

# The National Qualifications Framework and the Standards Setting



Setting quality standards is  
the first step in the quality  
cycle

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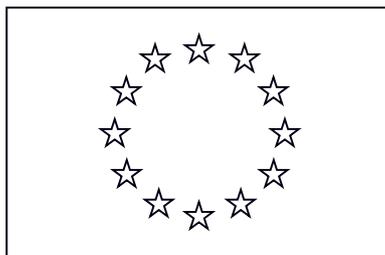
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### **SAQA's Mission**

**To ensure the development and implementation of a National Qualifications Framework which contributes to the full development of each learner and to the social and economic development of the nation at large.**

## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AD	Assistant Director /NSB Co-ordinator
CSS	Communications and Secretarial Services (Division)
DSSD	Directorate Standards Setting and Development
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance (Bodies)
FET	Further Education and Training
FI	Framework Implementation
GET	General Education and Training
HET	Higher Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSB	National Standards Body
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SGB	Standards Generating Body

## Introduction

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was established through the SAQA Act of 1995 to oversee the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The NQF is a means for transforming the education and training in South Africa and has been designed to:

- create a single, integrated, national education and training framework for the whole nation
- make it easier for learners to enter the education and training system and to move and progress within it
- improve the quality of education and training in South Africa
- enable learners to develop to their full potential and thereby support the social and economic development of the country as a whole.

The NQF is essentially a quality assurance system with the development and registration of standards and qualifications as the first important step in implementing a quality education and training system in South Africa. The bodies responsible for generation and recommendation of qualifications and standards are respectively called Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) and National Standards Bodies (NSBs). The bodies responsible for the quality assurance of the standards and qualifications are called Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies that will carry out their functions in co-operation with education training providers and moderating bodies.

The purpose of the paper is to explain the role and function of standards setting within the NQF. In order to understand the role of standards setting it is important to understand the purpose of SAQA and its vision for education and training. This vision is explored in the first section of the paper, together with other important features of SAQA – its role and function in developing and overseeing the NQF. This section on SAQA will be followed by an outline of the main concepts of standards setting and how the structures are operating as well as the underlying rationale for their functioning. After outlining the basic features of standards setting structures, the relationship of the structures to qualifications and standards will be explored as well as their relationship to other NQF structures and processes.

## SAQA Vision, Mission and Structures.

### The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)

The Minister of Education, in consultation with, the Minister of Labour appoints the 29 SAQA members for a period of three years. The 29 SAQA members represent the major education and training stakeholders including representatives from government, business and labour.

### The Vision

SAQA's vision is to develop an education and training system that reflects

The NQF is essentially a quality assurance system with the development and registration of standards and qualifications as the first important step in implementing a quality education and training system in South Africa.

the objectives of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

## SAQA Mission Statement

To ensure the development and implementation of a National Qualifications Framework which contributes to the full development of each learner and to the social and economic development of the nation at large.

## SAQA Functions

The primary function of SAQA (also called ‘the Authority’) is to oversee the **development** and **implementation** of the NQF (also called ‘the Framework’).

In terms of section 5(1) of the South African Qualifications Authority Act (1995), SAQA must:

- Oversee the development of the NQF.
- Formulate and publish policies and criteria for:
  - registering bodies responsible for establishing education and training qualifications and standards (NSBs and SGBs)
  - accrediting bodies responsible for monitoring and auditing achievements in terms of such qualifications and standards (ETQAs)
- Oversee the implementation of the NQF, including:
  - registering or accrediting the above mentioned bodies and assigning their functions
  - registering national qualifications and standards
  - ensuring compliance with provisions for accreditation
  - benchmarking standards and registered qualifications internationally
- Advise the Minister on the registration of qualifications and standards.
- Be responsible for the control of the finances of the Authority.

The primary function of SAQA is to oversee the development and implementation of the NQF.

## National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

### Objectives

The objectives of the NQF as stated in the Mission Statement above and according to the SAQA Act are the following:

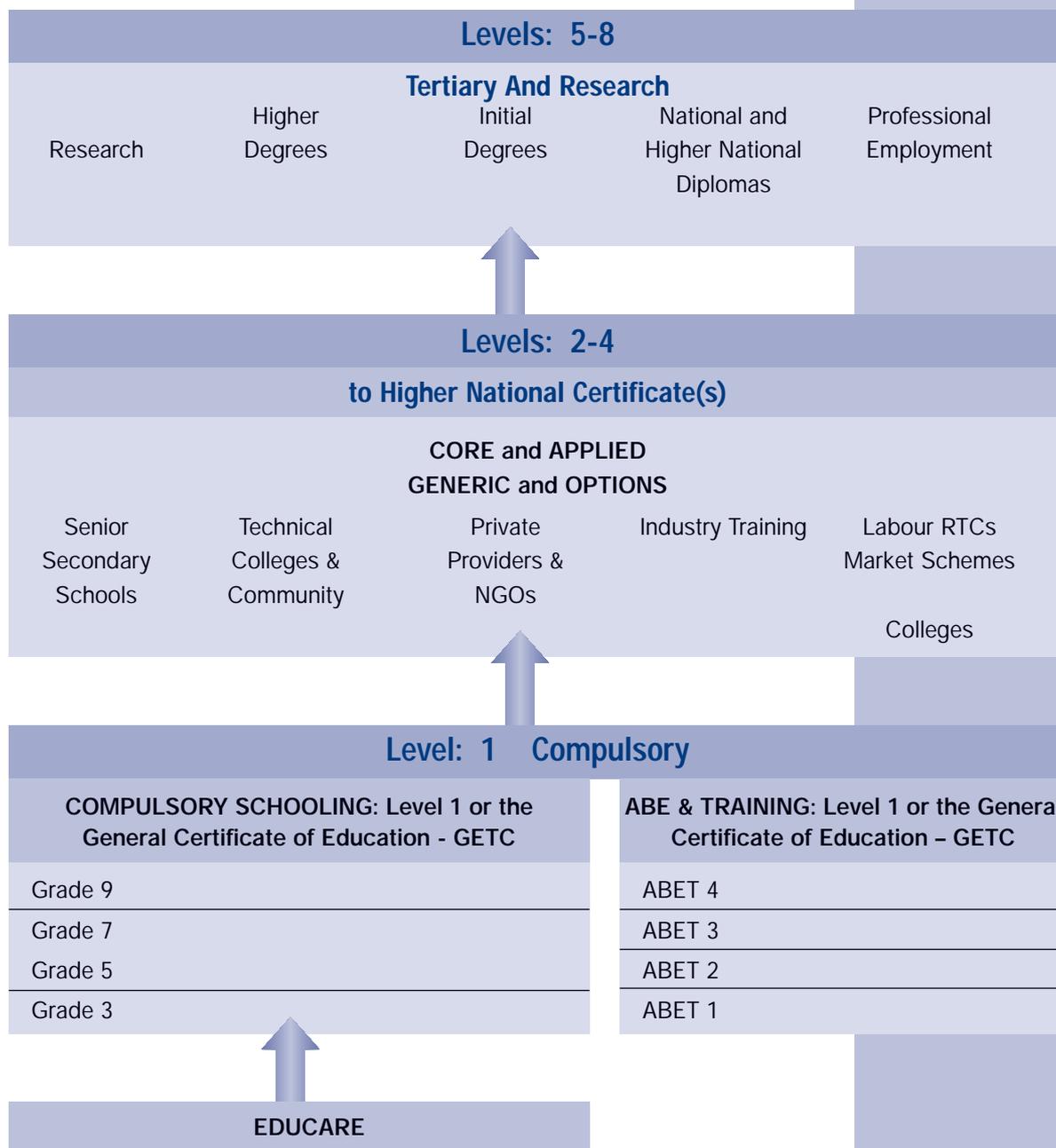
- Create an integrated national framework for learning achievements.
- Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths.
- Enhance the quality of education and training.
- Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities, and thereby
- Contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.

### Levels

SAQA has adopted an eight-level framework. Level 1 is the least complex, and Level 8 the most complex. Both Levels 1 and 8 are regarded as open-ended. This means that there is learning below Level 1 that will only be formally recognised by SAQA at Level 1.

There is one exception, put in place to provide for the recognition of

adult learning that falls outside of the Framework. Level 1 has three certification levels for Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) - 1, 2 and 3 - which lead to the General Education and Training Certificate (ABET 4) at Level 1 on the NQF. These features are illustrated below:



**Bands**

What is also clear from the above table is that the 8 levels are grouped into three (3) bands -

- General Education and Training (GET), covering Level 1 and below.
- Further Education and Training (FET), covering Levels 2 to 4.
- Higher Education and Training (HET), covering Level 5 to 8.
- These terms describe the different levels of education and training in South Africa.

## Key Aspects of the NQF

### *Critical Cross-Field Education and Training Outcomes*

Critical cross-field outcomes are those generic outcomes that are useful for, and result from, all teaching and learning.

### *Organising Fields and Sub-fields*

For organisational purposes, the NQF divides all education and training in South Africa into 12 organising fields.

SAQA has established 12 National Standards Bodies, one per field. These organising fields are not based on traditional discipline or subject areas; nor are they based on economic sectors. SAQA recognises that real life does not fall neatly into fields or sub-fields. These organising fields are a convenient mixture of the two, to make standards generation possible.

SAQA also published an initial framework of sub-fields for the twelve organising fields of the NQF (this appears below). Sub-field delineation is a dynamic exercise, it is likely that these initial sub-fields will change over time for the purpose of operationalisation, however, it was necessary to freeze them for a period, to enable stakeholders to locate SGB formation within a stable framework. Through a research study SAQA will, in conjunction with NSBs and the fields as a whole, develop more permanent sub-fields and their rationales.

The formation of SGBs within the framework of sub-fields will require careful monitoring on the part of both SAQA staff and NSBs. While in many instances there will be more than one SGB per sub-field, an NSB will have to ensure that the size of the SBGs and the number of SGBs per sub-field, are appropriate to the field. The sub-committee for SGB Registration has to co-ordinate and monitor the activities of the SGBs registered within the framework of sub-fields.

In cases where qualifications and standards generated by an SGB are applicable to organising fields and sub-fields beyond those within the framework of which the SGB is registered, SAQA has established mechanisms to ensure the availability and ready accessibility of those qualifications and standards to those fields and sub-fields.

**Critical cross-field outcomes are those generic outcomes that are useful for, and result from, all teaching and learning.**

NSB	Organising Field	Sub-fields
01	Agriculture & Nature Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary Agriculture</li> <li>• Secondary Agriculture</li> <li>• Nature Conservation</li> <li>• Forestry and Wood Technology</li> <li>• Horticulture</li> </ul>
02	Culture & Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design Studies</li> <li>• Visual Arts</li> <li>• Performing Arts</li> <li>• Cultural Studies</li> <li>• Music</li> <li>• Sport</li> <li>• Film, Television and Video</li> </ul>

NSB	Organising Field	Sub-fields
03	Business, Commerce and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance, Economic &amp; Accounting</li> <li>• Generic Management</li> <li>• Human Resources</li> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Purchasing</li> <li>• Procurement</li> <li>• Office Administration</li> <li>• Public Administration</li> <li>• Project Management</li> <li>• Public Relations</li> </ul>
04	Communication Studies & Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Information Studies</li> <li>• Language</li> <li>• Literature</li> </ul>
05	Education, Training & Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schooling</li> <li>• Higher Education &amp; Training</li> <li>• Early Childhood Development</li> <li>• Adult Learning</li> </ul>
06	Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engineering and Related Design</li> <li>• Manufacturing and Assembly</li> <li>• Fabrication and Extraction</li> </ul>
07	Human & Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Relations</li> <li>• General Social Science</li> <li>• Industrial &amp; Organisational Governance and Human Resource Development</li> <li>• People/ Human Centred Development</li> <li>• Public Policy, Politics &amp; Democratic Citizenship</li> <li>• Religious &amp; Ethical Foundations of Society</li> <li>• Rural &amp; Agrarian Studies</li> <li>• Traditions, History &amp; Legacies</li> <li>• Urban &amp; Regional Studies</li> </ul>
08	Law, Military Science & Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety in Society</li> <li>• Justice in Society</li> <li>• Sovereignty of the State</li> </ul>
09	Health Sciences & Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventive Health</li> <li>• Promotive Health &amp; Developmental Services</li> <li>• Curative Health</li> <li>• Rehabilitative Services</li> </ul>
10	Mathematical, Physical, Computer & Life Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mathematical Sciences</li> <li>• Physical Sciences</li> </ul>

NSB	Organising Field	Sub-fields
...10		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life Sciences (see NSB 01 &amp; 07)</li> <li>• Information Technology &amp; Computer Sciences</li> <li>• Earth &amp; Space Sciences</li> <li>• Environmental Sciences</li> </ul>
11	Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospitality, Tourism, Travel, Gaming and Leisure</li> <li>• Transport, Operations &amp; Logistics</li> <li>• Personal Care</li> <li>• Wholesale &amp; Retail</li> <li>• Consumer Services</li> </ul>
12	Physical Planning & Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Planning, Design and Management</li> <li>• Building Construction</li> <li>• Civil Engineering Construction</li> <li>• Electrical Infrastructure Construction</li> </ul>

### Standards

The South African Qualifications Authority Act (Act No. 58 of 1995) defines unit standards as the:

- **registered statements** of desired education and training outcomes and
- their **associated assessment criteria**, describing the quality of the expected performance, together with
- administrative and other **information** specified in the NSB regulations

The purpose of a unit standard is to provide guidance to the:

- **Assessor** as to the evidence that must be gathered during assessment
- **Learner** as to the learning outcomes that must be achieved
- **Provider** and/or materials designer as to the learning materials or learning experiences to be prepared to assist learners in reaching competence.

