



## **Council on Higher Education and South African Qualifications Authority**

### **Joint Communiqué 1 of 2025: Re-registration of HEQSF-aligned qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework**

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) previously issued Joint Communiqué 1 of 2024 dated 09 May 2024. The communiqué dealt with the registration of historical qualifications and the reregistration of Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework Qualifications (HEQSF) on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

This is a further communiqué on the subject matter. It has three parts to it. Part A provides an update on the registration process, Part B addresses concerns that institutions have raised about the process, and Part C describes how the process will further unfold.

#### **PART A: Reregistration of Qualifications: Developments to Date**

##### **1. Historical qualifications**

- 1.1. In Joint Communiqué 1 of 2024, institutions were urged to ensure that their historical qualifications are registered on the National Qualifications Framework Management and Information System (NQF-MIS) and are on the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD). This was necessary to ensure that graduates from these qualifications can get assistance with verification of these qualifications where the need arises.

- 1.2. Institutions are requested to take note that a process of registration of such qualifications was agreed between the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and SAQA.
- 1.3. Institutions that still require such qualifications to be registered may engage directly with SAQA and the DHET.

## **2. Pipeline students on non-HEQSF-aligned students**

- 2.1. Institutions were also requested to take stock of non-aligned qualifications that still had pipeline students and report on the number of students by qualification with SAQA qualification identification (ID) numbers and with confirmation that all students concerned were enrolled prior to the 31 December 2019 cut-off date within two months of publication of the Communique.
- 2.2. For Institutions that submitted this information, the CHE has requested SAQA to extend the last date of achievement (LDA) to enable pipeline students to complete these qualifications. In the case of qualifications that are linked to professional designations/ registration, the institution would also need to engage the relevant professional body.
- 2.3. No further requests can be processed.
- 2.4. Save for the few qualifications that are being managed through the process described above, the understanding of the CHE and SAQA is that institutions are now offering only HEQSF-aligned qualifications.

## **3. Re-Registration of HEQSF-qualifications on the NQF**

- 3.1. Joint Communique 1 of 2024 also communicated plans for handling the reregistration of different categories of HEQSF-aligned qualifications that were due to expire on 30 June 2024.

3.2. Institutions were also sent letters indicating which of their qualifications fell into the categories indicated in the Joint Communiqué as follows:

- a) Qualifications that were deemed by SAQA to meet the requirements of the Policy and Criteria for Registration of Qualifications and Part-Qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework<sup>1</sup>. These have been reregistered on the NQF until 30 June 2027 (Qualifications in Addendum A in the July 2024 letters).
- b) Qualifications that were deemed by SAQA not to meet the requirements of the Policy and Criteria for Registration of Qualifications and Part-Qualifications on the NQF: The CHE requested SAQA to reregister these qualifications until 30 June 2027 with status "Data under Construction" (RDC) whilst the two regulators agreed on and implemented a process of ensuring the outstanding requirements was addressed by institutions (Qualifications in Addendum B in the July 2024 letters).
- c) Qualifications that have previously been registered on the NQF against Standard Generating Body (SGB) qualifications: A process of delinking these and having them registered on the NQF as stand-alone qualifications was agreed between the CHE and SAQA. Most institutions will have received letters requesting content for these (Qualifications in Addendum C in the July letters).
- d) All Institutions that have not yet submitted content for their qualifications in Addendum C in the July 2024 letters are requested to submit the content to [mheqsf@che.ac.za](mailto:mheqsf@che.ac.za) and copying [naude.r@che.ac.za](mailto:naude.r@che.ac.za) by no later than 31 March 2025. The institution is requested to use the latest SAQA template required by SAQA, to submit in a Word format (and not pdf) and to ensure that the CHE reference number of the related programme is also included.

[Qualification template](#)

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<sup>1</sup> South African Qualifications Authority (2022). Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part-Qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework. SAQA, Pretoria.

