



## INVITATION TO COMMENT

### REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON SAQA'S INTENTION TO RECOGNISE A PROFESSIONAL BODY AND REGISTER ITS PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS

In accordance with the *National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008* (Act No. 67 of 2008) and the South African Qualifications Authority's (SAQA) *Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation for the Purposes of the National Qualifications Framework Act, Act 67 of 2008 (2023)* referred to as the *P&C for professional bodies*, SAQA invites comment from interested parties on the following application received to recognise a professional body and register its professional designations.

#### 1. RECOGNITION OF A PROFESSIONAL BODY

The public is invited to comment on SAQA's intention to recognise the Professional Body listed below and register its professional designations:

##### 1.1 FIELD GUIDES ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (FGASA)

The evaluation focused on the following key areas as set out in the criteria:

Governance, Management and Sustainability  
Disciplinary Matters and Accountability  
Data Management  
Continuing Professional Development  
Awarding of Professional Designations

Professional designation title
Certified Field Guide
Certified Professional Field Guide
Certified Trails Guide
Certified Professional Trails Guides
Certified Master Trails Guide

The detailed FGASA application, seeking recognition, is available on the SAQA website at [saqa.org.za](http://saqa.org.za).

Public comments regarding the above must reach SAQA no later than 30 working days after publication of this Notice. All correspondence must be addressed to Mr JHA Nel, Senior Manager: Registration and Recognition at e-mail addresses: [fmakhafola@saqa.org.za](mailto:fmakhafola@saqa.org.za)/[tmokoena@saqa.org.za](mailto:tmokoena@saqa.org.za).

**MS NADIA STARR**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
**SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY**



**REGISTRATION AND RECOGNITION UNIT**

**EVALUATION REPORT FOR THE RECOGNITION OF PROFESSIONAL BODIES AND  
REGISTRATION OF PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS**

<b>Name of Professional Body</b>	Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA)
<b>Statutory or Non-Statutory Body</b>	Non-Statutory
<b>Sector</b>	Hospitality, Tourism, Travel, Gaming & Leisure
<b>Physical Address</b>	Block B, The Farmery R257 Hoedspruit
<b>Application Signed by CEO / Registrar/ Board Chairperson</b>	Yes
<b>Number of Designations Applied for</b>	5
<b>Date of Site Visit</b>	24 February 2026
<b>Date of Publishing</b>	



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PROFESSIONAL BODY RECOGNITION AND PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION REGISTRATION</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>DESKTOP EVALUATION REPORT</b></p>
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**NAME OF BODY:** Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA)

**Background**

FGASA was established in 1990 as result of a growing need for standardised training and professionalism in the nature guiding industry of Southern Africa, and to establish a body to regulate and elevate the standards of the profession. In 2004, FGASA was registered with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) as a non-profit company (NPC). In October 2023, following the SAQA registration end date of legacy qualifications for guides coupled with a call from the industry, FGASA's Board of Directors took a decision to apply for a SAQA recognition.

FGASA has formed sound partnerships, and collaborates with various industry stakeholders, including tourism boards, lodges, and conservation organisations, to promote the profession of nature guiding and ensure its sustainability. By focusing on these areas, FGASA continues to play a vital role in shaping the future of nature guiding in Southern Africa and ensuring that the region's natural and cultural heritage is preserved for generations to come.

The objective of FGASA is to promote, encourage and protect the interest of members and, to promote the common interests of its members in carrying on their occupation as tourist guides, nature guides, wildlife trackers and/or representatives of the tourism, nature and conservation sectors through, inter alia:

- providing support and resources for continued professional development;
- providing career and mentorship support and opportunities and supporting the development of a national career advice system;
- recognising suitable workplaces and training providers;
- assisting the development of curricula for learning programmes and qualifications;
- setting and assessing professional board examinations and practical assessments;
- awarding professional designations;
- developing and/or quality assuring qualification/s required for the awarding of professional designations;
- building networks for members and professionals;
- maintaining, developing, encouraging, and monitoring a high ethical standard of conduct amongst its members, and issuing and enforcing a code of conduct to maintain professional behaviour, including disciplinary measures;
- lobbying government for relevant policy change in the tourism, nature and conservation sectors by promoting or opposing legislative or other measures connected with or effecting the Tourist Guide, Nature Guide and Wildlife Tracker industry;
- promoting fair access to the profession for people from all backgrounds and encouraging the provision of alternative access routes into professional designations through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL);
- if deemed desirable by the company in general, meeting, joining or becoming a member or an associate of, or affiliate to anybody or other association whose objects are wholly or in part similar to those of the company;
- dealing with such matters as may affect the common interests of the members and encouraging leading international professional practise.

## Compliance summary table

No	Item	Yes	No
1	Legally Constituted Entity	✓	
2	Good Corporate Governance Practices	✓	
3	Transformation	✓	
4	Human Resources	✓	
5	Premises	✓	
6	Financial Resources	✓	
7	Awarding of Professional Designations	✓	
8	Recognition of Prior Learning	✓	
9	Continuing Professional Development	✓	
10	Membership Database	✓	
11	Career Advice Information	✓	
12	Code of Conduct and Protection of the Public	✓	
13	Education and Training	✓	
14	The Proliferation of Professional Bodies	✓	
15	Professional Designations	✓	
16	Application fees	✓	

### 1. Area of concern

None.

### 2. Areas of improvement

None.

### 3. CRITERIA FOR RECOGNISING A PROFESSIONAL BODY

Registration and Recognition Unit evaluated the application against the *Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation for the Purposes of the NQF Act*. FGASA was found to meet the criteria for recognising a professional body listed below:

#### 3.1 Legally Constituted Entity

FGASA is a Non-profit Company (NPC) registered with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) on 03 May 2024 with registration number 2004/003844/08. There are five (5) directors on the FGASA CIPC registration certificate.

The following document(s) were submitted:

- CIPC registration certificate.
- CIPC disclosure certificate (2025).
- CIPC Memorandum of Incorporation (MOI).
- List of designated members.

#### 3.2 Good Corporate Governance Practices

FGASA submitted the following documents:

- Terms of Reference of the Board.
- Minutes of the Board meeting (19 & 20 June 2024).
- List of Board members.

- FGASA has a Board of Directors (Board) which is responsible for the business affairs of the company.
- The Board is led by the chairperson who is responsible for effective governance and strategic direction of FGASA.
- The Board appoints a Managing Director upon such terms and conditions and for such period as it shall determine in its sole discretion.
- The Managing Director reports to the Board and assists the Board with the day-to-day operations of the company.