### Qualifications

Learning is recognised when a learner achieves the required number and range of credits at a specific level of the NQF. When a learner meets these requirements, he/she obtains a qualification.

The NSB Regulations (452 of 28 March 1998) describe qualifications as:

- representing a **planned combination of learning outcomes** with a defined purpose or purposes, including applied competence and a basis for further learning
- **enriching the qualifying learner** by providing status, recognition, credentials and licensing; it improves marketability and employability; and opens up routes to additional education and training
- **benefiting society and the economy** by enhancing citizenship, increasing social and economic productivity, providing specifically skilled and/or professional people, and transforming and redressing past inequities
- complying with the objectives of the NQF contained in section 2 of the Act

- having both specific and critical cross-field outcomes that **promote life-long learning**
- where applicable, being **internationally comparable**
- incorporating integrated assessment to ensure that the purpose of the qualification is achieved; a range of **formative** and **summative** assessment methods appropriate to the competence being assessed are used
- providing for the recognition of prior learning, including learning outcomes achieved through formal, informal and non-formal learning and work experience

### **Credit system**

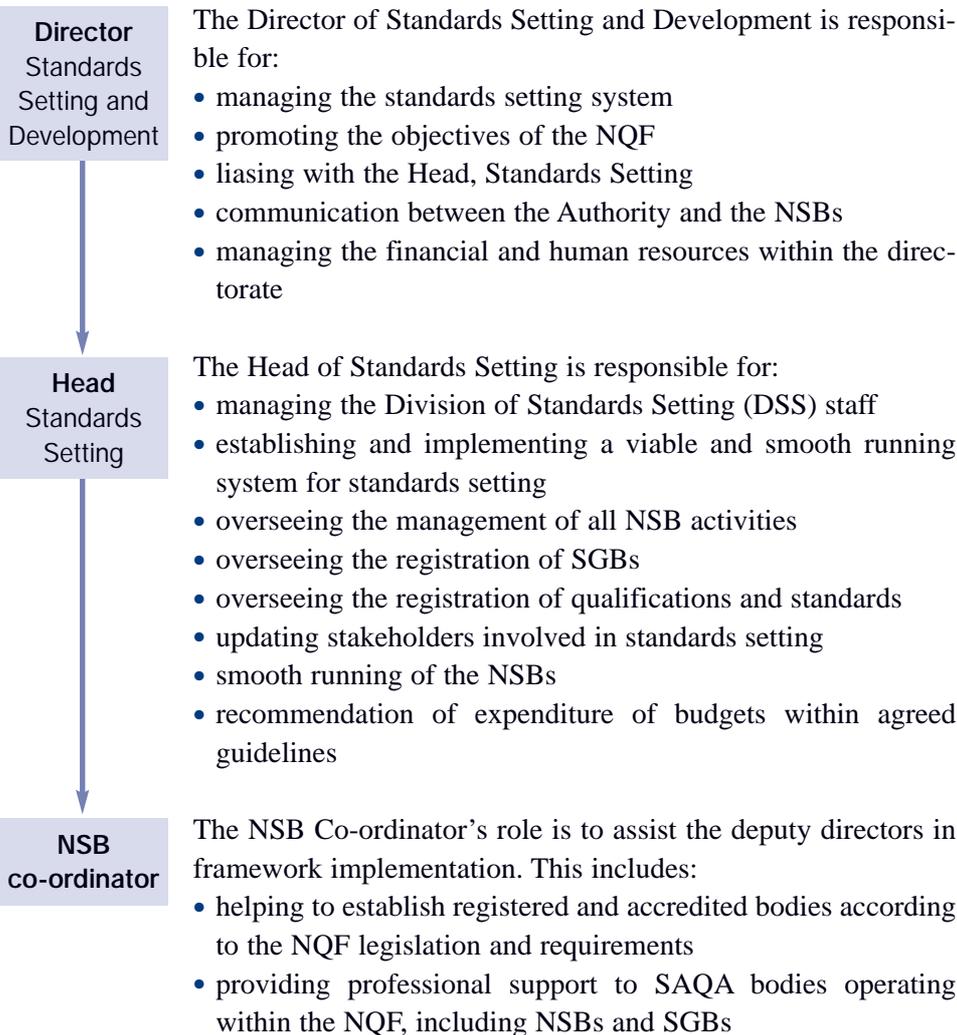
SAQA uses a credit system based on the idea that one credit equals 10 notional hours of learning, motivated in context in each case.

‘Notional hours of learning’ refers to the learning time that it would take an average learner to meet the outcomes defined. It includes concepts such as:

- contact time
- time spent in structured learning in the workplace
- individual learning
- assessment

‘Notional hours of learning’ refers to the learning time that it would take an average learner to meet the outcomes defined. It includes concepts such as: contact time, time spent in structured learning in the workplace, individual learning and assessment.

## **The Role of SAQA Staff Members in Standards Setting**



- ensuring that members of NSBs and SGBs are knowledgeable with regard to SAQA legislation
- maintaining proactive communication between SAQA, Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQA), NSBs, and SGBs
- seeking and exchanging information relevant to NQF developments or fields or sectors
- keeping and maintaining administrative systems for the specific registered or accredited bodies
- assisting in the drafting of annual work plans and budgets as well as monitoring the progress made
- assisting in the registration of qualifications and standards
- managing the relevant NSB and its activities

## National Standards Bodies (NSBs)

NSBs are registered bodies that are responsible for:

- establishing education and training qualifications and/or standards, and
- specific functions relating to the registration of national qualifications and/or standards

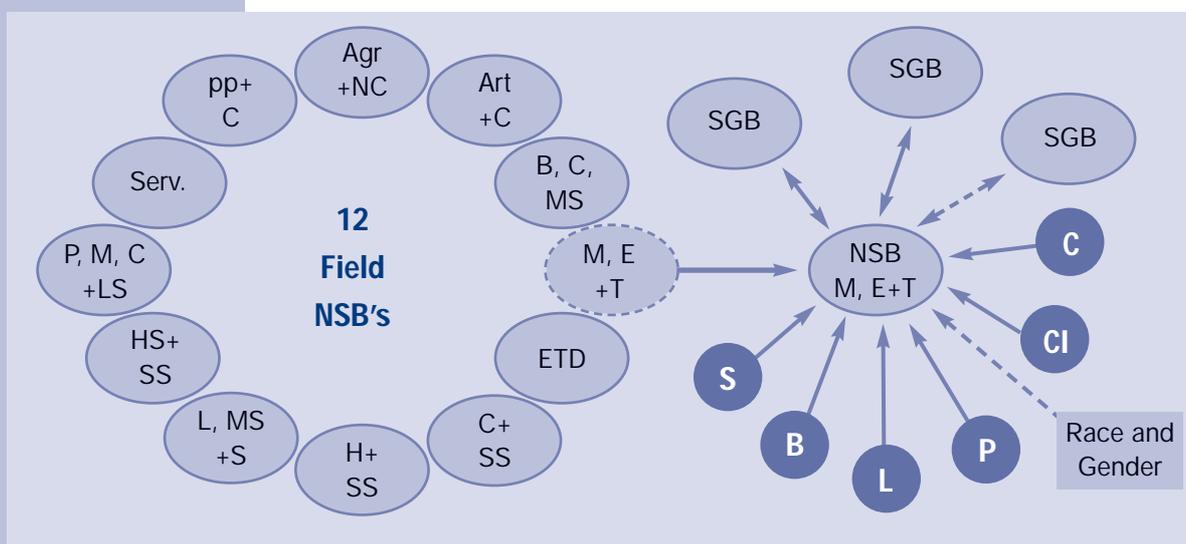
### Establishment

NSBs are one of SAQA's institutional pillars, with one NSB established per field and registered by SAQA for a period of three years.

### Composition

NSBs are made up of national stakeholders with a key interest in the field. Normally there are 36 members in each NSB. Members are nominated from six stakeholder categories:

- The State
- Organised Labour
- Organised Business
- Providers of E&T
- Critical Interest Groups
- Community/ Learners



## Membership

- National stakeholder bodies from the six stakeholder categories with a key interest in the organising field are invited to nominate members to serve on NSBs.
- Nominated persons must:
  - look after issues of productivity, fairness, public interest and international comparability for education and training
  - enjoy credibility and the respect of the constituency
  - have the necessary expertise and experience in the field, and the support or backing of the nominating body
  - be able to advocate and mediate the needs and interests of all levels within the field covered by the NSB
  - be able to exercise critical judgement at a high level
  - be committed to a communication process between the NSB and the constituency
- The Authority appoints members after consultation and in co-operation with the bodies concerned. The need for representation and equity, redress and relevant expertise in terms of the work of NSBs is carefully considered.

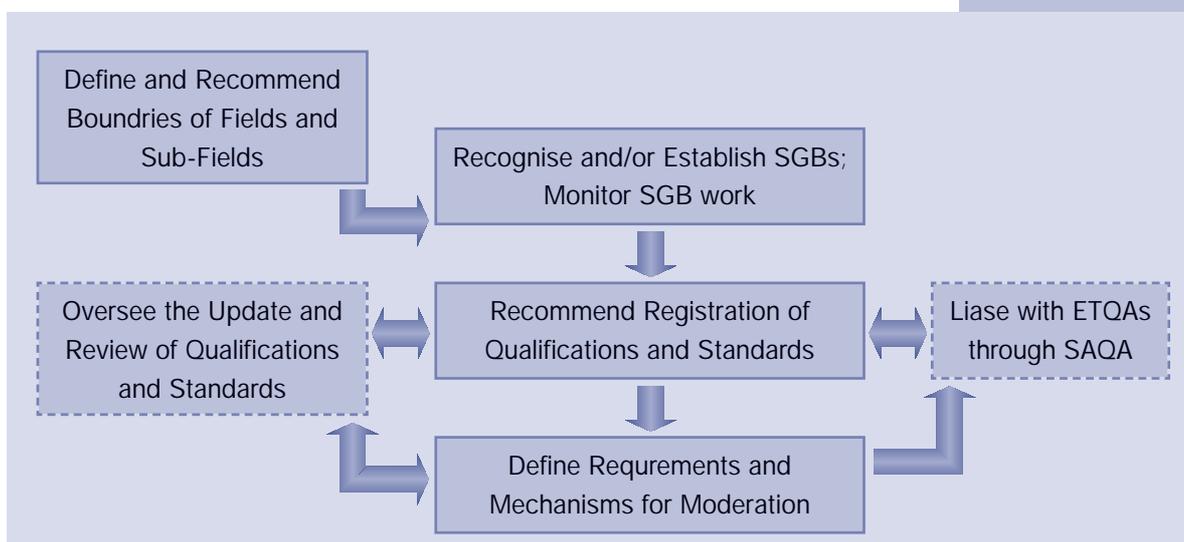
## Functions

NSBs must:

- Define and recommend to SAQA the boundaries of the Organising Field.
- Define and recommend a framework of sub-fields to be used as a guide for SGBs.
- Recognise and/or establish SGBs within the framework of sub-fields, and ensure that the work of the SGBs meets SAQA requirements.
- Recommend the registration of qualifications and standards.
- Oversee the update and review of qualifications and standards.
- Liaise with ETQAs through SAQA..
- Define requirements and mechanisms for the moderation of qualifications and standards.

*Note:* NSBs will not generate qualifications and standards themselves. They will oversee these activities at sub-field level.

**NSBs must recommend the registration of qualifications and standards to SAQA.**



## Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs)

SGBs are registered bodies responsible for the generation of qualifications and/or standards.

### *Establishment and Recognition*

The recognition or establishment of the SGB occurs within the framework of SAQA-accepted sub-fields as described by the NSB. In the case of SGB establishment, the NSB itself initiates the formation of the SGB; in the case of SGB recognition, the initiative to form the SGB comes from the field.

### *Composition*

The SGB should be made up of key education and training stakeholders in the sub-field, drawn from interest groups and specialists. There should not normally be more than 25 representatives in the SGB.

Nominated persons must:

- look after issues of productivity, fairness, public interest and international comparability for education and training in the sub-field
- enjoy credibility and respect in the sub-field
- have the necessary expertise and experience in the sub-field, and the support or backing of the nominating body
- be able to advocate and mediate the needs and interests of all levels within the sub-field covered by the SGB
- be able to exercise critical judgement at a high level
- be committed to a communication process between the SGB, the NSB and the constituency

### *Membership*

- Key education and training stakeholder interest groups in the sub-field are invited to nominate members and/or specialists to serve on SGBs.
- The NSB appoints members after consultation and in co-operation with the bodies concerned [Regulation 22(1)].
- While expertise is most important, representation, equity and redress in terms of the work of NSBs are important considerations.
- An organisation or group of organisations wishing to be recognised as an SGB shall establish a discrete group who would function as the SGB.

### *Functions*

An SGB shall:

- generate qualifications and standards
- update and review standards
- recommend qualifications and standards to NSBs
- recommend criteria for the registration of assessors and moderators or moderating bodies
- perform such other functions as may from time to time be delegated by its NSB

## Education And Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs)

ETQAs are established by SAQA in each of the sectors described below to

**In the case of SGB establishment, the NSB itself initiates the formation of the SGB; in the case of SGB recognition, the initiative to form the SGB comes from the field.**

monitor and audit achievements in terms of national qualifications and standards.

### ***Establishment***

An organisation or group of organisations can seek accreditation as an ETQA in one of the following sectors:

- A social sector
- An economic sector [e.g. Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and Statutory bodies].
- An education and training sub-system sector [e.g. Higher Education, General and Further Education and Training and Adult Basic Education and Training].

### ***Composition***

SAQA accredits organisations or a group of organisations to act as ETQAs. Members of the ETQA are those people who have been appointed to that body by the organisation or group of organisations that meet the requirements of the ETQA regulations.

