national government and provincial government may use any particular language for purposes of government taking into account usage, practicality, expense and regional circumstances and the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province*"; and
 - Section 30 which states that "*Everyone has the right to use the language and participate in the cultural life of their choice*".
 - 1.2.2 **The National Language Policy Framework (2003)** which states that, "*a publication policy of multilingualism (i.e. the function, the audience and the message) should be followed in those cases that do not require publication in all 11 official languages. However, where the effective and stable operation of government at any level requires comprehensive communication of information, it must be published in all 11 official languages*".
 - 1.2.3 **The Pan South African Language Board Act, Act 59 of 1995.**
 - 1.2.4 **The Promotion of Access to Information Act, Act 2 of 2000.**
 - 1.2.5 **The Batho Pele principles** as contained in the government white paper on "*Transforming Public Service Delivery*" (1997).
 - 1.2.6 **Use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act No.12 of 2012) and Regulations.**
 - 1.2.7 **The NQF Act, 67 of 2008** which states that, "*The objectives of the NQF are designed to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.*" (Section 5(2)).

- 1.2.8 **The SAQA “Guideline for Plain English Writing and Editing”.**
- 1.3 SAQA has taken a decision to use English as the language of business and operations and to use English, IsiZulu and seSotho for oral communications with the public. The decision taken is mindful of the following objectives and principles of the South African government, namely the need to:
- 1.3.1 promote multilingualism amongst the South African public;
 - 1.3.2 support and grant equal access to information and services to all South Africans regardless of language, race religion, sexual orientation or creed;
 - 1.3.3 eradicate the marginalisation of indigenous South African languages;
 - 1.3.4 foster respect for and respect for language rights; and
 - 1.3.5 use language that is accessible to all.
- 1.4 English has been chosen as the language for daily operations at SAQA for the following reasons:
- 1.4.1 The need to have a standardised format and terminology for registered qualifications and part-qualifications and so avoid confusion and misunderstanding on the part of providers of education and training, learners and the general public;
 - 1.4.2 The need for employers in the private and the public sectors to fully understand the qualifications held by prospective employees so as to make decisions on their suitability for employment;
 - 1.4.3 The language of teaching and learning in most schools, TVET Colleges, universities, and other education and training sites who are users of the products of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), is English;
 - 1.4.4 Most facilitators of education and training are fully competent in English;
 - 1.4.5 English is used by the Ministry and the Department of Higher Education and Training in official communications, as do all government departments;
 - 1.4.6 The NQF and its information system, the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), contain information in English that is accessed by interested parties around the world; and
 - 1.4.7 Resource constraints. Reproducing the work of SAQA in other languages in addition to English, for example the NLRD data, minutes and proceedings of meetings, publications, website, policies and certificates and statements of achievement in other languages would require additional human and financial resources as well as time.
- 1.5 Where possible, information on SAQA is translated into other official languages. SAQA has an information manual which is available in all eleven official South African languages on the SAQA website which gives details of the services it offers.

- 1.6 The rights of indigenous South African language speakers are safeguarded as is their right to access NQF information as SAQA handles client queries, both oral and written, in the preferred language of the client.

2. THE NATURE OF SAQA

2.1 SAQA is a juristic person established under the South African Qualifications Act of 1995 and whose continued existence is confirmed by the National Qualifications Act, 67 of 2008.

2.2 SAQA is accountable to the Minister of Higher Education and Training.

2.3 The NQF is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the:

- Classification;
- Registration;
- Publication; and
- Articulation of quality-assured national qualifications.

2.4 The objectives of the NQF are designed to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large. The NQF objectives are to:

- 2.4.1 Create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;
- 2.4.2 Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths;
- 2.4.3 Enhance the quality of education and training; and
- 2.4.4 Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities (NQF Act, Section 5).

2.5 The objectives of SAQA are to:

- 2.5.1 advance the objectives of the NQF;
- 2.5.2 oversee the further development and implementation of the NQF; and
- 2.5.3 co-ordinate the sub-frameworks of the NQF. (NQF Act, Section 11)

2.6 SAQA sees the NQF as a framework for **communication, coordination and collaboration** across **education, training, development and work**.