- The Board consists of a minimum of three (3) persons and a maximum of ten (10) elected to office by the Regional Representatives Forum on behalf of the voting members in terms of the MOI, provided that:
  - included in the number of directors, the Managing Director shall serve as a director of the company, ex officio;
  - at least three of the directors shall not be 'connected persons' as defined in the Income Tax Act in relation to one another; and
  - no single person may directly or indirectly control the decision-making powers of the company.
- Elected directors, in addition to satisfying the qualifications and eligibility requirements to become a director of the company, are required to be members in good standing with the company and have served at least two years on a regional committee.
- Except for ex officio directors, directors serve terms of two (2) years each beginning from the date of their appointment and retire at the meeting of directors following the expiry of each term of office, provided that the appointment and resignation of directors are staggered so that at least one third of the elected directors retire each year.
- Directors who are retiring are eligible for re-appointment for a maximum of one (1) further consecutive term of office, but once this maximum is reached must then take a break in service from the Board of at least one (1) year before they may be re-appointed as directors.
- The Board may appoint other committees of directors and delegate to any such committee any of the authority of the Board; and/or include in any such committee persons who are not directors.
- The authority of a committee appointed by the Board is limited and restricted to the extent that the powers of the company are limited by the MOI.

### 3.3 Transformation

FGASA submitted its Transformation Policy.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to lay out the steps and commitments FGASA will undertake to:

- Promote equity, diversity, and inclusion within the field guiding profession.
- Ensure that historically disadvantaged individuals (HDIs) have equitable access to training, mentorship, and career advancement opportunities.
- Establish a professional body that reflects the demographics of South Africa.
- Contribute to the broader transformation agenda of the environmental and ecotourism sectors.

#### Principles Guiding Transformation

- **Inclusivity:** Actively welcoming and supporting individuals from all demographic groups, especially those who have been historically marginalised.
- **Equity:** Creating fair access to opportunities, resources, and support for those who have faced systemic barriers.
- **Sustainability:** Ensuring that transformation efforts are not temporary but embedded in the long-term strategy of the organisation.
- **Transparency:** Communicating openly about FGASA's transformation objectives, strategies and progress.
- **Collaboration:** Engaging with government bodies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), private sector partners, and local communities to foster transformation across the industry.

#### Membership Diversity

FGASA will actively work to increase the representation of underrepresented groups, particularly black South Africans, women, and individuals from rural communities, in its membership. This will be achieved through:

- **Outreach Programs:** Targeting historically disadvantaged communities and providing information about field guiding as a viable and rewarding career.
- **Scholarship and Bursary Programs:** Offering financial support for training and certification to historically disadvantaged individuals (HDIs) who are interested in becoming professional field or trail guides.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Collaborating with educational institutions, NGOs, and community organisations to raise awareness about career opportunities in field guiding.

### Training and Capacity Building

To promote an inclusive guiding profession, FGASA will focus on:

- **Subsidised Training:** Providing subsidised training programs for HDIs, particularly in rural areas, where access to field guiding education is often limited.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Establishing mentorship networks where experienced guides mentor and support new guides from underrepresented groups, helping them navigate the industry.
- **Leadership Development:** Creating specialised leadership development programs for HDIs to foster future leaders within the industry

### Employment Equity

FGASA will work with industry partners, including lodges, game reserves, and tour operators, to promote fair hiring practices that prioritise diversity and inclusion. This includes:

- **Employment Quotas:** Encouraging employers to adhere to the Employment Equity Act and establish voluntary employment quotas that reflect the demographics of the country.
- **Skills Development:** Partnering with employers to ensure that HDIs receive on-the-job training and opportunities for advancement within their careers.
- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** Actively promoting RPL pathways for individuals with informal guiding experience, particularly those from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds, to gain certification and advance their careers.

### Governance and Leadership

To ensure that transformation is embedded at all levels of FGASA, the association will:

- **Diversify Leadership:** Actively work to diversify the leadership structures of FGASA by recruiting Board members, committee members, and staff from underrepresented groups.
- **Transformation Committee:** Establish a Transformation Committee to oversee the implementation of this policy, track progress, and report on achievements and challenges.
- **Partnerships and Collaborations:** Collaborate with other professional bodies, conservation agencies, and government departments to align FGASA's transformation efforts with national transformation goals.

### Industry Transformation Advocacy

FGASA recognises that transformation within the field guiding profession cannot happen in isolation. Therefore, the association will go through:

- **Industry Advocacy:** Advocate for transformation within the broader ecotourism, conservation, and wildlife management sectors.
- **Community Engagement:** Engage with local communities, particularly those adjacent to conservation areas, to promote field guiding as a career and create pathways for community members to enter the profession.
- **Supplier Development:** Support the development of Black-owned businesses in the field guiding supply chain, including uniform providers, equipment suppliers, and transport services.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

FGASA is committed to regularly reviewing the progress of its transformation efforts. This will be done through:

- **Annual Reporting:** Publishing an annual transformation report that outlines progress against the goals outlined in this policy, highlighting successes, challenges, and areas for improvement.
- **Data Collection:** Gathering demographic data on its membership, training program participants, and certified guides to track transformation progress.
- **Stakeholder Feedback:** Conducting regular surveys and consultations with stakeholders, including members, employers, and community organisations, to ensure that the policy remains relevant and impactful.

### Demographic composition of the Board

Gender	Black	Indian	Coloured	White	Total
Male	1	0	0	3	4
Female	0	0	0	1	1
Total	1	0	0	4	5

### 3.4 Human Resources

FGASA submitted its Staff Organogram.

FGASA has 12 staff members, comprising nine (9) full-time employees and three (3) part-time employees.

Demographic composition of staff members

Gender	Black	Indian	Coloured	White	Total
Male	2	0	0	1	3
Female	4	0	0	5	9
Total	6	0	0	6	12

### 3.5 Premises

FGASA submitted a Lease Agreement. According to the lease, FGASA is located at Block B, The Farmery R257 Hoedspruit.

### 3.6 Financial Resources

- FGASA submitted its independently reviewed financial statements for 2022, 2023, and 2024.
- The review conclusion is that nothing has come to the attention of the reviewer that causes him/her to believe that these financial statements do not present fairly, in all material respects the financial position of the Field Guides Association of Southern Africa NPC as at 29 February 2024, and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-sized Entities and the requirements of the Companies Act of 2008.
- FGASA generates income from sale of goods, subscription fees, and examination fees.

### 3.7 Awarding of Professional Designations

FGASA submitted the following documents:

- Policy and criteria to develop, award, monitor, and revoke designations.
- Designation application form.

Purpose

- FGASA develops professional designations to establish clear and recognised standards for knowledge, skills, and ethical conduct within the guiding profession.
- These standards serve as benchmarks for professional practice, ensuring that designation holders meet the expectations of clients, employers, and conservation organisations.
- The designations aim to enhance the quality of guiding services, contribute to positive visitor experiences, and support conservation outcomes.
- They promote responsible tourism practices that align with environmental sustainability and cultural sensitivity.

Development Process: Needs Analysis and Stakeholder Consultation

- The development process begins with a comprehensive needs analysis, identifying gaps within the guiding and eco-tourism sectors and anticipating future trends.
- FGASA collaborates with stakeholders — including conservation agencies, eco-tourism operators, government bodies, academic institutions, and industry experts — to ensure that the designations address the evolving needs of the profession.
- Each professional designation is built upon a detailed competency framework that outlines the specific knowledge, technical skills, and ethical behaviours required for effective practice.
- These frameworks are aligned with appropriate NQF levels, ensuring that each designation reflects the depth and complexity of competencies required.
- FGASA benchmarks its professional designations against equivalent qualifications and certifications internationally.
- This benchmarking ensures that the designations meet global standards, enhancing their portability and recognition across borders.
- RPL is integrated into the designation development process to ensure inclusivity and accessibility.
- By providing an alternative pathway to professional recognition, RPL enables individuals with substantial informal or experiential learning to demonstrate their competencies.