### ***Functions***

The function of the ETQA is to:

- promote quality amongst providers
- accredit providers for specific qualifications and standards registered on the NQF
- evaluate assessment and facilitation of moderation among providers
- co-operate with relevant Bodies appointed to moderate across ETQAs
- register assessors for specified registered qualifications and standards in terms of the criteria established for this purpose
- monitor the quality of provision
- take responsibility for the certification of learners
- maintain an acceptable database
- submit required reports to SAQA
- recommend new qualifications and standards to NSBs for consideration, or modify existing qualifications and/or standards

### ***Powers and Responsibilities***

In performing its functions, an ETQA:

- shall abide by the relevant regulations
- may delegate selected functions to a provider or other Body with the prior approval of SAQA; however, it may not delegate its accountability to SAQA

*Note:* The Skills Development Act of 1998 makes provision for a Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) to take over the economic sector ETQA responsibilities for SAQA within 18 months of the SETA being registered. 25 SETAs has been established by the Minister of Labour.

## **Providers**

‘Provider’ means a body that delivers learning programmes focused on the

‘Provider’ means a body that delivers learning programmes focused on the achievement of specified NQF qualifications and standards. A provider also manages the assessment of learning achievements.

achievement of specified NQF qualifications and standards. A provider also manages the assessment of learning achievements.

### **Accreditation**

An ETQA may accredit a body that meets the specified criteria, when an application is received. Broadly, accreditation is concerned with the prospective provider's capacity and capability to provide.

### **Criteria for Accreditation**

A body may be accredited as a provider when both the ETQA and the provider have the same primary focus. Accreditation also depends on whether the provider:

- is registered as a provider in terms of applicable legislation
- has a quality management system
- is able to develop, deliver and evaluate learning programmes which lead to specified registered qualifications and standards
- has the necessary:
  - financial, administrative and physical resources
  - policies and practices for staff selection, appraisal and development
  - policies and practices for learner entry, guidance and support system
  - policies and practices for the management of off-site practical or work-site components
  - policies and practices for the management of assessment
  - reporting procedures
  - ability to achieve the desired outcomes, using available resources and procedures considered by the ETQA
- has not already been granted accreditation by or applied for accreditation to another ETQA

**Broadly, accreditation is concerned with the prospective provider's capacity and capability to provide.**

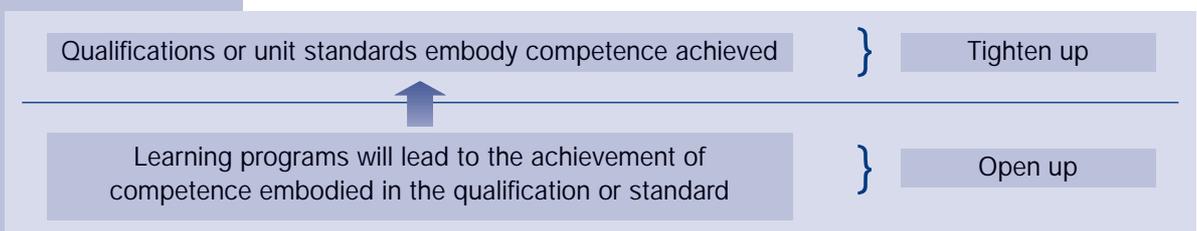
## Concepts in Standards Setting.

### Standards Setting

This section will address the key ideas underlying standards setting, as well as the framework for standards set by the NQF. The key ideas that underlie standards setting are as follows:

#### **An Outcomes-based Paradigm**

In the construction of the NQF, outcomes (standards) have been separated from inputs (learning programs). This is illustrated in Figure 1 below:



### ***Standards setting in this new framework is about the part above the dotted line – the standard.***

What lies below the line is largely the business of professional providers and their clients. Of course, this is where the importance of the interactions between the parts of the NQF becomes clear. The provision of quality learning is the business of the framework, and in particular of special quality assurance (QA) structures called Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs), which will be responsible for overseeing this aspect.

But the setting of standards is about outcomes, and this paradigm shift to distinguishing between outcomes and inputs is central to understanding the NQF. Many people still confuse standards with their own learning programs and think that standards setting is about recording or registering their learning programs.

The learning system South Africa is moving towards will not be one in which learning programs are registered on the NQF. Instead, quality will be a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, there will be national standards (qualifications and unit standards) against which learning will be offered, while on the other hand there will be ETQA processes, which will accredit providers who offer this learning. These two processes together will encompass quality, and allow for freedom of innovation in the delivery of learning programs.

### ***Setting standards for assessment***

Setting standards is a primary tool for ensuring that people are recognised for learning achievements on an objective and transparent basis. By reaching agreements as to the standards required, and by communicating these standards to learners, trainers, educators and assessors, we then have a basis for making assessment judgements in a way that is fair, open, reliable and consistent.

### ***Learner-centredness***

The focus is on placing learners in the centre of the education and training system and of the proceedings. One of the NQF objectives is to create a system that would lead to the full personal development of learners. For NSBs, for example, this idea means that in processing applications to register a particular qualification an NSB will have to ask, ‘in whose interests will this qualification be? Does it serve the purposes of learners, or does it merely serve the interests of a group of providers?’ If the answer is that it really serves the interests of providers only, then the decision may well be not to register the qualification.

### ***Democratisation of Learning and Recognition***

The setting of standards is about making the creation of knowledge more democratic. The new way of generating standards within the NQF is based on an assumption that the diverse groupings can sit down together, talk rationally about issues broader than their own agendas, and finally come up with social contracts that will build a 21st century system of education and training.

SAQA is largely composed of stakeholder structures. The Authority itself is made up of representatives of every South African stakeholder in

**The new way of generating standards within the NQF is based on an assumption that the diverse groupings can sit down together, talk rationally about issues broader than their own agendas, and finally come up with social contracts that will build a 21st century system of education and training.**

One might take this further and say that national standards are the agreed repositories of knowledge about 'quality practice' or competence, as well as about legitimate criteria for assessing such competence.

Education and Training. The NSBs also reflect a new way of operating through partnerships. This constitutes a new set of partners in South African Education and Training. Traditionally, few of these partners have ever sat down and spoken to one another about Education and Training, and yet now, under the auspices of SAQA legislation, these partnerships have become an integral part of the new system.

SGBs are also charged with composing themselves through the forging of partnerships amongst key stakeholder interest groups. Again, this is a new approach for many of those who will be involved.

## A framework for standards

### *What are Standards?*

**National standards<sup>1</sup>:** can be described as specific descriptions of learning achievements agreed on by all major stakeholders in the particular area of learning. (NSB Regulation 2 provides for the registration of national qualifications and standards.) As the NSB Regulations indicate, "unit standard" means "registered statements of desired education and training outcomes and their associated assessment criteria together with administrative and other information as specified". National means that the standards have gone through the SAQA registration process.

One might take this further and say that national standards are the agreed repositories of knowledge about 'quality practice' or competence, as well as about legitimate criteria for assessing such competence.

**Competence:** in turn, might be defined as the application of knowledge, skills and values (Regulation 5(1)(a)) in a specific context to a defined standard of performance.

**Practice:** could be located in any arena, and involve practitioners ranging from the shop floor lathe operator to a professional nurse to an academic historian. In all of these arenas of practice the implicit knowledge of what makes for 'good practice' or competence needs to be made explicit in the form of national standards.

### *What are not Standards?*

This might seem an unusual question to ask. Its importance lies in the origins of standards in other countries around the world.

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1 "Standards" is used here as a generic term covering qualifications, unit standards, and other standards

**Work-based:** When standards first began to gain international prominence, they were largely work-based standards, mostly attached to performance appraisal. Often they were task-based and behaviourist in content, giving priority to observable behaviour at the expense of any underlying characteristics of competence such as knowledge or judgement.

**Curriculum standards:** Later, in the 1980s, a new form of standard began to appear, a curriculum standard. Most notably, at the end of the decade, New Zealand implemented a qualification framework based upon curriculum standards.

Standards are not:

- A statement or syllabus topic to be addressed;
- A course or module;
- A process, e.g. reading an instrument or preparing equipment for a specific task;
- An input, e.g. teaching someone;
- An activity, e.g. demonstrating something;
- A learning process, e.g. understanding or applying knowledge;
- The mastering of a learning objective;
- A score, grade or percentage; or
- A specific entity of knowledge or a unit of knowledge as classified in traditional subject matter syllabi.

In South Africa at least three worlds of practice will want to use national standards:

- **The world of work** will want to use standards for a multitude of purposes. These might range from performance appraisal to recruitment criteria to career 'laddering' to industrial bargaining.
- **The world of curricula** will have other agendas altogether. Although education and training takes place in many places including the world of work, the agenda of the world of work is not an industrial relations agenda, but an educational one. Practitioners in this world require standards against which they can write their curricula.
- **The professional world**, in turn, has different needs from the other two worlds. Professional bodies require standards in order to define what is competent practice so that they can license professionals to practise in South Africa.

## Uses of qualifications and unit standards

The primary uses of qualifications and unit standards are as:

- a guide to learners
- a guide to educators for the preparation of learning material
- descriptions of end points of **learning** (towards which learning should aim)
- descriptions of what must be **assessed**, in what contexts, and the standard of performance required
- a means of **recognising** achievements (records of learning and/or com-

The world of work will want to use standards for a multitude of purposes. These might range from performance appraisal to recruitment criteria to career 'laddering' to industrial bargaining.

The assessment methods must be appropriate for assessing the candidate's knowledge and skills in relation to the benchmarks provided in the qualifications and unit standards.

petence portfolios will indicate what qualifications and unit standards have been achieved by learners)

These primary uses are directly related to SAQA in that the SAQA structures are designed to set up, promote, maintain, and monitor these activities.

Once the outcomes required by the stakeholders have been set in the form of qualifications and unit standards, then it is up to them to use the qualifications and unit standards as a basis for developing people and maintaining and assessing the standards.

Qualifications and unit standards are of primary importance in the development of learning programs and assessment activities. If the titles and specific outcomes are placed in a matrix, these can be used as definitions of what people are expected to know and be able to do at outcome level. Using either a quick skills audit or full assessment of existing competency in relation to the qualifications and unit standards, and combining this with a training needs analysis, the analyst would be able to determine what training is needed among existing personnel. For new trainees, similar procedures could be followed, except that additional analytical tools would be needed to design the learning programme.

### *Using qualifications and unit standards for assessment*

Assessment activities are designed to gather evidence as to whether a person “is able” in relation to the outcome/s being assessed. Decisions are made regarding the most appropriate forms of assessment relative to the outcomes being tested. As far as possible, assessors will seek to ensure assessment of unit standards and of qualifications is as integrated as possible.

In many cases, assessors will not need to design assessment activities at all, but will be able to simply record naturally occurring evidence of ability. For example, as part of a training course, a trainer (who could also be a registered assessor) might require learners to demonstrate competence in a certain area before moving on to the next step. Such evidence of competency can simply be recorded as part of the learner's portfolio, and then be presented for credit. Provided the evidence is valid and complies with the other principles of assessment, no further assessment is required.

For successful assessment, the assessor will need to apply a variety of methods of assessment depending on what is being assessed, e.g., on-the-job tests, observation, simulations, written examinations, continuous assessment, integrated assessment, portfolios, performance appraisals, self and peer assessment, etc. The assessment methods must be appropriate for assessing the candidate's knowledge and skills in relation to the benchmarks provided in the qualifications and unit standards.

The assessment model must be able to produce consistent results and valid outcomes for the skills and knowledge being considered. The task of the assessor is to select the most appropriate form of assessment, and design assessment activities capable of **gathering evidence relative to the outcomes**.

### *Using qualifications and unit standards for developing learning programmes*

Learning programs are developed and implemented in order to enable people to achieve learning outcomes to required standards of performance.

Learning programs could be of a generic, developmental nature, or could be designed to meet a specific purpose, e.g., to bridge a competency gap, to address a skills deficiency, to teach new systems.

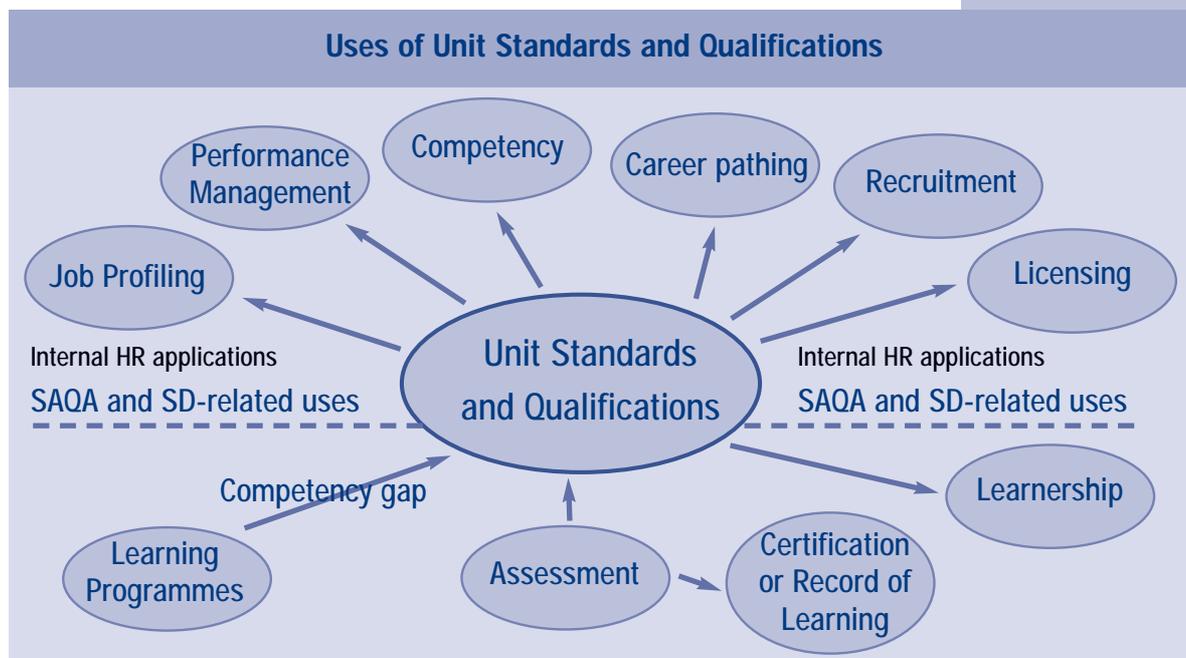
At the risk of stating the obvious, learning programs are designed to address learning needs. The learning need may be seen simply as the gap between desired competence and current competence.