3. SAQA's ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

In addition to achieving its objectives, SAQA is responsible for the following:

- 3.1 Advising the Minister of Higher Education and Training on NQF matters;

- 3.2 Developing a system of collaboration to guide the mutual relations of SAQA and the Quality Councils (QCs);
- 3.3 Resolving disputes regarding the QCs;
- 3.4 Developing, publishing and ensuring the currency and relevance of Level Descriptors;
- 3.5 Developing policy and criteria for the development, registration and publication of qualifications and part-qualifications;
- 3.6 Registering qualifications and part-qualifications recommended by the QCs on the NQF;
- 3.7 Developing policy and criteria for assessment, recognition of prior learning and credit accumulation and transfer;
- 3.8 Developing policy and criteria for the recognition of professional bodies and the registration on the NQF of professional designations;
- 3.9 Recognising professional bodies and registering professional designations on the NQF;
- 3.10 Liaising with international counterparts on qualifications framework matters and informing the QCs and other interested parties about international practice;
- 3.11 Conducting and commissioning research on issues relating to the development and implementing of the NQF and conducting periodic impact studies on the NQF;
- 3.12 Maintaining a national system of records of registered qualifications, registered part-qualifications, learner achievements, recognised professional bodies, registered professional designations and related information. This is done by means of populating and maintaining the National Learners' Records Database;
- 3.13 Providing a foreign qualifications evaluation and advisory service; and
- 3.14 Informing the public about the NQF.

4. THE NATURE OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY SAQA

SAQA provides on-going support and information to learners, providers of education and training and the general public regarding registered qualifications and part-qualifications, learner achievements, professional bodies and professional designations, foreign qualifications, international qualification framework practices and trends, NQF related

research findings and any other related education and training matters. These services include the following:

- 4.1 Providing certificates of equivalence of foreign qualifications with NQF levels**

This service is for individual persons with foreign qualifications wishing to enrol for study at a South African institution and/or to obtain work, study and/or residence visas/permits. Their credential documents are often in a foreign language such as Russian, German, French, and others. This requires competence in reading these languages. When required, the services of an outside language translator/interpreter are used to translate foreign qualification documents. Communication with the client is through English and the certificate is provided in English, as it is the preferred language used in the South African business and education and training environments. Where possible, SAQA staff will communicate with foreigners in their own language.
- 4.2 Verifying learners' South African qualifications and issuing certificates of achievement**

Certificates are issued in English, but enquiries, which must be received in writing, may be made in any of the South African official languages.
- 4.3 Verifying the authenticity of qualifications for employers and institutions of learning**

This service is provided to counter the presentation of misrepresented qualifications or qualifications issued by non-accredited institutions. Applications must be made in writing and may be in any of the official South African languages. The statements of authenticity are issued in English as that is the generally accepted language of business and formal institutional learning, in South Africa.
- 4.4 Registering qualifications and part-qualifications on the NQF**

Qualifications and part-qualifications are submitted to SAQA for registration on the NQF, in English, by the three QCs. Communication (written and oral) regarding the qualifications or part-qualifications submitted by the QCs is through the medium of English.
- 4.5 Recognising Professional Bodies and registering Professional Designations on the NQF.**

All communication with professional bodies regarding recognition and registration of professional designations is done in English. This includes applications for recognition and registration, corresponding certificates issued to professional bodies, site visits, monitoring visits, evaluation reports and queries.
- 4.6 Maintaining the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)**

The general public has electronic access to the databases of registered qualifications and part-qualifications, recognised professional bodies, registered professional designations and associated information which is available on the NLRD through the SAQA website. Clients may make e-mail, fax, written or

telephonic enquiries on NLRD related information. The NLRD Registers are kept in English to ensure the consistency of terminology and understanding and because the language of business is English. The NLRD and SAQA website are used by foreign countries as well as by the South African public. The enquiries submitted to SAQA may be in any of the South African official languages and the response will be given in the same language, unless the reply is to be used in a context where English is required.