- The process includes rigorous assessments—such as interviews, practical demonstrations, and portfolio reviews—to validate prior learning effectively.
- All new professional designations undergo thorough evaluation by FGASA's Professional Standards Committee (PSC).
- The committee assesses the relevance, validity, and alignment of the designation with industry requirements and NQF standards before approving.

#### Awarding criteria

- **Educational Qualifications:** Candidates must complete relevant accredited training programs or possess equivalent qualifications recognised through RPL. Educational qualifications form the foundation of the awarding process, ensuring that candidates have the necessary theoretical knowledge.
- **Practical Experience:** Candidates must provide documented evidence of practical fieldwork, including detailed logbooks, supervisor endorsements, and client testimonials. This evidence verifies that candidates have effectively applied their knowledge and skills in real-world contexts.
- **Demonstrated Competencies:** Candidates are required to demonstrate their competencies through rigorous assessments, including theoretical examinations, practical evaluations, and portfolio reviews. Assessments are conducted by FGASA assessors to ensure that candidates meet the competency standards specified for the designation.
- **Ethical Compliance:** Candidates must commit to FGASA's Code of Conduct, which emphasises professionalism, conservation ethics, and respect for cultural diversity. Ethical compliance is assessed through interviews, declarations, and ongoing monitoring.

#### Application and Assessment Process

- **Application Submission:** Candidates submit a comprehensive application, including all required documentation—such as educational certificates, evidence of practical experience, and references.
- **Assessment of Applications:** Accredited assessors review applications to verify that candidates meet the eligibility criteria. The assessment process ensures fairness, consistency, and adherence to FGASA's standards.
- **RPL Assessment:** For candidates pursuing the RPL pathway, assessments involve evaluating prior learning through evidence submissions, interviews, and practical demonstrations. The process validates competencies against the standards of the desired designation.
- **Decision and Notification:** Successful candidates are awarded the professional designation and receive certificates detailing their scope of practice, level of expertise, and validity period. Unsuccessful candidates are provided with feedback and guidance on areas for improvement.

#### Monitoring of Professional Designations

- **Purpose:** Monitoring ensures that designation holders maintain their competence, ethical behaviour, and compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. It supports the integrity of FGASA's professional designations and promotes continuous improvement.

#### Criteria for Revoking Professional Designations

##### Grounds for Revocation:

- **Non-Compliance with CPD:** Failure to meet CPD requirements or to provide evidence of ongoing professional development.
- **Violation of Ethical Standards:** Breaches of FGASA's Code of Conduct, including unethical behaviour, misconduct, or actions that harm clients, wildlife, or the environment.
- **Legal Infractions:** Convictions for offences that impact the individual's ability to practice, such as poaching, fraud, or operating without proper licenses.
- **Falsification of Qualifications:** Providing false information regarding qualifications, experience, or competencies.

#### Revocation Process

- **Initiation of Proceedings:** Revocation proceedings are initiated upon receipt of credible evidence or formal complaints.
- **Investigation:** The Professional Standards Committee (PSC) conducts a thorough investigation, ensuring fairness, transparency, and impartiality.

- Notification and Response: The designation holder under investigation is notified in writing and allowed to respond to the allegations.
- Decision Making: The PSC evaluates all evidence before reaching a decision. Sanctions may include probation, suspension, or revocation of the designation.
- Communication of Outcome: The decision is communicated in writing, outlining the reasons and any conditions for potential reinstatement.

### 3.8 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

FGASA submitted the following documents:

- RPL policy.
- Evidence of RPL implementation.

The purpose of the RPL policy is to:

- ensure that designated guides can gain formal recognition without holding a formal qualification.
- highlight FGASA's stringent quality assurance processes and commitment to robust evaluation methods, including theoretical examinations and practical assessments.
- provide an interim mechanism until fully registered occupational qualifications become available.

Absence of Formal Registered Qualifications

- The guiding profession currently relies on unit standard-based skills programmes rather than registered qualifications.
- This situation complicates the formal recognition of learning and career progression.
- FGASA's RPL policy is intended to mitigate this issue by providing a recognised pathway to professional designations while FGASA pursues recognition.
- Once the occupational qualifications become available, FGASA will adopt them as the standard basis for awarding designations.

Scope of the policy

This RPL policy applies to:

- Individuals seeking professional designations who do not hold existing, NQF-registered occupational qualifications.
- Existing FGASA-certified guides who will transition into professional designations based on their historical assessments, which already include theoretical and practical evaluations.
- Assessors, moderators, and administrators involved in the RPL process.
- Employers, training providers, and stakeholders who have an interest in how RPL is conducted and validated.

Roles and Responsibilities

- FGASA sets the criteria, appoints qualified assessors, and maintains quality assurance systems.
- Assessors are trained to apply consistent standards, ensuring that both theoretical examinations and practical assessments reflect the competencies required.
- Moderators verify that outcomes are fair and consistent.
- Candidates are required to provide adequate evidence and be prepared to undertake theoretical and practical evaluations.
- Employers and other stakeholders may support candidates by confirming their experiences and endorsing their readiness.

Evidence Requirements for RPL Candidates

- RPL candidates must submit a comprehensive portfolio of evidence that may include logbooks, references, certificates of training, guest feedback, and documented contributions to the industry.
- All evidence should be verifiable.
- Assessors will review these materials in conjunction with the results of theoretical and practical assessments.

Quality Assurance and Moderation

- FGASA applies quality assurance measures rigorously, ensuring that it adheres to requirements.

- Qualified assessors, standardised marking guides, and regular moderation guarantee consistency and fairness.
- External subject matter experts may be consulted, especially for higher-level designations, to ensure credibility and impartiality.

#### Appeals Process

- If a candidate disputes an RPL decision, FGASA will provide a formal appeals process.
- The candidate must submit a written appeal within a designated timeframe.
- An independent appeals committee will review the evidence, assessment records, and rationale, ultimately providing a final and reasoned decision.

### 3.9 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

FGASA submitted the following documents:

- CPD policy.
- Evidence of CPD implementation.

#### Purpose of the CPD policy

- **Standardisation of Professional Growth:** Provide a consistent and structured mechanism for monitoring and encouraging ongoing professional learning among designated guides.
- **Quality Assurance:** Ensure that CPD activities are meaningful, credible, and aligned with the competencies and responsibilities associated with each professional designation.
- **Enhanced Credibility:** Demonstrate FGASA's commitment to professionalisation and quality assurance, thereby strengthening its case for recognition as a professional body.
- **Adaptation to Industry Developments:** Facilitate guides' adaptability to evolving ecological, social, regulatory, and technological contexts, ensuring that the South African guiding sector remains globally competitive, ethically guided, and environmentally responsible.
- **Promotion of Lifelong Learning:** Encourage guides at all levels to continuously improve their knowledge, skills, and ethical frameworks, reinforcing the principle that professional competence is not static but a journey of ongoing refinement.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

- **FGASA:** Develop and maintain the CPD framework, offer guidance and resources, conduct audits, and ensure fairness, transparency, and consistency in CPD administration.
- **Designated Guides:** Plan and execute appropriate CPD activities, maintain accurate records, submit evidence as required, and use FGASA's resources (e.g., CPD portal, recommended training directories) to meet their obligations.
- **Training Providers and Employers:** Offer high-quality, relevant training opportunities, provide accurate documentation of attendance or completion, and support guides' efforts to meet CPD requirements.
- **Industry Stakeholders (Conservation Bodies, Research Institutions, Tourism Authorities):** Collaborate with FGASA to develop meaningful CPD offerings, ensuring that activities remain relevant, accessible, and in line with best practices.