Learning programs are designed based on the inputs required to achieve certain learning outcomes. Input decisions need to take into account a host of factors such as target population, prerequisite learning, sequence of learning, methods and media.

It is possible that different learners might need different types of learning experiences to be able to achieve the same qualifications and unit standards, depending on a variety of factors such as prior knowledge, previous learning experiences, cultural background, availability of technology, learning context, etc. Indeed, it may be desirable to design the learning programme in such a way that the individual learners have choices, but the same outcome and standard of performance is attained and measured at the end.

### ***Other uses of qualifications and unit standards***

Organisations may, however, attach other uses to qualifications and unit standards registered on the NQF. Examples of other uses are: competency-based remuneration (CBR), recruitment, job profiling (JP), performance management (PMS), promotion, career pathing and licensing. It should be emphasised that while qualifications and unit standards registered on the NQF will be useful to facilitate all the above, these are not SAQA or related uses, and will rather be internal/organisational uses.



It should be emphasised that competence management is not the same as performance management. The NQF is about competence management, i.e., the NQF provides us with the means to describe the competence required (qualifications and unit standards) and the means of measuring this compe-

tence (assessment). People who achieve a unit standard or a qualification are therefore considered competent in terms of that unit standard or qualification. They are capable of performing to a required standard. This does not necessarily mean that people will perform at their level of competence in the workplace - hence the need for supervisors and managers and performance management systems.

Perhaps one of the single greatest challenges facing a South African national qualifications framework is the following. If standards come to be written exclusively in any one of these worlds, then they will not be applicable to the other two worlds, and the country will end up with three separate frameworks. In other words, if standards are written as curricula, they will not necessarily be useful for designing performance appraisal systems. Similarly, if standards are written as performance appraisal, they may well not be suitable for professional usage. *In other words, standards must be generated in such a way that they will act as an anchor to which these three worlds can tie the design of their own practices.*



**Figure 2.**

Figure 2 illustrates this concept in graphic form. The standards in the centre act as the anchor to which the other three worlds tie the design of their practices. This formulation assumes that a layer – **design** – lies between the standards and the world of practice. Professional curriculum experts will use standards to design curricula, but the standards themselves are not curricula. Professionals in the world of work will use standards to design work-based programs, but the standards are not these programs; professional bodies will define their licensing requirements against standards, but the standards are not themselves licensing prescriptions.

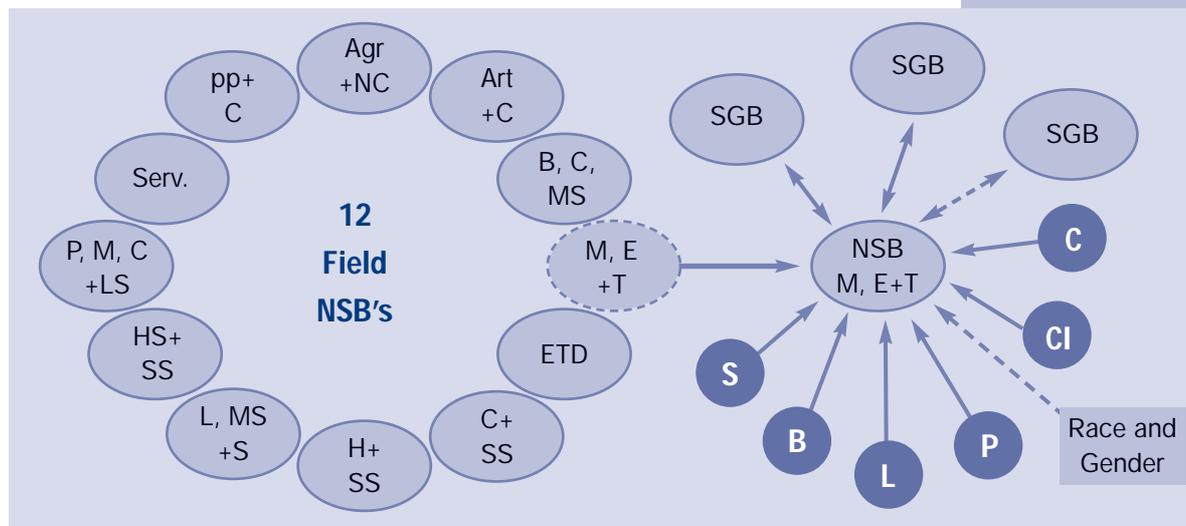
## Respective Roles and Functions of NSBs and SGBs

### Introduction

In section 2, we pointed to the two main functions of SAQA:

- standards generation and registration, and
- quality assurance

It is our intention in this next section to focus on standards generation. Of importance here will be the relative roles of NSBs and SGBs.



### System and Structure

As shown in the drawing above, there are 12 Organising Fields. For each, there is an NSB to represent the interests of the field in the generation and recommendation for registration of qualifications and unit standards. NSBs are essentially stakeholder groupings with specific expertise play the role of wise elders, and cannot expect to have all the required and expertise to generate standards for every sub-field. It is important that the 6 stakeholders – State, Business, Labour, Providers, Community and Critical Interest Groups – are represented in NSBs.

SGBs are recognised by the NSB as sources of expertise in sub-fields. They are not necessarily representative of the 6 stakeholder groupings, but rather of the subject matter expertise in the area as well as a vision of a transformed education and training system. It is the intention that SGBs themselves have the relevant expertise to complete the actual task of standards generation.

The section below focuses on the roles of NSBs with respect to SGBs and the role of the SGB.

### National Standards Bodies (NSBs)

Because NSBs recognise and/or establish SGBs, and are ultimately responsible for the standards submitted and recommended, it is important to have

ETQAs will be accredited by SAQA in economic, social, or education and training sub-system sectors to ensure that providers in those sectors have the capacity and capability to deliver learning programmes towards the achievement of registered qualifications and/or standards.

some understanding of the role and functions of NSBs in relation to those of SGBs. The general composition, membership and functions of both bodies have been outlined in the previous section. NSB Regulations published on 28 March 1998 governs NSBs in detail].

## Key Roles of NSBs in Relation to SGBs

The National Qualifications Framework offers an opportunity to enhance the quality of education, training and assessment in South Africa.

The quality assurance system that SAQA will manage through its National Standards Bodies (NSBs) and Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs) includes:

### *The Registration of Qualifications and Standards*

Registration occurs to ensure that the standards and qualifications that are registered are relevant, up to date and acceptable to major stakeholder and user groups.

To this end, the **NSB** will ensure that:

- the proposals for qualifications and unit standards meet the NQF's transformational objectives of access, portability, and articulation as well as the other technical requirements for registration,
- all consultation-process requirements have been met, and qualifications and standards are registered

**SGBs** will be recognised and/or established by NSBs to:

- undertake the generation of qualifications and standards including processes designed to consolidate the range inputs of the many qualifications and standards generation processes underway in South Africa,
- initiate qualifications and standards generation within the framework of sub-fields, and

### *Accreditation of Providers*

ETQAs will be accredited by SAQA in economic, social, or education and training sub-system sectors to ensure that providers in those sectors have the capacity and capability to deliver learning programmes towards the achievement of registered qualifications and/or standards.

### *Moderation of Assessment*

To ensure consistency in the assessment of registered qualifications and standards, organisations accredited to act as ETQAs, for example the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) set up in terms of the Skills Development Act of 1998, will:

- devise assessment plans and suggest moderation options in that sector
- register the (workplace) assessors who will implement the sector's assessment plans

### *Quality Audit*

ETQAs will ensure the effective performance of overall systems for the management of quality.

This manual focuses on the requirements and criteria which SGBs will apply in co-ordinating standards generation in South Africa preparatory to

presenting them to NSBs for pre-registration endorsement.

The design, recording and registration of qualifications and standards are discussed in the next section of this document.

## Guiding Principles for NSBs and SGBs in Setting of Standards

The bodies responsible for setting NQF standards are involved with the following:

- 2.1. Consultation: NSBs, and their SGBs, must consult widely with those who have an interest in their area.
- 2.2. Relevance: Qualifications and standards must be relevant to the requirements and needs of all their users.
- 2.3. Transferability: NSBs and their SGBs must promote the recognition of transferable skills to assist learners who may need to change their learning or career direction.
- 2.4. Efficiency and Accessibility: NSBs and their SGBs must *set and maintain* standards, and wherever possible keep costs down.
- 2.5. Innovativeness: Standards generation is a dynamic process. NSBs and their SGBs must accommodate innovation that derives from changing technology, new products, services, markets, skills and knowledge in their specialist areas.
- 2.6. Broad Focus: NSBs and their SGBs must consider the impact of their planned outputs on all levels of the NQF. Although the focus of an SGB's standards generation may be at a particular level, the implications for all levels must be considered.
- 2.7. Minimal Duplication: It is a fundamental principle of the NQF that every qualification and standard will be unique. If a standard is to be used in several qualifications, the NSBs and users concerned must agree on its form, and not create their own versions.

## Generation of Standards – Stages in the Process

NSBs will oversee the generation and registration of standards in the organising field for which they are responsible. The locus of standards generation will be in broadly representative SGBs. The NSBs will undertake the recommendation of standards. In the case of both standards generation and registration, SAQA's full-time NSB Co-ordinators facilitate the process by providing the administrative support necessary for both NSBs and SGBs to complete their work to SAQA's schedules.

The standards setting process proceeds through three separate stages.

### Stage 1 – Analysis and Planning

- Each NSB will monitor SGB activities to ensure that the skills and knowledge required in its field is captured.

Standards generation is a dynamic process. NSBs and their SGBs must accommodate innovation that derives from changing technology, new products, services, markets, skills and knowledge in their specialist areas.

- NSBs will then develop a plan which will include a:
  - i Description of how Unit Standards will be developed
  - ii List of the number and type of qualifications and standards that will be developed
  - iii List of immediate priorities
  - iv Timetable for the generation of qualifications and standards and the phasing out of any old or redundant qualifications.

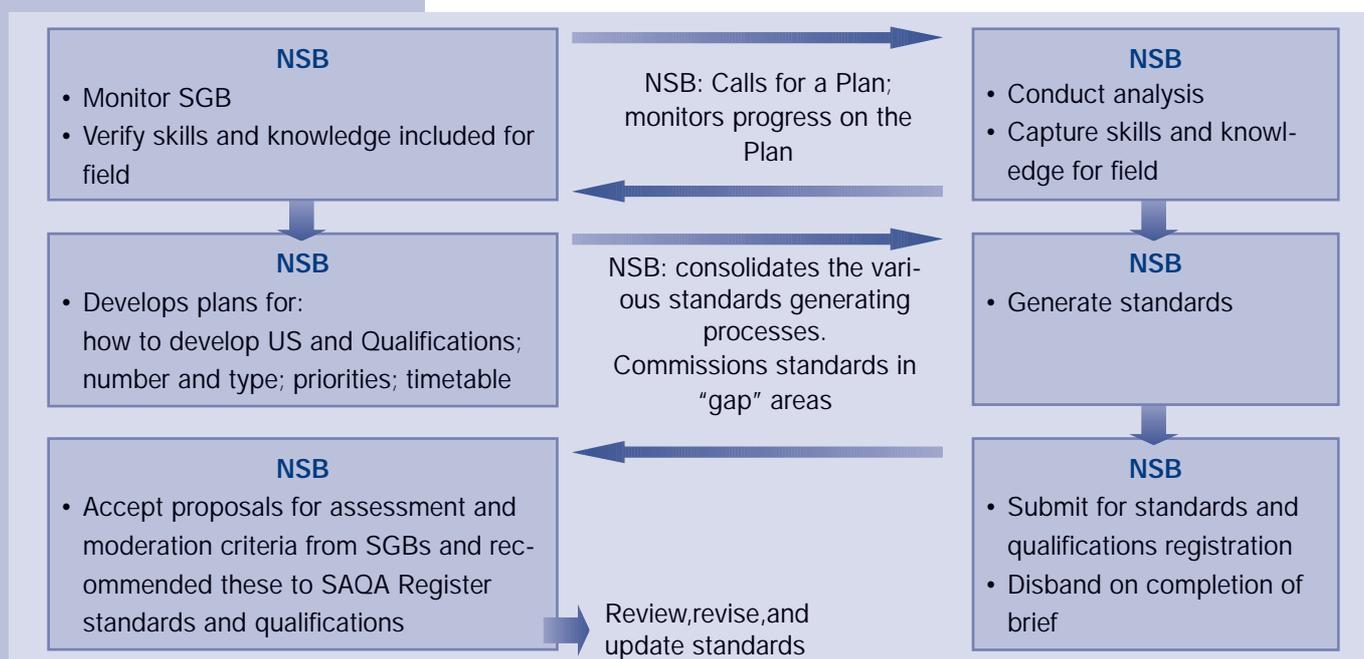
### **Stage 2– The Development of qualifications and standards**

- Each NSB will co-ordinate the development of its qualifications and standards by recognising SGBs which must:
  - Adopt , adapt or originate standards in a sub-field, or
  - Facilitate the consolidation of existing standards and/or qualification generation processes in the sub-fields for which it is responsible.
- Where no standards generation processes are underway, NSBs, through the appropriate SGB, will commission the adoption, adaptation or generation of qualifications and standards.