4.7 Developing NQF policies

SAQA is required to develop, oversee the implementation, and keep current a number of NQF related policies such as the National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Learning (RPL), Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part-Qualifications on the NQF, Policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer within the NQF, and others. The development of the policies must be done in consultation with and in some cases after consultation with the QCs. The meetings and work to develop the policies is done in English and the policies are published in the government gazette, when required, on the SAQA website and available in hard copy in English.

4.8 Informing the public about the NQF

SAQA carries out a number of activities to inform the public about the NQF and to advocate the NQF. These include workshops, information sessions, hosting of conferences, compilation of publications and leaflets, posting of relevant information on social media and on print media as well as participating in conferences and workshops of other organisations when invited. Publications such as policies, criteria and guidelines and general NQF information are available in English. However, when SAQA participates in advocacy events such as career exhibitions, where contact is made with large numbers of people whose home language is not English, SAQA ensures that communication can be done in at least English, IsiZulu and SeSotho. SAQA also participates in radio interviews conducted in other South African official languages.

4.9 Handling NQF related queries from the general public

SAQA receives queries on a daily basis from the general public about NQF related matters. The queries are received in writing by e-mail, fax and telephonically. Some clients visit the SAQA offices. Even though most queries are made in English, responses are given in other languages in which the query is submitted to SAQA..

5. REGIONS OR GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS WHERE SAQA PROVIDES ITS SERVICES

SAQA is situated in Pretoria, but as required, provides its services across the country and internationally. Services are provided and queries answered either face-to-face at SAQA

or by use of telephone, fax, e-mail and writing (letters, reports and certificates) to customers who are unable to visit SAQA personally.

6. SAQA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

SAQA uses English as its medium of communication for all its day-to-day operations and three languages, namely English, isiZulu and Sesotho for oral communications. SAQA's business activities in English include:

- All meetings, workshops and conferences both within SAQA and for the general public;
- Agenda documents for meetings and minutes and records of meetings;
- Publications, e.g. policies, criteria and guideline documents and research findings;
- The SAQA Annual Report;
- Information on the SAQA website;
- Communication on the SAQA Intranet;
- The NLRD and other information systems used for managing NQF information;
- Communication with the Minister of Higher Education and Training and the Department of Higher Education and Training;
- Communication with other government departments;
- Completion of official forms;
- Advertisements of SAQA vacancies in the media;
- Notices in the government gazette;
- Certificates of evaluation, verification, registration and recognition;
- Disciplinary hearings; and
- Official signage in the SAQA building identifying facilities and services.

However, when communication is initiated by a client in another South African official language or by someone who is not proficient in English and where the use of English will lead to misunderstanding or confusion, the language of the client is used.

7. COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHOSE LANGUAGE OF CHOICE IS NOT ENGLISH

SAQA communicates with members of the public whose language of choice is not English as follows:

- 7.1 Written queries (faxes, letters and e-mails) in a language other than English are referred to a staff member who is proficient in the language used, and will compile a response which is checked for correctness and accuracy according to set standards. If that staff member is unable to answer the query, then assistance is provided to prepare an appropriate response which is then translated into the language of the query. The reply is checked by a staff member proficient in the language and edited for correctness and accuracy according to set standards.

- 7.2 Written requests in a language other than English for verifications, certificates, and others are dealt with as in point 7.1 above. However the certificate/statement is issued in English and accompanied by a letter in the client's language the contents of the certificate and the reason for issuing it in English. The usual check for correctness of information is done according to set standards.

The certificates and statements are issued in English as that is the language used by most education and training institutions, business, the public service and government departments.

- 7.3 Oral requests (telephonic and from walk-in clients) in a language other than English are referred to a staff member proficient in the language of the client. If the staff member is unable to answer the query, the client is referred to another staff member who can provide the required information. The staff member who is able to communicate in the preferred language of the client and who is dealing with the query continues to assist the client in answering the query by serving as a translator.

When there is no staff member at SAQA proficient in the client's language to act as an interpreter, the client is requested to return to SAQA at an appointed time (within 10 working days) for a meeting with an interpreter. SAQA arranges for an appropriate interpreter to be present.