#### Process of Formalising CPD

- **Preparation and Notice Period:** Guides will be informed at least six (6) months in advance of the first official CPD cycle start date.
- **Support and Resources:** FGASA will develop resource materials, provide training on how to record and submit CPD evidence, and establish an online CPD portal.
- **Phased Implementation:** CPD requirements will be gradually introduced, ensuring guides have time to familiarise themselves with the system and integrate CPD activities into their professional routines.

#### CPD Requirements

- All designated guides will be required to meet a standard of 30 CPD points over a three-year cycle.
- While the total is measured every three (3) years, it is strongly recommended that guides aim for approximately 10 CPD points per year to maintain consistent professional growth and prevent last-minute efforts at the end of the cycle.

- This three-year cycle ensures that guides have sufficient time to engage in meaningful activities while also promoting regular and ongoing development rather than episodic or cursory engagement.
- Although the 30-point total applies to all designations, the nature of expected CPD activities varies according to the complexity, responsibility, and leadership associated with each designation level.
- This ensures that CPD is not a one-size-fits-all exercise but rather equips professional development to the career stage and role expectations.

#### CPD activities

- **Formal learning:** These include accredited courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences delivered by recognised training providers or reputable organisations.
- **Online and Distance Learning:** Online learning has become increasingly accessible and flexible. Recognised webinars, e-learning modules, and online courses enhance knowledge without geographic barriers.
- **Practical Skills Enhancement:** Guides often learn best through hands-on experiences. Field training, advanced tracking workshops, firearms competency updates (where applicable), wilderness first aid courses, and other specialised skill sessions fall into this category.
- **Research, Publications, and Thought Leadership:** For higher-level designations, contributing to industry knowledge and innovation is vital. Activities in this category elevate the profession and encourage guides to become influencers and leaders.
- **Mentorship and Leadership:** Guides with professional and master-level designations are encouraged to mentor junior guides, lead team-based learning initiatives, and engage in industry advisory bodies.
- **Community and Conservation Engagement:** Involvement in community education, citizen science projects, or conservation initiatives broadens a guide's perspective and fosters environmental stewardship.
- **Self-directed Study and Reflection:** While externally verifiable activities are preferred, some degree of self-driven learning is acceptable. This might include reading relevant books, watching educational documentaries, or maintaining reflective practice logs.

#### CPD Recording, Reporting, and Verification

- Accurate record-keeping and reporting are essential for maintaining the integrity of the CPD system.
- **CPD Portfolio:** Each guide will maintain a digital CPD portfolio, logging each activity along with documentary evidence such as certificates, attendance registers, references, published materials, or mentorship agreements.
- **Annual and Interim Reports:** Guides may generate interim reports through the CPD portal to track their progress. FGASA encourages guides to review their CPD status at least once a year.
- **Auditing and Verification:** FGASA will periodically audit a sample of CPD portfolios to ensure authenticity and compliance. Guides selected for audit must submit any requested documentation promptly.
- If discrepancies or inconsistencies are found, FGASA may require clarification or, in serious cases, impose remedial measures.
- The audit process ensures the credibility and reliability of the CPD system.

#### Non-Compliance and Remedial Measures

- Despite initial guidance and ongoing support, some guides may struggle to meet CPD requirements. FGASA aims to handle non-compliance fairly and constructively, prioritising solutions that help guides fulfil their obligations.
- **Grace Period:** Guides who have not accumulated 30 points by the end of the three-year cycle may be granted a six-month grace period to meet the shortfall.
- **Remedial Requirements:** Persistent non-compliance may require the guide to undertake specified training, attend remedial workshops, or complete additional assessment tasks within a defined timeframe.
- **Suspension of Designation:** Continued failure to meet CPD requirements can result in the temporary suspension of the professional designation. While suspended, the individual may not present themselves as holding that designation. Once compliance is achieved, reinstatement is possible.

- Appeals: Guides who believe they were treated unfairly or whose personal circumstances merit special consideration can appeal through FGASA’s official appeals process. An independent committee will review the case and render a final, binding decision.

**Ethical Considerations and Integrity of the CPD System**

- The credibility of the CPD system relies heavily on honesty, transparency, and ethical behaviour.
- Guides must report CPD activities accurately and truthfully.
- Fraudulent claims, falsified documents, or attempts to manipulate the CPD system undermine the profession’s integrity.
- FGASA reserves the right to revoke designations if fraud is proven.
- FGASA will also protect the confidentiality of personal data and CPD records.
- Aggregated statistics may be published to inform strategic decisions and highlight sector-wide trends, but individual information will remain confidential, except where audits or investigations necessitate disclosure.

**3.10 Membership Database**

- FGASA submitted a list of members.
- FGASA has 4488 active members on its membership database.
- There are 962 designated members on the FGASA membership database.
  - Certified Field Guide - 469
  - Certified Professional Field Guide - 214
  - Certified Trails Guide - 138
  - Certified Professional Trails Guides - 69
  - Certified Master Trails Guide - 45

**Demographic composition of individual members (designated and non-designated)**

Gender	Black	Indian	Coloured	White	Total
Male	693	43	54	1733	2523
Female	170	14	24	891	1099
Total	863	57	78	2624	3622

**Certified Field Guide**

Gender	Black	Indian	Coloured	White	Total
Male	104	4	5	310	425
Female	6	0	2	91	97
Total	110	4	7	411	522

**Certified Professional Field Guide**

Gender	Black	Indian	Coloured	White	Total
Male	12	1	1	188	202
Female	1	0	0	27	28
Total	13	1	1	215	230

**Certified Trails Guide**

Gender	Black	Indian	Coloured	White	Total
Male	72	5	3	302	382
Female	1	0	0	42	43
Total	73	5	3	344	425

**Certified Professional Trails Guide**

Gender	Black	Indian	Coloured	White	Total
Male	4	1	0	67	74
Female	0	0	0	8	8
Total	4	1	0	77	82

Certified Master Trails Guide

Gender	Black	Indian	Coloured	White	Total
Male	0	0	0	43	43
Female	0	0	0	5	5
Total	0	0	0	48	48