### **Stage 3 – Quality Assurance**

- Each NSB will:
  - i Propose the quality assurance system requirements for the quality of learning delivery and the assessment it will require for its qualifications and standards
  - ii Endorse accreditation and moderation proposals from ETQAs (under the guidance of SAQA)
- Each NSB will continuously and systematically review, revise and update the qualifications and standards in the organising field for which it is responsible.
- To ensure that the quality of qualifications and standards in the NQF remains high, SAQA will audit the standards setting work of each NSB and SGB.

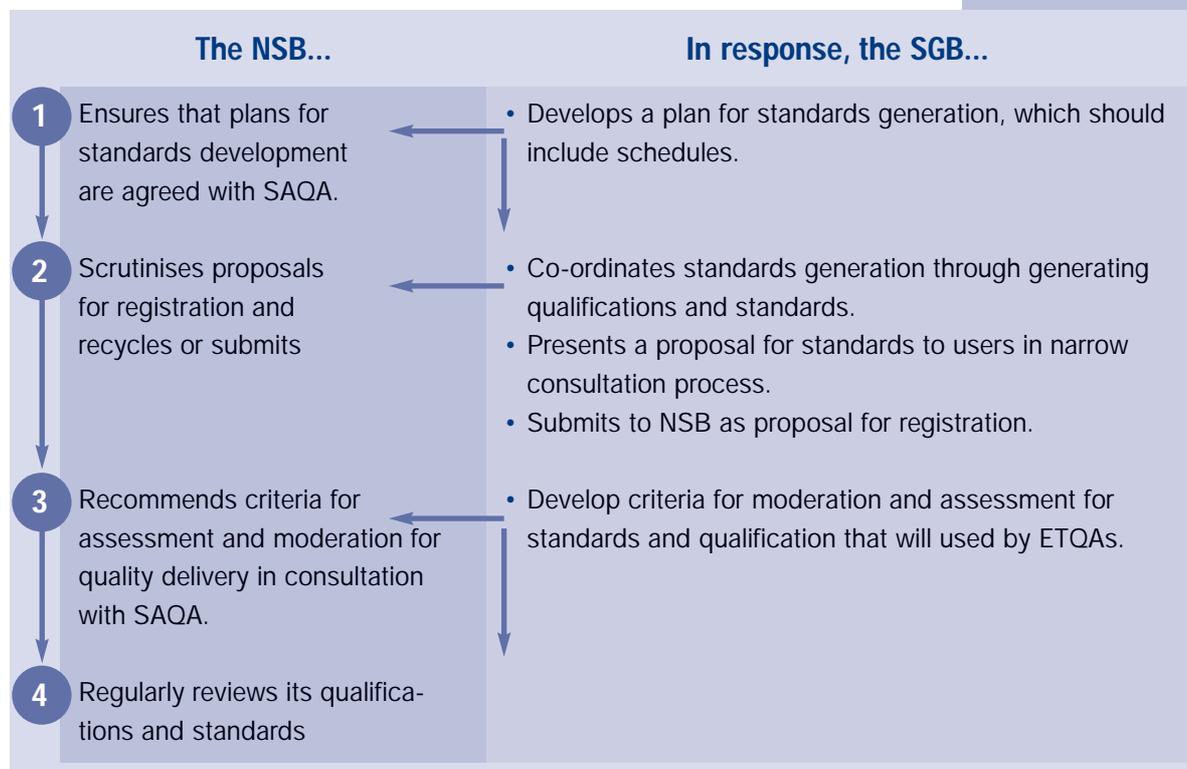
The following flow diagram summarises the steps above.



## Generating Registered Standards: NSBs AND SGBs

In the national standards setting process, NSBs and SGBs will have definite roles. The roles are clearly linked in that the SGB 'responds' to an NSB role.

The discrete roles are outlined in the table below:



## Performance Requirements of NSBs and their SGBs

NSBs are appointed by SAQA to recommend the registration of standards and qualifications. In the context of each of the activities NSBs will need to undertake to achieve this objective are a range of tasks which will need to be performed by SGBs. The outcomes of SGB activities in relation to NSB tasks are described here.

### **NSB Task 1: Establish and/or recognise SGBs**

In responding to this NSB task, the SGB will have to satisfy the NSB in these key areas:

#### ***i. Does the prospective SGB fall within the NSB scope?***

SGBs will need to examine the defined scope of the NSB's field. Once this has been done, the SGB's task of locating its place in the NQF system should be relatively straightforward. While SAQA has published a list of sub-fields for all 12 NSB.

#### ***ii. Is the prospective SGB properly formed?***

Once identified, the SGB should be formed in terms of SAQA's guidelines and criteria, and a chairperson should be elected.

In responding to these tasks, an SGB must reassure the NSB that the skills and knowledge analyses that foreshadow standards development adequately cover the sub-field for which the SGB is responsible. The SGB should present a detailed plan that shows how the entire development process will be completed.

### **iii. Is there support for the SGB ?**

An SGB should demonstrate support within the sub-field to generate standards and qualifications.

### **iv. Are the SGB processes aligned with those of the NSB?**

The SGB endorses (and recommends) the NSB process it will use to develop qualifications and standards proposals and secure the support of users.

#### **NSB Task 2: Agree with SAQA a plan for qualifications and standards development**

and

#### **NSB Task 3: Ensure Skills and Knowledge Analyses completed to requirement.**

In responding to these tasks, an SGB must reassure the NSB that the skills and knowledge analyses that foreshadow standards development adequately cover the sub-field for which the SGB is responsible. The SGB should present a detailed plan that shows how the entire development process will be completed.

SGBs are not responsible for a sub-field. They are responsible for the generation of qualifications and standards as stated in their different briefs. The project plan that an SGB proposes must include at least:

- a list of priorities
- a development timetable, and
- a list of trends, and training gap

In respect of the standards writing process, the following issues should be addressed in the plan:

#### **a. Plans for the process of standards generation:**

The plan should include:

- Information that standards writers will need, such as:
  - needs-analysis outcomes, and
  - how the SGB will go about generating the standards

#### **b. Plans for the production of the standards title matrix:**

The process the SGB intends to follow for co-ordinating the generation of a standards titles matrix must be clearly articulated.

#### **c. Evaluation of the standards titles matrix:**

Plans must make provision for establishing and using a consultative network for inputs and proposals around qualifications and standards already undertaken in the sub-field. This input is key to the evaluation of the matrix.

#### **d. Standards writing:**

The plans will outline the process for the generation of standards by the writers.

#### **e. Recommendation to NSB for registration:**

The plan will outline the process to be followed for the submission of standards to the NSB for recommendation to SAQA.

A similar process will need to be followed in respect of qualifications, with the addition of a plan for confirming the transition arrangements from current qualifications to new.

**NSB Task 4: Specify Quality Requirement for Delivery of Standards.**

In response to this NSB Task, the SGB should present a plan to the NSB that recommends how the NSB will, in co-operation with providers and SAQA (or its ETQA functionaries):

- Check on the quality of standards; and
- Maintain the integrity of the standards in their delivery.

Plans should include at least a plan for:

- i. The development of appropriate systems of assessment
- ii. The moderation of assessments
- iii. The accreditation of providers

**NSB Task 5: Promote qualifications and standards.**

Each SGB should produce a plan showing how the qualifications and standards developed by the NSB will be promoted to users, including: state departments, economic and social sectors, providers of education, training and assessment services, businesses and learners

**NSB Task 6: Review qualifications and standards**

NSBs should present SAQA with regular scheduled reports of progress in:

- qualifications and standards development and uptake by users
- the implementation of quality assurance plans
- the promotion of qualifications and standards

The reports should also include a listing of amendments, updates completed and reviews undertaken of qualifications and standards.

To ensure that NSBs and SGBs function as required, SAQA should agree to a plan for the regular quality audit of NSBs and SGBs by independent auditors appointed by SAQA for the task.

## Identification and appointment of SGBs by NSBs

The process of registering an interest in becoming an SGB.

- Step 1:** An interested group completes the form (attached in Appendix 3) and sends it to SAQA. Documents supporting the application are included.
- ↓
- Step 2:** The NSB Co-ordinator considers the details. Major stakeholders are consulted to ensure other significant players in the sub-field are not excluded.
- ↓
- Step 3:** The NSB meets with the applicants and other interested parties to ensure the roles and responsibilities of an SGB are clearly understood and acceptable.
- ↓
- Step 4:** A more detailed application is lodged with the NSB.
- ↓

Each SGB should produce a plan showing how the qualifications and standards developed by the NSB will be promoted to users, including: state departments, economic and social sectors, providers of education, training and assessment services, businesses and learners

**Step 5:**

The application is Gazetted and publicly advertised over a 30-day period. Other interested parties are encouraged to consult with the applicant through the NSB Co-ordinator attached to the NSB. An example of such an application is included below:

STAATSKOERANT, 24 DECEMBER 2000

No. 20751 17

No. 808 25 June 1999

**PUBLIC NOTICE BY NSB 11, SERVICES, OF AN APPLICATION TO REGISTER AN SGB FOR HYGIENE AND CLEANING SERVICES**

NSB 11 has received an application to recognise and register an SGB for Hygiene and Cleaning Services.

**Proposed Brief of the SGB**

1. Develop learning pathways for potential qualifications and unit standards in Hygiene and Cleaning [Regulation 24(1)(e)].
2. Generate the following qualifications in accordance with SAQA requirements for NOF levels 1, 2, 3 and 5 in support of the learning pathways in 1 above:
  - National Certificate in Hygiene and Cleaning Services – Level 1
  - National Certificate in Hygiene and Cleaning Services – Level 2
  - National Certificate in Hygiene and Cleaning Services – Level 3
  - National Diploma in Hygiene and Cleaning Services – Level 5
 [Regulation 24(1)(a)].
3. Recommend the qualifications and standards generated in 2, above, to NSB 11 (Services) [Regulation 24(1)(c)].
4. Recommend criteria for the registration of assessors and moderators or moderating bodies [Regulation 24(1)(d)].
5. Perform such other functions as may from time to time be delegated by NSB 11 (Services) [Regulation 24 (1)(e)].

---

COMPOSITION OF THE SGB

*List of Names and Organisations*

**Step 6:**

The NSB Co-ordinator in consultation with the applicant recommends other interested parties either join the applicant or become part of a consultative network.

**Step 7:**

The NSB recommendation is endorsed by SAQA and the NSB appoints the new SGB. The new SGB then becomes the body with which the NSB works to set and maintain standards within the specialist area defined in the application. An example of this gazette notice is included on the following page:

**In order to accomplish the above...**

...The NSBs will need to examine applications against a set of criteria. The document in the next section provides the basis for such an examination.

**Functioning of an SGB**

One of the biggest challenges facing SAQA, and indeed the whole national skills development process as described in the SAQA and Skills

Development Acts, is that of affordability. Different models must be considered to determine the most viable model. Failure to do this could result in the collapse of the system.

### ***Critical Steps***

Although there are two different routes to appointing an SGB, the essential steps – or what needs to be done – are the same. These steps are listed below, not necessarily in chronological order:

#### **Conduct a *scoping exercise*:**

This important first stage establishes the boundaries for the sub-field and provides the focus for standards generation and the design of qualifications. It also enables proper timelines and project costing to be developed.

#### **Conduct an *outcomes analysis of the system*:**

Work processes and/or roles are examined and all the knowledge and skill requirements captured.

#### **Describe a *titles matrix*:**

The Titles Matrix is an overview of the sub-field expressed in terms of the outcomes required of people working and acting in the field. This matrix will vary from one SGB application to another.

#### **Secure *stakeholder participation*:**

Participation is not only a cornerstone of SAQA's approach, but essential if the relevance of qualifications and standards is to be ensured.

#### **Secure *appointment as SGB*:**

This stage is essential if standards are to be registered and nationally accepted.

#### **Develop a *business plan*:**

The process of standards generation must be systematic and controlled. This is important to control both cost and time taken in generation, as well as to avoid duplication of effort.

#### **Grow the *capacity of participants*:**

It is important that standards generation processes are not the preserve of the few, but that participation of the group is informed and meaningful. This will almost certainly imply formal training for most in what is a new area of expertise.

#### **Generate *qualifications and standards*:**

Using what is readily available is an important principle for effective use of resources.

#### **Critique *emerging unit standards*:**

While many SGBs will use skilled writers from amongst the ranks of the SGB to formulate what the group decides, it is important that the whole group is able to participate meaningfully in the quality assurance process.