- 7.4 Should a client with a hearing impairment approach SAQA with a query and there is no SAQA staff member proficient in sign language, the client is requested to:
- 7.4.1 Submit the query in writing with the answer provided in writing while the client is present; or
 - 7.4.2 Bring his/her own sign-language interpreter for a meeting at an arranged time; or
 - 7.4.3 SAQA will secure the services of a sign-language interpreter for a meeting at a predetermined time.

The follow-up meetings in all cases will be scheduled within 10 working days of the client approaching SAQA with the query.

8. ACCESS TO THE SAQA LANGUAGE POLICY BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- 8.1 The SAQA Language Policy will be available in English, isiZulu and seSotho on the SAQA website and in hard copy format.
- 8.2 Requests for a hard copy of the Language Policy may be made to SAQA in writing, telephonically or in person. Copies of the Policy can either be handed to clients or sent to them.

- 8.3 People making telephonic requests will in the first instance be referred to the SAQA website, but can be provided with a hard copy on request.
- 8.4 SAQA documents will not be available in Braille, due to the high cost of production and the relatively few requests for Braille versions of documents available in the past.

9. COMPLAINTS MECHANISM

- 9.1 Any person (either a SAQA staff member or a member of the public) who is dissatisfied with SAQA's use of official languages may lodge a complaint. The complaint must be in writing. The name, address and contact details of the complainant, and full details of the complaint must be provided. Such a complaint must be:
- Addressed to the SAQA CEO;
 - Either delivered by hand to SAQA, or sent by e-mail to the SAQA CEO or sent by registered post to SAQA's postal address; and
 - Lodged within 3 months of the complaint arising.
- 9.2 The SAQA CEO will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 48 hours of receipt.
- 9.3 The SAQA CEO may request the complainant to:
- Supply more information to aid the investigation into the complaint; and
 - Arrange a meeting to conduct an oral enquiry into the complaint.
- 9.4 The SAQA CEO must, within 3 months of receipt of the complaint:
- Consider the complaint, conduct the necessary investigation and make a decision on the complaint; and
 - Inform the complainant in writing of the decision.

Contact details of the SAQA office

Physical Address: SAQA House, 1067 Arcadia Street, Hatfield, Pretoria

Postal Address: Postnet Suite 248, Private Bag X06, Waterkloof, 0145

Telephone: (012) 431-5000

Fax: (012) 431-5147

E-mail address: sagainfo@saqa.org.za

Website: <http://www.saqa.org.za>

- 9.5 A complainant not satisfied with the decision of the SAQA CEO may lodge an appeal with the Minister of Higher Education and Training.
- 9.6 The appeal must be in writing. The name, address and contact details of the appellant and the full details of the appeal must be provided. Such an appeal must be:
- Addressed to the Minister of Higher Education and Training;
 - Either delivered by hand to the Ministry of Higher Education and Training or sent by registered post to the postal address of the Minister of Higher Education and Training; and
 - Lodged within 1 month of the SAQA CEO's decision being received by the complainant.
- 9.7 The Minister of Higher Education and Training, in accordance with the Regulations, must:
- Consider the appeal and make a decision; and,
 - Inform the appellant in writing of the decision.

Contact details of the Ministry of Higher Education and Training

Physical address: 123 Francis Baard Street, Pretoria, 0001

Postal address: Private Bag X174, Pretoria, 0001

Telephone number: +27 12 312 5555

Fax number: +27 12 323 5618

10. EXEMPTION FROM ESTABLISHING A LANGUAGE POLICY UNIT

The Minister of Arts and Culture has in terms of section 12 (1) of the Use of Official Languages Act, 12 of 2012 granted SAQA exemption, in part, from establishing a Language Policy Unit. SAQA will assign a senior employee to perform the functions of a Language Policy Unit.

11. SUBMISSION OF ANNUAL REPORTS

SAQA will on an annual basis, and within 3 months of the end of its financial year, submit a report to the Minister of Arts and Culture and to the Pan South African Language Board. The report will include details on:

- 11.1 The implementation of SAQA's Language Policy;
- 11.2 Any complaints received regarding SAQA's use of official languages and the manner in which these complaints were addressed; and
- 11.3 Any other matter that the Minister may prescribe.