**3.11 Career Advice Information**

- FGASA employs various strategies to make career-related information available to learners and the public.
- The official website serves as a primary hub for information related to career pathways in guiding, featuring detailed descriptions of certification levels, including requirements, benefits, and progression pathways.
- Additionally, it offers downloadable resources, guides, and FAQs that address common inquiries about careers in field guiding.
- FGASA regularly organises workshops, seminars, and training programs aimed at both current and aspiring guides. These events often include sessions on career development, skill enhancement, and networking opportunities with industry professionals, providing valuable insights into career trajectories within the field of guiding.
- Collaborating with various educational institutions, FGASA ensures that learners receive high-quality education through accredited training programs, promoting these initiatives to reach a wider audience.
- Mentorship initiatives connect experienced guides with newcomers, allowing aspiring guides to gain insights into career paths, skill development, and professional networking.
- Through social media platforms, FGASA actively shares career-related content, success stories, and industry updates, encouraging real-time interaction with potential learners and the public.
- Publishing newsletters and other informational materials, highlights career opportunities, industry trends, and personal success stories from guides, keeping members and the public informed about developments within the guiding profession.
- Participation in industry events, conferences, and expos provides additional opportunities for FGASA to share information about guiding careers, serving as platforms for networking and knowledge exchange.
- FGASA also offers advisory services to help individuals navigate their career paths in guiding, including one-on-one consultations and tailored career advice.
- Access to online courses and resources allows learners to pursue their training at their own pace, with course outlines, prerequisites, and career pathways making it easier for individuals to understand their options.
- By working with schools and training facilities, FGASA integrates career guidance into curricula, ensuring that learners are informed about the possibilities within the guiding profession from an early stage in their education.
- Through these diverse methods, FGASA effectively disseminates career-related information, fostering awareness and encouraging interest in the field of guiding among learners and the broader public.

**3.12 Code of Conduct and Protection of the Public**

FGASA submitted the following documents:

- Code of Ethics and Conduct.
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- Appeals Policy.
- Sample of Complaints Register.

Purpose of the Code of Ethics and Conduct.

- The purpose of the FGASA Code of Ethics and Conduct is to establish and maintain the highest professional standards within the field guiding industry.
- It serves as a guiding framework for members, ensuring ethical and responsible conduct in all aspects of their work.
- This includes upholding safety standards for clients and wildlife, preserving the integrity of the natural environment, and maintaining a high level of professionalism in their interactions with clients, colleagues, and the general public.
- The Code of Ethics and Conduct enhances the reputation of FGASA and its members.

## Disciplinary Procedure

The purpose of the disciplinary procedure is to outline the process for investigating and adjudicating complaints of misconduct against members of FGASA. This framework aims to:

- Maintain Ethical Standards by upholding the highest standards of professional conduct among FGASA Members, ensuring public trust and confidence in the Association.
- Ensure fair and impartial process for all parties involved, including the complainant, the accused Member, and the Association.
- Protect and safeguard the integrity and reputation of FGASA by addressing misconduct promptly and effectively.

## Lodging a complaint

- All complaints to FGASA must be submitted to FGASA, using the Complaint Report Form detailing the particulars of the complaint, and must, as far as possible, include any documentation in support of their complaint.
- All complaints will be allocated a unique case number and recorded on the FGASA Complaints Register.
- The complaint must be addressed to [md@fgasa.org.za](mailto:md@fgasa.org.za).
- Complaints may be submitted by any person, including other FGASA members, clients of FGASA members, employees of FGASA, and members of the public.
- Acceptable methods of submission include email, postal mail, and other agreed-upon electronic means.
- All complaints must be submitted in writing and must include the complainant's full name and contact information (including phone number and email address), the full name of the FGASA member against whom the complaint is being made, and a clear and concise statement of the alleged misconduct, including specific details of the incident(s), including dates, times, and locations, names and contact information of any witnesses, and supporting documentation, such as photographs, videos, audio recordings, or written reports, whenever possible.
- Where the association itself is the complainant, the Managing Director (MD), or their nominee, will assume the role of the complainant in a particular matter.
- In such a case, the MD, or their nominee, may not partake in the panel and/or committee adjudicating the complaint.
- FGASA may, if it suspects a member having breached the Code of Ethics and Conduct, institute disciplinary proceedings against that member.
- Some examples include members falsely claiming to hold a category of membership or designation issued by FGASA, Guides carrying out work for which they do not hold the necessary NDT registrations, designation(s), members failing to comply with applicable continuous professional development requirements, unprofessional conduct, and members making false and /or defamatory statements against FGASA.

## Investigation process

- FGASA will send a notice of the complaint, together with any supporting documentation annexed thereto, to the member concerned.
- The member will be afforded 10 (ten) business days to respond to the allegations contained in the complaint in writing.
- At the same time, FGASA may request from the complainant any further information which FGASA may require.
- Thereafter, FGASA refers the complaint to the Disciplinary Committee for investigation and review.
- The Disciplinary Committee will appoint a panel that comprises three committee members.
- The panel may review and investigate a complaint.
- Should disciplinary action be sanctioned, the Case Initiator may not have been involved in the panel or investigation phase.
- The panel will review the complaint, the investigation and proposed disciplinary sanctions.
- The panel may dismiss the complaint should there not be enough evidence to suggest that a member has committed misconduct.
- After considering a complaint, the panel may determine that the alleged misconduct is of such a serious nature that a resolution based solely on written submissions would be inappropriate.

- In such instances, the panel will refer the matter to the full Disciplinary Committee and recommend that a formal hearing be convened ("Hearing").
- This recommendation will be accompanied by the complete record of the proceedings and evidence to date.
- If the Disciplinary Committee is of the opinion that a hearing is not appropriate in the circumstances, it will issue directives to the panel to conclude the matter, including any guidance deemed appropriate by the Disciplinary Committee.
- The member and the complainant will both be informed of the outcome of the investigation and any recommended disciplinary sanctions in writing and afforded a further period of 5 (five) business days to respond thereto.
- If a member fails to file their reply to the Notice of Complaint, the Disciplinary Committee may continue to deal with the matter in the absence of the member.

#### Disciplinary hearing proceedings

- The Disciplinary Committee is entitled to hold hearings by any means it deems appropriate, including electronic communication, provided that such electronic communication affords all the participants the opportunity to participate effectively.
- The Disciplinary Committee appoints a chairperson who was not on the Panel or considered the initial complaint.
- The Disciplinary Committee appoints a "Case-Initiator" to conduct the case for FGASA and represent FGASA at the hearing.
- The Case-Initiator will be a suitable person from the list of persons and will not have been a member of the panel that considered the initial complaint.
- The Case-Initiator will be provided with the full record of the relevant proceedings.
- Upon the Case-Initiator's request, the Disciplinary Committee may appoint one or more persons to assist the Case-Initiator.
- The Case-Initiator must send a written Notice of Hearing to the member to inform the member of the charges, particulars of the hearing, including the documentation that the Case-Initiator intends to use in the Hearing.
- The Case-Initiator will inform the member of their rights in general.
- The date and time of the hearing must be no earlier than 10 days after the date of the Notice to attend a hearing.
- The member shall file an answering statement with the Case-Initiator at least 5 (five) days prior to the commencement of the hearing.
- If the Case-Initiator or the member intends to rely on testimony from witnesses, they must provide written affidavits to the Case-Initiator and member no later than 5 (five) days prior to the commencement of the hearing.
- If the Case-Initiator or member intends to present expert evidence, they must disclose this, along with a summary of the issues the expert(s) will be testifying on, no later than 5 (five) days prior to the commencement of the hearing.