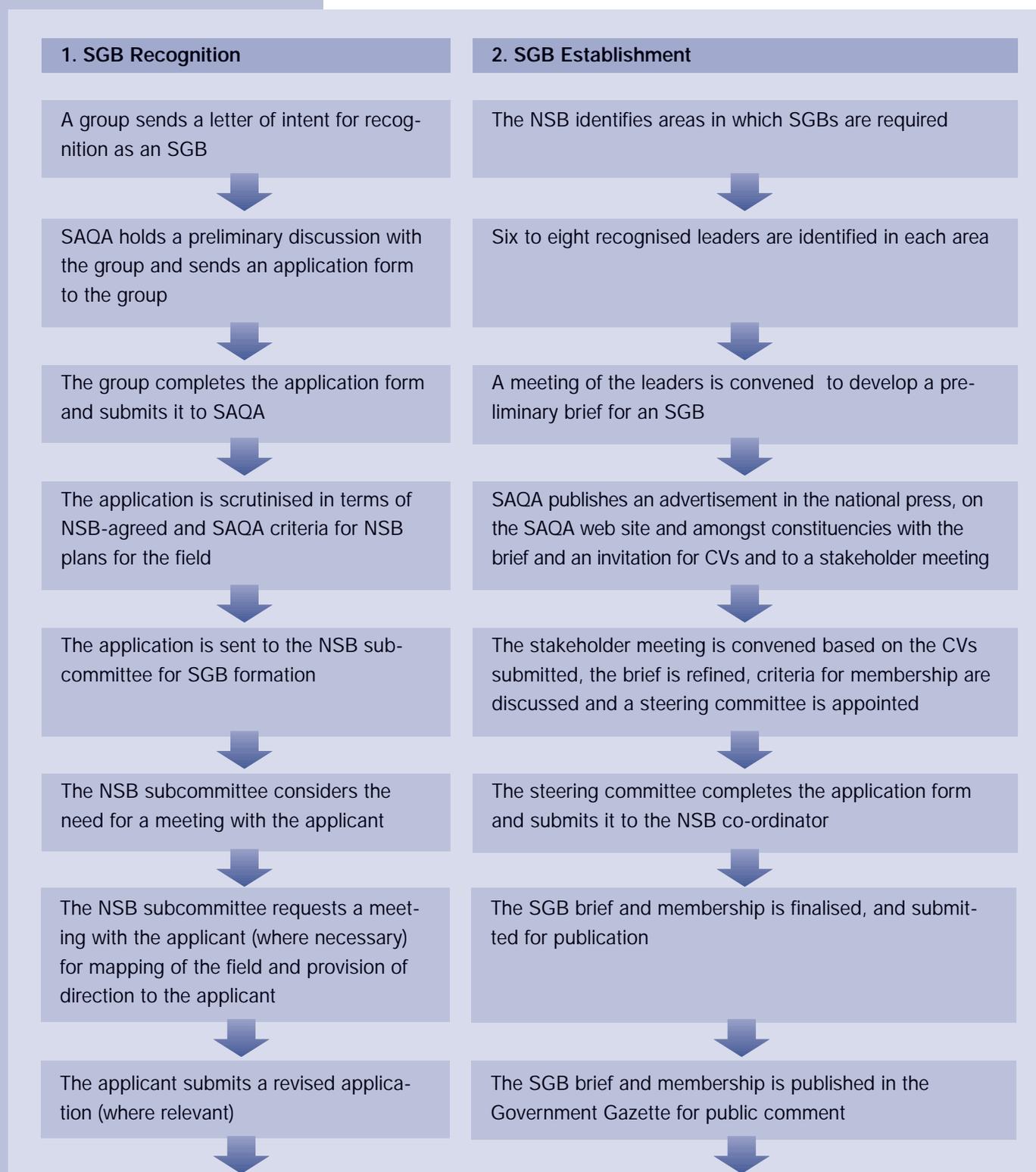
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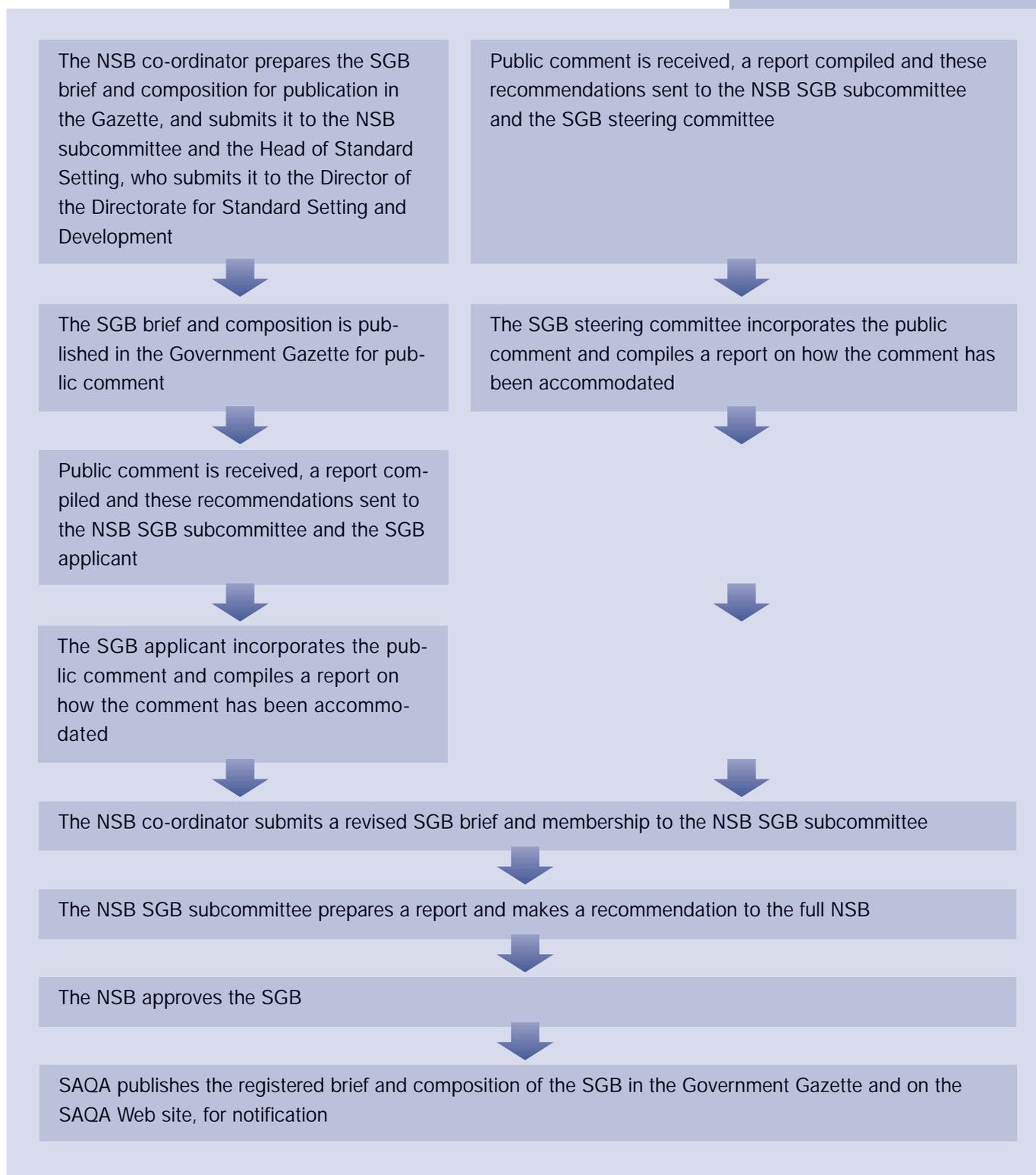
**Submit qualifications and standards for recommendation:**

The NSB is the body that recommends the qualifications and standards to SAQA for registration on the NQF.

**Options for consideration**

The reality of standards generation in South Africa is that there are many different approaches and initiatives in existence. SAQA's challenge is to integrate these without wasting effort already expended or compromising quality. The following approaches are possible for SGB work:





### *Implications of the options*

#### **For SAQA as an institution:**

As a general principle, SAQA will encourage as much initiative from the field as possible. To make this possible, SAQA will adopt a highly efficient service orientation and be ready with:

- advice,
- capacity building, and
- pro forma examples

Whether the SGB is formed via a fast tracking or general recognition route for purposes of recognition by an NSB, or via an NSB route (that is, through establishment by the NSB), once formed it operates as a legal, independent entity with its own unique identity according to criteria laid down in the NSB Regulations.

SAQA's purpose will be to guide and facilitate the process of recognition of SGB's. Building capacity will be a key concern. Of particular importance will be the:

- training of people to work with and generate standards
- training in and assistance with project management
- actual writing of the standards from the information supplied by subject matter experts in the sector
- critiquing of emerging standards for internal coherence and quality control

#### ***Of the Fast-track Recognition Approach:***

This model has a number of advantages if properly managed. Not the least of the advantages would be to encourage the proactive effort of those who have attempted to implement the Acts without coercion. The advantages would include:

- existing work rooted in practice and developed for 'real' needs
- much of the expensive analysis and writing time paid for
- existing capacity and a 'case study' in the sector
- fewer, shorter and more effective SGB meetings

#### ***Of the General Recognition Approach:***

The process usually begins with a champion in one of the organisations within a group of organisations in a sector. The advantages of this approach are:

- the sector has a momentum, for whatever reason, and this is likely to facilitate the entire formation and generation process
- the task of including stakeholders, which can otherwise be costly, is done in the field through existing contacts
- the preliminary analysis and scoping would also be carried out in the field
- the SGB can decide on the working groups that are 'fit for purpose' in and across the various sectors
- the SGB will investigate external funding options (including SAQA) open to it

SAQA will examine business plans carefully to ensure that:

- sectors receive and act on good advice
- genuine capacity building takes place
- expensive meetings are kept to a minimum, and that they are all working meetings with clear and attainable objectives
- funding is realistic without being crippling.

#### ***Of the Establishment Approach:***

The advantages are that:

- strategic areas can be addressed directly
- qualifications and standards can readily be aligned with the SAQA vision
- SAQA can manage the process from the beginning.

Disadvantages and challenges will include the realities that

- this option is dependent on SAQA funding; and
- this approach will stretch NSB capacity from a resources perspective.

#### ***Purpose of this explication***

What this section has attempted to do is to outline the basic differences

between SGB recognition and establishment as these processes (are likely to) play themselves out in reality. The intention is neither to convey that the ultimate beneficiaries of the first two approaches outlined are the specific institutions or sectors which initiate SGB formation nor that SGB recognition cannot come about except through a fast tracking approach or a the general recognition approach. Rather, SGB recognition is rooted in and derives from a context which influences how an SGB is formed. Whether the SGB is formed via a fast tracking or general recognition route for purposes of recognition by an NSB, or via an NSB route (that is, through establishment by the NSB), once formed it operates as a legal, independent entity with its own unique identity according to criteria laid down in the NSB Regulations.

### Conclusion

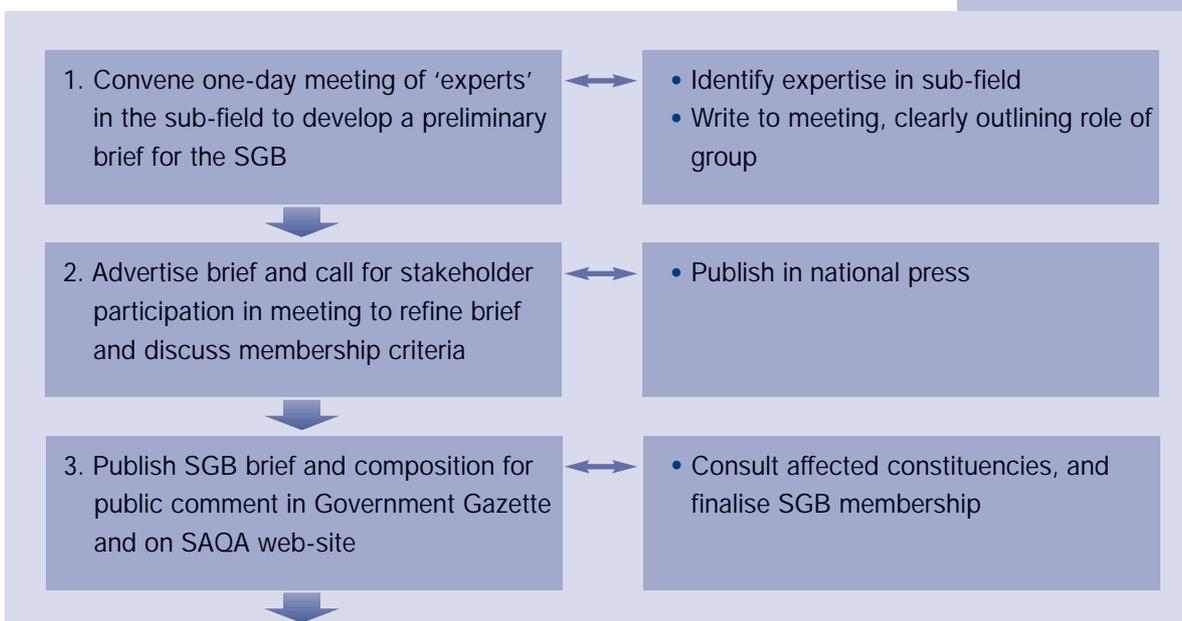
The challenge is to devolve functions as quickly as possible. This implies proper planning, capacity building and quality assurance. The next part of this paper will focus on the process for appointing SGBs.

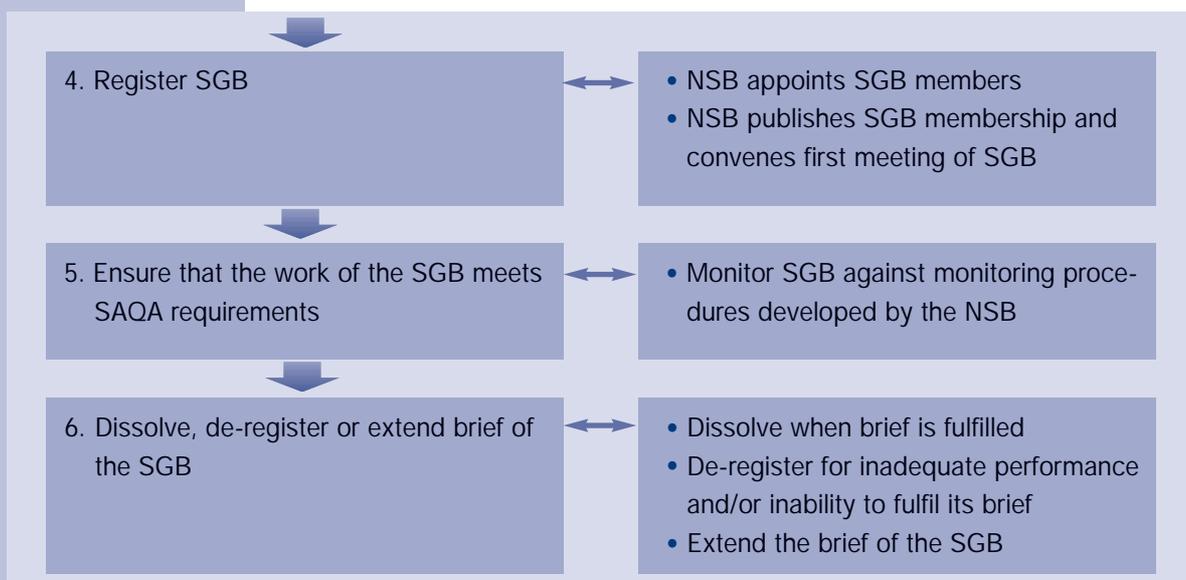
## SGB Applications – Process and Criteria

In this section we outline the process and criteria for SGB applications. ISAQA developed a detailed document, which can be obtained from the Directorate Standards and Development that spells out how organisations can apply. There is also a SGB Application Pack to assist prospective SGB applicants.