#### Findings

- At the conclusion of the Hearing, the chairperson must find the member guilty or not guilty of the charge(s) against them.
- After considering aggravating and mitigating circumstances, the chairperson will determine an appropriate sanction(s) to be imposed on the member, in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy.
- The finding, incorporating the sanction(s), must be communicated in writing to the member, the complainant, and the Disciplinary Committee.
- A member (the Appellant) having been found guilty of a charge or charges may lodge an appeal against the finding and/or sanction within five (five) days of the date of the finding by setting out the grounds for appeal in writing and submitting their appeal to the Committee ("the Appeal").
- The findings of the Hearing Panel may be published by the Disciplinary Committee in a suitable format and manner determined by the Disciplinary Committee.
- However, publication of any finding and/or sanction(s) may only occur after the period for lodging an appeal has elapsed and no appeal has been received, or in cases where a member's appeal has been unsuccessful.

- If a member misses deadlines, such as failing to submit their response to the initial notice or failing to attend the hearing or any rescheduled parts of it, the chairperson may proceed with the matter in their absence.
- However, the chairperson must first be sure that the member was properly notified about the hearing and that they haven't provided a good reason for missing it.
- If the member does not attend, the chairperson will decide based on the information and evidence provided by the Case-Initiator.

#### The appeal

- A member (the Appellant) having been found guilty of a charge or charges may lodge an appeal against the finding and/or sanction within five (five) days of the date of the finding by setting out the grounds for appeal in writing and submitting their appeal to the Committee (“the Appeal”).
- The Committee, in accordance with its terms of reference, will appoint an Appeal panel to consider the appeal. The Appeal panel will comprise 3 (three) panel members from the Disciplinary Committee, provided that no person having considered the initial complaint, or who was part of the hearing, may be a member of the Appeal panel.
- The Appeal Panel will consider the record of the complaint and the grounds for the appeal and allow or disallow an appeal within 10 (ten) days of receiving the notification of the appeal and will inform the appellant and the Disciplinary Committee in writing, accordingly.
- Where the appeal is allowed, the Appeal Panel will consider both the record of the initial complaint and the appeal received from the member concerned, but may not consider new evidence, except where:
  - new information becomes available, and it would be impracticable, in the opinion of the Appeal Panel, to refer the matter back to the (initial) Panel or the Hearing Panel (as the case may be); and/or
  - a dispute arises as to a point of procedure followed by the (initial) Panel or the Hearing Panel (as the case may be), and it is not possible to ascertain from the record, in the opinion of the Appeal Panel and on a balance of probabilities, the process that was followed.
- The Appeal Panel will, in its sole discretion, have the authority to:
  - substitute any finding of the panel with a new finding; and/or
  - impose a new sanction(s) and/or
  - confirm the finding(s) and/or sanction(s) of the panel

#### Findings

- The Appeal Panel will execute their adjudication function in a reasonable, procedurally fair, transparent and unbiased manner in accordance with the provisions of this policy and the principles of natural justice.
- Such an Appeal Panel's decision shall be final and binding on the member and the complainant and not subject to further appeal.

#### Complaints

FGASA received one complaint, which did not reach conclusion as the complainants never pursued the case further.

### **3.13 Education and Training**

FGASA complies with Clause 17 of the Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation for the Purposes of the National Qualification Framework Act, Act 67 of 2008 (2023).

- FGASA is not accredited as an education and training institution by a Quality Council.
- The Department of Higher Education and Training has not registered FGASA as an educational institution.

### **3.14 Proliferation of Professional Bodies**

- There is no statutory professional body operating in the sector.
- There is no other SAQA-recognised professional body operating in the sector.

## 4. CRITERIA FOR RECOGNISING A PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION

### 4.1 Designation(s) to be registered

**Designation Title:** Certified Field Guide

**Short Description:**

A Certified Field Guide, recognised by FGASA, is a highly trained professional specialising in vehicle-based safari experiences. Their rigorous skill set encompasses comprehensive wildlife knowledge, safe off-road navigation, responsible environmental practices, and effective guest interaction. By adhering to FGASA standards, these certified field guides create immersive and educational experiences while ensuring passenger safety and preserving the natural environment.

**CRITERION**

**Underlying NQF Registered Qualification**

Occupational Certificate: Field Ranger, NQF Level 4.

**Experiential / Practical Experience / Experiential Learning**

To obtain the Certified Field Guide designation, a minimum of 260 days of actively guiding guests, acquired over a period of one year, must be logged. (130 of these days can be logged as non-guiding activities such as anti-poaching, tracking, rhino monitoring). The 260 logged days need to be signed off by the FGASA office. The logbook will not be signed off if incomplete

**Competency Assessment / Board Examination**

A theoretical examination with a 75% pass mark.

A practical assessment conducted in the field with guests.

**Designation RPL Statement**

To qualify for RPL as a Certified Field Guide (NQF Level 4), candidates must provide comprehensive evidence of their practical experience, theoretical knowledge, and adherence to professional standards. Candidates are required to submit logbooks documenting a minimum of 12 months of guiding experience.

**Designation competencies:**

- Demonstrate a broad understanding of ecological principles and environmental processes.
- Accurately identify fauna, flora, and ecosystems while explaining their interrelationships to guests.
- Guiding and Communication:
  - Lead safe, engaging, and educational nature experiences in diverse environments.
  - Use effective communication and storytelling techniques to interpret and share knowledge with clients.
  - Assess, manage, and mitigate risks in natural settings, including wildlife encounters, terrain challenges, and weather conditions.
  - Apply basic first aid and emergency procedures when necessary.
  - Provide accurate, respectful insights into local culture, heritage, and historical landmarks, promoting ethical and culturally sensitive tourism.
- Uphold the FGASA Code of Conduct, adhering to environmental ethics and responsible tourism practices.
- Ensure guest satisfaction while maintaining respect for wildlife, ecosystems, and local communities
- Safely operate and maintain safari vehicles, including 4x4 off-road driving in varied terrains, ensuring client safety and environmental preservation.
- Integrate sustainability principles into guiding activities, minimising ecological impact and engaging clients in conservation efforts.
- Provide exceptional service, adapting experiences to meet diverse guest needs and responding professionally to feedback or challenges.

**RETAINING CRITERIA**

To ensure the currency of professional knowledge and to retain the Professional Designation, the professional must comply with the following minimum requirements:

### **Code of Conduct**

Designees are required to adhere to the Professional Code of Conduct.

### **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

Designees are required to obtain 30 CPD points in a three-year cycle.

### **Fees**

Designees are required to pay the annual membership fee.

### **Professional Designation Progression Pathway**

<i>Certified Field Guide</i>	Certified Trails Guide
Certified Professional Field Guide	Certified Professional Trails Guide
	Certified Master Trails Guide

For more information on this Professional Designation, please visit the website at [www.fgasa.co.za](http://www.fgasa.co.za).

**Designation Title:** Certified Professional Field Guide

### **Short Description:**

The Certified Professional Field Guide designation is awarded to individuals who have demonstrated the ability to consistently deliver high-quality, client-focused guiding experiences while upholding the highest ethical and professional standards. This designation not only acknowledges the guide's technical skills and knowledge but also their leadership qualities and dedication to advancing the guiding profession. It signifies a professional who is trusted to operate at an elevated level of complexity and responsibility, contributing meaningfully to the conservation and sustainable tourism industries.

### **CRITERION**

#### **Underlying NQF Registered Qualification**

Higher Certificate in Ecotourism Guiding, NQF Level 5.

#### **Experiential / Practical Experience / Experiential Learning**

To obtain the Professional Safari Guide designation, a minimum of 520 days of active guiding experience with paying guests, acquired over a period of two years, must be logged.

#### **Competency Assessment / Board Examination**

A theoretical examination with a 75% pass mark.

Practical assessment conducted in the field, including assessment of guiding skills whilst conducting game drives, as well as guest hosting, over a period of 3 days.

#### **Designation RPL Statement**

Candidates must provide documented evidence of at least 2–3 years of guiding experience, captured in logbooks. These logs should detail encounters with complex guiding scenarios, problem-solving examples, and guest feedback. This documentation must demonstrate the candidate's ability to operate independently and handle diverse guiding challenges.

#### **Designation competences:**

- Operate at an advanced level within the guiding profession, demonstrating expertise, leadership, and professionalism.
- Understand and explain advanced ecological concepts, species interactions, and conservation principles.
- Provide insightful, thematic, and engaging interpretations tailored to diverse audiences.
- Serve as a role model for professional behaviour, guide and mentor junior staff, and foster teamwork and collaboration while maintaining high standards of professionalism and ethics.
- Anticipate, evaluate, and resolve complex challenges in the field, including unexpected wildlife behaviour, safety risks, and client-related issues, with minimal supervision.
- Manage client experiences through personalised attention, conflict resolution, and adapting activities to meet diverse needs.
- Maintain client safety by adhering to risk management protocols and demonstrating sound judgement.

- Advocate for conservation principles and educate clients on sustainable tourism practices while ensuring adherence to environmental, wildlife, and tourism regulations.
- Plan and manage logistics, including vehicle handling, route planning, and equipment preparation, while minimising environmental impact during guiding activities.
- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of environmental and tourism laws, ensuring compliance and best practices in all guiding activities.

### **RETAINING CRITERIA**

To ensure the currency of professional knowledge and to retain the Professional Designation, the professional must comply with the following minimum requirements:

#### ***Code of Conduct***

Designees are required to adhere to the Professional Code of Conduct.

#### ***Continuing Professional Development (CPD)***

30 CPD points in a three-year cycle.

#### ***Fees***

Designees are required to pay the annual membership fee.

#### ***Professional Designation Progression Pathway***

Certified Field Guide	Certified Trails Guide
<i>Certified Professional Field Guide</i>	Certified Professional Trails Guide
	Certified Master Trails Guide

For more information on this Professional Designation, please visit the website at [www.fgasa.co.za](http://www.fgasa.co.za).

**Designation Title:** Certified Trails Guide

#### **Short Description:**

A Certified Trails Guide is an individual who is qualified to function as 1st and 2nd Rifle on trails or walks in areas where free-roaming dangerous game occurs.

### **CRITERION**

#### **Underlying NQF Registered Qualification**

Occupational Certificate: Field Ranger, NQF Level 4.

#### **Experiential / Practical Experience / Experiential Learning**

- A minimum of 50 hours logged on a trail as observer led by a FGASA Trails Guide, FGASA Professional Trails Guide, or Master Trails Guide.
- A minimum of 10 encounters logged from at least three of the animal categories as observer on a trail led by a FGASA Trails Guide, FGASA Professional Trails Guide, or Master Trails Guide.
- A minimum of 50 hours logged on a trail as 2<sup>nd</sup> rifle with a FGASA mentor. Minimum 20 encounters
- A minimum of 50 hours logged on a trail 1<sup>st</sup> rifle with a FGASA mentor. Minimum 20 encounters
- A minimum of 50 hours logged on a trail in the workplace/walking with guests with a FGASA professional trails guide, Trails Guide or Master trails guide. 10 encounters from at least 3 of the dangerous game categories.

#### **Competency Assessment / Board Examination**

Complete a practical Assessment. This is conducted by an approved FGASA Trails Guide assessor. It is a multi-day walk spanning over a minimum of two full days (two morning and two afternoon walks) and a minimum of 10 hours on foot.

Must include at least two encounters with at least two different dangerous game categories. At least four categories of free-roaming dangerous game must be present in the area where the assessment takes place.

The candidate must be assessed in the roles of both 1st and 2nd rifle with walking guests.

### Designation RPL Statement

To be considered for RPL, candidates must provide evidence of their experience and skills. This includes documented experience, such as logbooks showing at least 12 months of guiding experience conducting trails on foot.

### Designation competencies:

- Demonstrate a broad understanding of ecological principles, including key species, habitats, and wildlife behaviour
- Apply practical skills in tracking, navigation, and group management while maintaining situational awareness to identify and mitigate risks.
- Ensure client safety through adherence to safety protocols, emergency response skills, and proficiency in rifle handling, including safe and accurate firearm use for group protection when necessary.
- Promote conservation ethics by educating clients on sustainable practices and avoiding behaviours that harm the environment.
- Comply with all legal requirements, such as protected area rules and guiding legislation, ensuring operations are lawful and responsible.
- Take responsibility for client safety, environmental impact, and ethical guiding practices, demonstrating autonomy while working under supervision when needed.
- provide safe, engaging, and educational wilderness experiences, contributing to responsible tourism and conservation efforts.

### RETAINING CRITERIA

To ensure the currency of professional knowledge and to retain the Professional Designation, the professional must comply with the following minimum requirements:

#### **Code of Conduct**

Designees are required to adhere to the Professional Code of Conduct.

#### **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

30 CPD points in a three-year cycle.

#### **Fees**

Designees are required to pay the annual membership fee.

#### **Professional Designation Progression Pathway**

Certified Field Guide	<i>Certified Trails Guide</i>
Certified Professional Field Guide	Certified Professional Trails Guide
	Certified Master Trails Guide

For more information on this Professional Designation, please visit the website at [www.fgasa.co.za](http://www.fgasa.co.za).

**Designation Title:** Certified Professional Trails Guide

#### **Short Description:**

The Certified Professional Trails Guide designation provides professional recognition for experienced trails guides who demonstrate advanced skills, knowledge, and leadership in wilderness guiding. These professionals excel in leading on-foot excursions, providing in-depth ecological interpretation, and ensuring client safety in dynamic and high-risk wilderness settings. With a strong focus on situational awareness, ethical conduct, and conservation principles, Certified Professional Trails Guides possess advanced tracking abilities, crisis management expertise, and the capacity to mentor junior guides. This designation reflects professionalism, autonomy, and a commitment to delivering exceptional, sustainable, and educational wilderness experiences.

#### **CRITERION**

##### **Underlying NQF Registered Qualification**

Higher Certificate in Ecotourism Guiding, NQF Level 5.