### Process for SGB Establishment

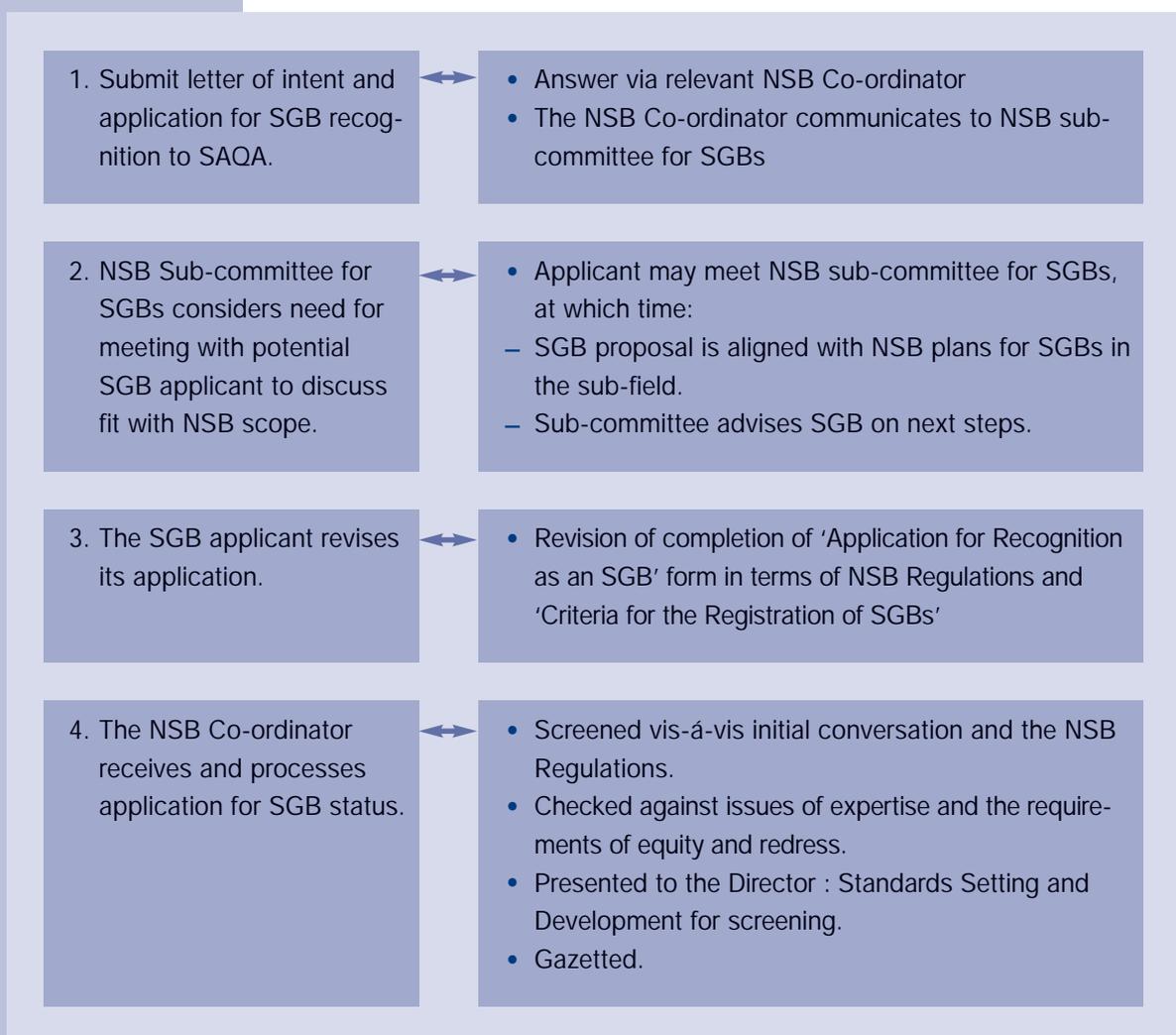
When the establishment of the SGB is a SAQA initiative, the following process – outlined in the flow diagram below - is an abbreviated form of the process SAQA will follow. The complete version is in the SGB Application Pack.

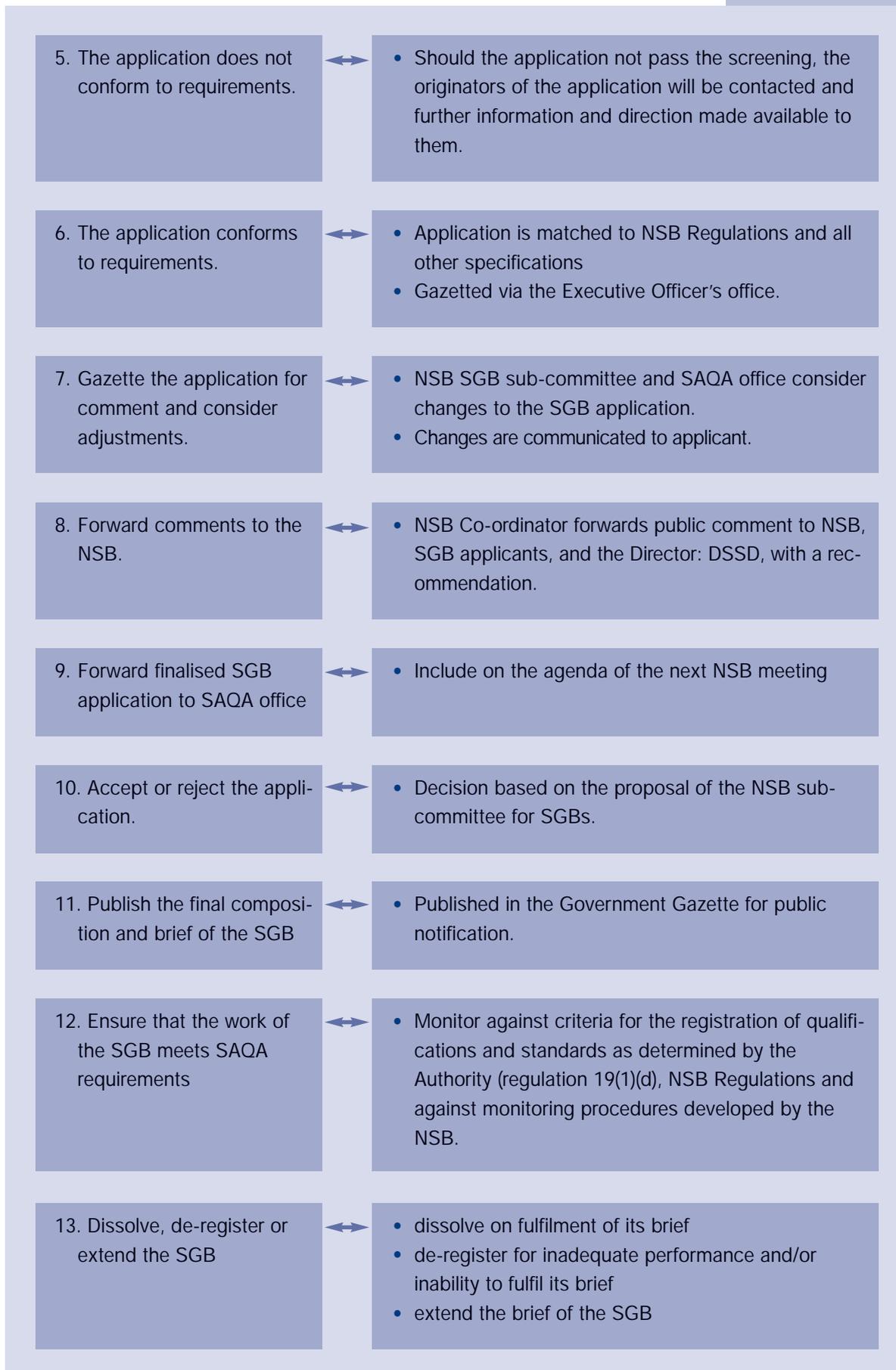




### Process for SGB Recognition

When the initiative for the SGB comes from an enterprise or a sector, then SAQA will go through a process to recognise the SGB. The process for recognition outlined in the flow diagram below is an abbreviated form of the process SAQA will follow. The complete version is in the SGB Application Pack.





**SEND APPLICATIONS TO:**

Director: DSSD  
 Postnet Suite 248  
 Private Bag X06  
 WATERKLOOF, 0145

**MARKED:**

Standards Generating Body  
 Application  
 Attention: Head, Division of  
 Standards Setting

**Guidelines for the application to become an SGB**

The criteria to be used in considering applications for SGB recognition include:

- Name of SGB.
- Organising field.
- Sub-field(s).
- Names of qualifications or standards to be generated.
- Projected time to generate qualifications and standards.
- Outline of the process for forming the SGB (including the consultation and negotiating process).
- Supporting documentation.
- Representivity of members on the SGB in terms of gender and race.
- Details of credibility of the SGB with regard to experience, expertise and respect in the sub-field.
- List of members to form the SGB and their stakeholder interest groups (including brief CVs of members).
- Business Plan (which should include communications and marketing strategy, budget and timeline) and indication of funding possibilities.
- Declaration: (we hereby accept that a decision of SAQA is final and binding, after an appeal has been heard by the Authority):
- Declaration of understanding that the SGB shall dissolve on completion of its brief:
- Date of application.
- Name of authorised person submitting the application.

***NSB DECISION***

The NSB will base its decision to accept or reject the application on the information supplied. It will then authorise the SGB to perform the following functions:

- To develop learning pathways for potential qualifications and standards for...
- To generate standards and qualification on levels...
- To recommend these standards to the NSB
- To recommend criteria for the registration of assessors and moderators or moderating bodies.
- To update and review standards as required.
- To perform such other functions as may be required from time to time by the NSB.

**In the event that the application is not recommended, the reasons and/or recommendations will be provided**

**Generating Standards and Qualifications.**

**I**n this section we elaborate the definitions of standards and qualifications and give an indication to the reader what is required when generating standards and qualifications.

## What is a Unit Standard?

A unit standard can be described as a set of registered statements of desired education and training and their associated assessment criteria, together with administrative and other information.

In other words, a unit standard is an end-statement of the achievement of a certain competence, as well as being a building block for possible qualifications.

### **Definition:**

A unit standard is a document that describes:

- a coherent and meaningful outcome of learning (title) that we want recognised nationally,
- the smaller more manageable outcomes that make up the main outcome (specific outcomes),
- the standards of performance required as proof of competence (assessment criteria), and
- the scope and contexts within which competence is to be judged

The information on the following pages must be specified for every unit standard:

### **Parts of a Unit Standard**

#### **1. Unit standard title**

*Form:*

- The title of the unit standard is unique
- That is, the title is different from any other title registered on the NQF.
- The title provides a concise yet comprehensive and pointed indication of the contents of the unit standard.
- The title contains a maximum of 100 characters including spaces and punctuation.

#### **2. Unit standard level**

- The level assigned to the unit standard is appropriate in terms of the complexity of learning required to achieve the standard (as described in SAQA's Level Descriptors).
- The level is appropriate in relation to the learning pathway/s within which the unit standard is located.

**Note:** Fundamental or Core standards in particular may form part of many different learning pathways.

#### **3. Credit attached to the unit standard**

- The definition of a credit is that 1 credit = 10 notional (assumed) hours of learning.
- The credit assignment reflects the average length of time the average learner might take to complete the learning leading to the achievement of the standard.

#### **4. Field and sub-field of the unit standard**

- The Fields of Learning have been indicated in Part 3, and the possible sub-fields in Appendix B.

**A unit standard can be described as a set of registered statements of desired education and training and their associated assessment criteria, together with administrative and other information.**

- Unit standards must be located within the sub-field and organising field.
- Where there is more than one sub-field or organising field to which the standard might apply, this must be clearly indicated and justified, either here or in the brief of the SGB that generated the standard.

## 5. Purpose of the unit standard

- The format of entries under the heading Purpose follow on from the statement:

**‘Persons credited with this unit standard are able to...’**

The *Purpose* of a unit standard includes its specific outcomes together with a concise statement of the contextualised purpose of the unit standard and what its usage is intended to achieve for:

- the individual
- the field or sub-field
- social and economic transformation

- These entries are phrased as:

**Verb + object + modifying phrase(s) (if required)**

### Example:

‘Analyse and determine remedial action for continuous production process problems’

- The purpose statement succinctly captures what the learner will know and be able to do on the achievement of the unit standard.
- The sub-outcome entries are ‘bulleted’ for easy reading purposes.

### Example:

‘Analyse remedial action for ...’