### **Experiential / Practical Experience / Experiential Learning**

- A minimum of 600 hours logged on trails as 1st or 2nd Rifle. At least 500 hours must be in the workplace during guiding based activities with regular walking guests in areas where free-roaming dangerous game occurs.
- A maximum of 100 hours can be non-guiding activities e.g. rhino monitoring, security on tracking assessments, or as a participant on a FGASA approved Wilderness, Primitive or Backpacking Trails specifically designed to mentor Trails Guides, etc.
- A minimum of 300 encounters with at least ten encounters from each of the animal categories. At least 270 encounters must be in the workplace during guiding based activities.
- A maximum of 30 encounters can be non-guiding activities e.g. rhino monitoring, security on tracking assessments, or as a participant on a FGASA approved Wilderness, Primitive or Backpacking Trail specifically designed to mentor Trails Guides.

### **Competency Assessment / Board Examination**

Pass Certified Professional Field Guide Theory examination and practical assessment as well as satisfying the experiential learning requirements in terms of professional experience and prescribed number of dangerous game encounters.

### **Designation RPL Statement**

Evidence for RPL must include a comprehensive portfolio that demonstrates the candidate's competencies. This portfolio may consist of trail logbooks, references from senior guides or lodge managers, certificates of relevant advanced training (such as first aid, firearms competency, or environmental management), and client feedback or peer endorsements highlighting interpretive skills, safety awareness, and leadership qualities.

### **Designation competencies:**

- Demonstrate advanced skills, knowledge, and ethical principles to lead safe, engaging, and sustainable wilderness experiences.
- demonstrate expertise in ecological interpretation, client safety, and conservation advocacy while upholding professional and ethical standards.
- Exhibit in-depth ecological knowledge, advanced tracking skills, and proficiency in navigating complex terrain.
- Maintain situational awareness and implement effective risk management strategies to ensure client safety, including the responsible handling and use of firearms in high-risk wildlife encounters.
- Deliver engaging and educational experiences tailored to client needs while managing group dynamics effectively.
- Mentor junior staff, model professional behaviour, and promote teamwork.
- Handle emergencies with advanced first aid and crisis management skills.
- Educate clients on sustainability and ensuring minimal environmental impact during activities.

### **RETAINING CRITERIA**

To ensure the currency of professional knowledge and to retain the Professional Designation, the professional must comply with the following minimum requirements:

#### **Code of Conduct**

Designees are required to adhere to the Professional Code of Conduct.

#### **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

30 CPD points in a three-year cycle.

#### **Fees**

Designees are required to pay the annual membership fee.

#### **Professional Designation Progression Pathway**

Certified Field Guide	Certified Trails Guide
Certified Professional Field Guide	<i>Certified Professional Trails Guide</i>
	Certified Master Trails Guide

For more information on this Professional Designation, please visit the website at [www.fgasa.co.za](http://www.fgasa.co.za).

**Designation Title:** Certified Master Trails Guide

**Short Description:**

The Certified Master Trails Guide designation is the highest professional level awarded by the Field Guides Association of Southern Africa for wilderness walking guides. It recognises extensive field experience, advanced environmental knowledge, and expert leadership in remote, potentially dangerous wildlife areas. To achieve this status, a guide must demonstrate a profound understanding of ecosystems, exceptional bushcraft, and proven proficiency in safely conducting multi-day walking safaris in challenging environments. This designation exemplifies professionalism and mastery in trail guiding.

**CRITERION**

**Underlying NQF Registered Qualification**

Diploma in Ecotourism Management, NQF Level 6.

**Experiential / Practical Experience / Experiential Learning**

- A minimum of 1200 hours logged on trails as 1st or 2nd Rifle. At least 500 hours must be in the workplace during guiding based activities with regular walking guests in areas where free-roaming dangerous game occurs.
- Must have guided or participated for at least 200 hours on backpack/primitive style trails in dangerous game areas.
- A maximum of 100 hours can be non-guiding activities e.g. rhino monitoring, security on tracking assessments, or as a participant on a FGASA approved Wilderness, Primitive or Backpacking Trail specifically designed to mentor Trails Guides, etc.
- Log a minimum of 600 dangerous game encounters with at least 30 encounters from each of the animal categories and must include all seven species. This must be in the workplace during guiding based activities.
- A maximum of 100 encounters can be non-guiding activities e.g. rhino monitoring, security on tracking assessments, or as a participant on a FGASA approved Wilderness, Primitive or Backpacking Trail specifically designed to mentor Trails Guides, etc.
- A minimum of 100 hours (of the 600) must be mentored hours.
- A minimum of five different mentors must be involved during the 100 hours.
- Three of the five mentors must be Master Trails Guide Assessors.
- Must have completed the FGASA Master Trails Guide workbook.
- FGASA SKS (DG) shooting assessment (this can be done once the candidate has qualified as Professional Trails Guide).
- Complete the FGASA Master Trails Guide Practical Assessment.

**Competency Assessment / Board Examination**

Each candidate must be assessed as 1st Rifle for at least 1½ days (including 1 night) and as 2nd Rifle for at least 1½ days (including 1 night). Therefore, the duration will slide as the minimum two candidates will take 3 full days and 2 nights, three or four candidates will take 6 full days and 5 nights, it must include a minimum of two encounters as 1st Rifle.

**Designation RPL Statement**

RPL candidates must compile a comprehensive portfolio of evidence that demonstrates their expertise and experience in advanced trails guiding. The portfolio should include documented experience of at least five years, with a focus on leadership roles and participation in complex expeditions. Detailed logbooks must record trail activities such as multi-day expeditions, leadership tasks, and conservation-related initiatives.

**Designation competencies:**

- Demonstrate expert ecological knowledge, with a deep understanding of complex ecosystems, wildlife behaviour, and conservation principles.
- Provide advanced interpretations, incorporating research-based narratives that enhance guest appreciation and promote sustainable tourism.
- Interpret subtle wildlife signs and demonstrate expertise in following and predicting animal movements under challenging conditions.

- Demonstrate excellence in advanced navigation and logistics, planning and executing multi-day trails with efficient resource management in diverse and dynamic environments.
- Guide junior staff, foster professional growth, and uphold industry standards.
- Engage in conservation advocacy, contributing to research projects, policy development, and stakeholder collaboration.
- Demonstrating advanced firearm safety and accuracy in high-stakes wildlife encounters.
- Comply with legal and regulatory frameworks is mandatory, with guides maintaining all necessary permits and adhering to protected area regulations.

**RETAINING CRITERIA**

To ensure the currency of professional knowledge and to retain the Professional Designation, the professional must comply with the following minimum requirements:

***Code of Conduct***

Designees are required to adhere to the Professional Code of Conduct.

***Continuing Professional Development (CPD)***

30 CPD points in a three-year cycle.

***Fees***

Designees are required to pay the annual membership fee.

***Professional Designation Progression Pathway***

Certified Field Guide	Certified Trails Guide
Certified Professional Field Guide	Certified Professional Trails Guide
	<i>Certified Master Trails Guide</i>

For more information on this Professional Designation, please visit the website at [www.fgasa.co.za](http://www.fgasa.co.za).