‘Determine the ...’

## 6. Learning assumed to be in place

- There is a clear relationship between the credit value of the standard and the learning assumptions.
- [This is the learning assumed to be in place if the learning required to achieve the standard is to be completed in the assigned credit time]
- The statement captures and reflects the knowledge, skill and understanding ‘building blocks’ which are assumed to be in place and which support the learning towards the achievement of the unit standard under consideration.

## 7. Specific Outcomes

- The format of entries under the heading Specific Outcomes follows on from the statement:

**Persons credited with this unit standard are able to:**

and these entries are phrased as:

**Verb + noun + modifying phrase(s)**

### Example:

‘Describing how information technology can be integrated into adult basic education and training’

- There are **usually** between 4 and 6 specific outcomes.  
[More than six **may** indicate that there is more than one purpose that the standard is trying to address. Fewer than four **may** indicate that the purpose of the unit standard is too narrow].
- The specific outcomes together reflect and capture the purpose of the unit standard in ways that are measurable and verifiable.
- The specific outcome statements focus on *competence outcomes* and avoid describing specific procedures or methods used in the demonstration of competence. This ensures that unit standards:
  - have broad and inclusive applicability
  - avoid frequent review and overhaul because of procedural or methodological shifts in tendencies
  - focus on competence outcomes for learning and performance, not descriptions of tasks or jobs
- The specific outcomes avoid evaluative statements where possible.  
[Statements reflecting the quality of performance are located in the assessment criteria].

## 8. Assessment criteria

- The format of entries under the heading Assessment criteria follow on from the statement:

**We will know that you are competent to...**

[insert specific outcome]

**if or when...**

[insert assessment criterion]

- Where there is a product, the assessable or measurable criteria for the product may include:
  - accuracy
  - finish / presentation
  - completeness (written information)
  - legibility (written information)
  - clarity (written / spoken information)
  - availability for use / location
- Where work organisation / work role is critical the assessable or measurable criteria for the way work is carried out may include:
  - time / speed / rate
  - schedule
  - procedures involving processes or methods
  - cost effectiveness
  - user specifications or needs
  - optimisation of resources
  - health and safety
  - hygiene
  - confidentiality / security
  - dress / appearance
  - language and behaviour
  - creation and maintenance of effective relationships
- The criterion statement sets the guidelines for developing particular assessment tasks at learning programme or services level rather than reflecting check lists for one or more assessment instruments.

The specific outcome statements focus on competence outcomes and avoid describing specific procedures or methods used in the demonstration of competence. The specific outcomes avoid evaluative statements where possible.

The assessment criteria must be sufficiently transparent to ensure ease of understanding across a range of learning providers, learning services and learners.

- The criteria capture the requirements for fair, valid and reliable assessment procedures that make use of tools and methods appropriate to the organising field, sub-field, level, category and the unit standard being registered.
- The assessment criteria capture the underlying and embedded knowledge base that allows the learner to reflect achievement of the unit standard (through the reflective and repetitive application of that knowledge, skill, ability and value achievement within a range of contexts).
- The assessment criteria must be sufficiently transparent to ensure ease of understanding across a range of learning providers, learning services and learners.

### 9. Range statements

- The range statements relate directly to specific outcomes, assessment criteria or even the standard.

*Note:* Not all specific outcomes or assessment criteria require range statements.

- There must be a clear relationship between range statements, the specific outcomes, the purpose of the unit standard, and the assessment criteria delineated for the unit standard.

### 10. Notes

- This category contains:
  - General Notes
  - Critical cross-field outcomes as well as
  - Embedded knowledge.

#### *Embedded Knowledge:*

- The format of entries follows on from the statements:
  - I/Learners can understand and explain...
  - I/Learners can apply...

and these entries are phrased as

**Noun + modifying phrase(s)**

#### **Example:**

‘Integration of information technology and adult basic education and training’

- Where there is an embedded knowledge section it comprises a statement of the knowledge base required for competent performance and achievement of the unit standard, representing what the learner has to understand and be able to explain in the area (sub-field) at the particular level.
- The embedded knowledge statement includes demonstrations of knowledge of the classificatory systems operating in the area and at the level of the unit standard.

#### **Example:**

Understanding of the Linnaean classificatory system in the identification of plants and animals.

**Critical Cross-Field Outcomes:**

- Critical Cross-Field Outcomes are in a ‘matrix’ format that indicates how each outcome is addressed in the standard. The matrix captures the relationship of the purpose, specific outcomes, and embedded knowledge to the critical cross-field outcomes.

The Critical Cross-Field Outcomes are the following:

- identifying and solving problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made
- working effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community
- organising and managing oneself and one’s activities responsibly and effectively
- collecting, analysing, organising and critically evaluating information
- communicating effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written persuasion
- using science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others
- demonstrating an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation
- contributing to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the society at large, by making it the underlying intention of any programme of learning to make an individual aware of the importance of:
  - reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
  - participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
  - being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
  - exploring education and career opportunities;
  - developing entrepreneurial opportunities

**General Notes:**

- The *general notes* act as a range statement for the whole standard. They include:
  - definitions of terms
  - legislation and regulations
  - general information of value to assessors and learning providers

**What is a Qualification?**

A qualification can be defined as a planned combination of learning outcomes with a defined purpose or purposes, intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning.

Two types of qualification are provided for in the NSB regulations. One is based on exit-level outcomes and associated assessment criteria, while the other is a qualification based on unit standards. Both are equally valuable;

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Another key to defining a qualification – as opposed to a unit standard – is credit size:

‘A total of 120 or more credits shall be required for registration of a qualification at levels 1 to 8, with a minimum of 72 credits being obtained at or above the level at which the qualification is registered (RSA, 1998)<sup>2</sup>’.

### *What information should a qualification contain?*

#### **A Qualification Title**

The title should provide a brief indication of the contents of the qualification and has to be unique - that is, different from any other title registered on the NQF.

#### **Qualification type**

Three aspects should be specified:

- **Name, band, and level:** for example, *Further Education and Training Certificate, Level 3*; or *First Degree* (by definition Higher Education and Training [HET] band), Level 6.

A National First Degree carries a credit weighting of 360 or more credits, with at least 72 credits at or above level 6. It should also satisfy both the requirements for the registration of qualifications outlined above and the criteria delineated in the level descriptors for the level at which the Degree is registered.

- **Area of practice:** for example, HET Certificate, Level 5, Nursing; or, First Degree, Level 6, Human & Social Sciences.
- **Specific purpose:** for example, HET Certificate, Level 5, Nursing, Midwifery; or, Masters Degree, Level 7, Mechanical Engineering, Structures.

#### **Relevant field/s and sub-field/s**

The plural use of the terms above should make it clear that any qualifications may be relevant in more than one field or sub-field.

#### **Credits required**

Two issues need to be addressed here:

- Total credits required for the award of the qualification and the minimum and maximum number of credits at various levels.
- Credit specifications in the categories fundamental, core and elective - which the NSB Regulations define as follows:
 

“Fundamental learning” means that learning which forms the grounding or basis needed to undertake the education, training or further learning required in the obtaining of a qualification;

2 RSA (1998a). “Regulations under the South African Qualifications Authority Act. 1995 (Act No. 58 of 1995)” Government Gazette No. 18787 (28 March). Pretoria Government Printer.

“Core learning” means that compulsory learning required in situations contextually relevant to the particular qualification; and

“Elective learning” means a selection of additional credits at the level of the National Qualifications Framework specified, from which a choice may be made to ensure that the purpose of the qualification is achieved.

## Purpose

This is a concise statement of the purpose of the qualification. It should address the following questions:

- What value has been added to the qualifying learner in terms of enrichment of the person through the provision of status, recognition, credentials and licensing; enhancement of marketability and employability; and opening up of access routes to additional education and training?
- What benefits are provided to society through enhancing citizenship, increasing social and economic productivity, producing specifically skilled and/or professional people, and transforming and redressing legacies of inequity?
- In what way does the qualification address the objectives of the NQF?

## LEVELS

There is not a great deal of difference between allocating levels to qualifications based on exit-level outcomes or to qualifications made up of unit standards.

- *Qualifications based on exit-level outcomes*

At what NQF level does the most advanced exit-level competence seem to reside?

- *Qualifications based on unit standards*

Here the consideration is based on a mix of two factors: at what level do the unit standards reside; and at what level does the process of integrating the overall outcomes seem to reside?

For more details regarding levels, please see the SAQA draft document ‘Towards the Development of Level Descriptors: A Guide for Writers of Standards, Unit Standards, and Qualifications’, available from the SAQA office or in SAQA Bulletin 2.1 (1998), on the SAQA web-site under ‘Publications’.

## FUNDAMENTAL, CORE AND ELECTIVE LEARNING

NQF Levels 1-4

- The qualification category Fundamental must contain a minimum of 20 credits from the field of Communication Studies and Language, and a minimum of 16 Mathematical credits.
- The categories Core and Elective must between them contain a minimum of 52 credits: a minimum of 36 credits at level 1 and 52 at levels 2-4 between core and electives [Regulation 9 (1)(b)]
- [NQF Levels 5 – 8](#)

The number of credits required for Fundamental, Core and Elective learning must be specified, with reasons provided for number and distribution.

- [Qualifications based on unit standards](#)

It is fairly common to confuse the above three categories of learning with the notions of compulsory and optional. The following example may help to address this confusion: an SGB may prescribe certain unit standards in a qualification as compulsory, which span the fundamental, core and elective categories of learning.

## Exit level outcomes

This category must capture the planned combination of learning outcomes -

**A qualification should ideally provide learners with manifestations of all the critical cross-field outcomes. How this is achieved within the qualification needs to be explained (in other words, it is insufficient to merely tick off the outcomes). Should it be inappropriate for the qualification to cover certain critical outcomes, a motivation to this effect should be provided.**

both specific and critical - that are required for competence at the particular level of qualification. Specific outcomes are those that are specific to the qualification's purpose.

A qualification should ideally provide learners with manifestations of all the critical cross-field outcomes. How this is achieved within the qualification needs to be explained (in other words, it is insufficient to merely tick off the outcomes). Should it be inappropriate for the qualification to cover certain critical outcomes, a motivation to this effect should be provided.

### **Learning assumed to be in place**

This is a statement that captures the learning base required for learning or achievement within the parameters of the particular qualification being registered.

Often confused with prerequisites, 'learning assumed to be in place' is not meant to fulfil a 'gate-keeping' function with regard to programs. Rather it is a mechanism for transparency – allowing learners to know what knowledge, skills and attitudes are reasonably assumed to be in place prior to their embarking on learning programs against particular qualifications. Nothing in this category precludes the recognition of prior learning.

### **Integrated assessment**

At qualification level, integrated assessment criteria relate to the demonstration of achievement of the qualification.

This is a set of statements that provide the guidelines for developing particular assessment tasks, at learning, programme or services level. The guidelines must allow assessors to develop formative and summative methods related to credentialing purposes appropriate to contextual and situational readings of candidates presenting themselves for the recognition of learning achievements. In addition, the criteria should allow for a range of assessment methods being used in assessing achievement in the learning programs.

- The criteria must capture the requirements for fair, valid and reliable assessment procedures that make use of tools and methods appropriate to the organising field, sub-field, level, and qualification being registered.
- The assessment criteria should allow the candidate to reflect achievement through the use of integrative assessment methods and criteria which ensure that both the purpose and the achievement of the qualification are able to be met across a range of contexts and circumstances, reflectively and repetitively.
- Specific and particular statements of the assessment criteria should be transparent and ensure ease of understanding across a range of learning providers, learning services and learners.

### **Criteria for the registration of assessors**

This category will additionally contain criteria for the registration of internal and external assessors in the sub-field.

### **Moderation options**

These will include the recommendation of moderation mechanisms, as well as of a moderating body or bodies. Such mechanisms and bodies must meet

the requirements for transparency, affordability and development of the field, sub-field and framework. NSBs and SAQA will have to ensure coherence and the avoidance of duplication across moderation criteria, bodies and mechanisms.

### Articulation possibilities

Two types of articulation may be specified:

- **Specific:** where agreements or accords are in place that grant recognition of credit from one qualification to another, or part of another, these should be noted.
- **Generic:** where the achievement of this qualification opens up possibilities for further learning or credit recognition, these possibilities should be noted.

The differences in format between qualifications based on unit standards and qualifications based on exit-level outcomes in the submission for registration should be noted. Formatting of qualifications based on unit standards requires the addition of a twelfth category to the eleven outlined above.

### Rules of Combination

The category entitled Rules of Combination either specifies or is a function of the titles of the unit standards according to the appropriate categories (fundamental, core and elective) for which credit is required before attainment of the qualification. Rules of Combination will be drawn from SGB and NSB recommendations according to the level and band of learning within which the qualification falls.

It should be noted that a qualification submitted for registration would not have to specify all the unit standards which would eventually ensure achievement of the qualification. Only those standards that are prescribed would be specified – others may be left up to the discretion of the provider or the learner.

### *SAQA additions to qualification submissions for registration*

On registering a qualification, SAQA will add **two further categories** to the information listed:

#### Issue Date

This is the date on which the Authority registers the qualification on the NQF. It acts as the benchmark date against which providers will be evaluated and registered according to the requirements for quality learning programs and services and the assessment of achievement as captured and reflected in the qualification.

#### Review Date

This reflects the period of time for which the registered qualification will be operational and before which a review and re-registration has to take place.

The review period is currently set at three years, with applications for re-registration being due in the first half of the third year of registration. SAQA's own internal systems will be used to alert NSBs to those qualifications which are due for review and, therefore, those qualifications and/or standards generating processes which have to be reactivated.

**NSBs and SAQA will have to ensure coherence and the avoidance of duplication across moderation criteria, bodies and mechanisms.**



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