- 3.3. To aid the reregistration process, the CHE and SAQA jointly implemented regional workshops on key requirements of the HEQSF and the requirements of the Policy and Criteria for Registration of Qualifications and Part-qualifications on the NQF to higher education institutions (HEIs) across the country.
- 3.4. The CHE and SAQA would like to extend appreciation to the institutions for their support for the workshops, reflected in the numbers as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Schedule of regional workshops and attendance**

<b>Regional Workshop</b>	<b>Date of Workshop</b>	<b>Total Number of Participants</b>	<b>Number of Public HEIs represented</b>	<b>Number of Private HEIs represented</b>
Western Cape	04 & 05 July 2024	79	5	21
Gauteng	18 & 19 July 2024	203	11	36
Kwazulu-Natal	22 & 23 July 2024	77	7	16
Mpumalanga & Limpopo	30 & 31 July 2024	75	5	2
Eastern Cape	29 & 30 August 2024	53	5	0

- 3.5. The CHE and SAQA further extend appreciation to the institutions that follow that provided venues for the workshops:
- Cape Peninsula University of Technology
  - University of KwaZulu-Natal
  - Walter Sisulu University
  - University of Mpumalanga
- 3.6. The links to the presentations made at the workshops are provided below.
- [Management of the HEQSF 20240514 \(Presentation Made at Regional Workshops\)](#)
  - [CHE-SAQA PROJECT \(SAQA PRESENTATION\)](#)
- 3.7. Since the workshops, the progress regarding the reregistration process is as follows:
- a) The CHE and SAQA have continued to meet with institutions on request. The regulators have attempted as much as possible to resolve concerns that could be addressed easily soon after the meetings with institutions.

Through the meetings, the regulators have also been able to provide guidance to institutions on a range of issues related to managing their programmes and qualifications. A range of concerns, some of which had already been raised at the workshops along with new ones were brought to the attention of the regulators. These will be discussed in detail in Part 2 of this communique.

- b) The selection of peers who will constitute the Community of Practice (CoP) for the evaluation of qualifications for reregistration has been completed.
- c) Initial training workshops for members of the CoP have been conducted.
- d) Follow-up training, with evaluation of the first qualifications was conducted in a physical working meeting of the CoP on 17 and 18 February 2025. Thereafter, four meetings of the CoP will be conducted in the calendar year.

## **PART B: CONCERNS RAISED BY INSTITUTIONS AND RESPONSES TO THESE**

### **1. Concern about requirement for registration of historical qualifications:**

Some institutions raised concern about registration of historical qualifications. Institutions are reminded of requirements to register qualifications under the SAQA Act and following establishment of SAQA. The process agreed between the DHET and SAQA is available for institutions that may still have historical qualifications they wish registered. These historical qualifications do not form part of the reregistration process.

### **2. Lack of clarity on the accreditation status of qualifications registered as RDC:**

The regulators wish to confirm that in line with current processes of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), these qualifications remain accredited and valid.

### **3. Concerns about perceived inaccuracies in the Guidelines for the Development and Evaluation of Qualifications and Part-qualifications for Registration on the National Qualifications Framework.**

- 3.1** In a meeting between the regulators and some HEIs in the sector, concerns were raised about perceived inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the Guidelines for the Development and Evaluation of Qualifications and Part-qualifications for Registration on the National Qualifications Framework, and in some cases with CHE documents.
- 3.2** SAQA appreciates the feedback from institutions and invites institutions to provide written submission in relation to any perceived inaccuracy or internal consistency for purposes of informing the current review of the Guidelines. Written submissions should be forwarded to [jnel@saqa.org.za](mailto:jnel@saqa.org.za) by no later than 31 March 2025
- 3.3** The CHE and SAQA will continue working together in trying to ensure consistency in documents and processes as required by the NQF Act.

**4. Concerns about lack of guidance on what entails a significant change to an accredited programme and the implications on the re-registration:**

- 4.1** Institutions raised concerns about lack of guidance on what constitutes a major/significant change to a programme and noted some discrepancies in the understanding of this between the CHE and SAQA.
- 4.2** The regulators undertake to continue working together to try and ensure that such discrepancies are addressed so as to prevent confusion in the sector.
- 4.3** The regulators acknowledge that save for the requirement for institutions to manage small changes to their programmes, there has not been a process of communicating small changes to programmes between the CHE and SAQA. Such a process will be put in place going forward.
- 4.4** It is also recognised that in the case of private higher education institutions, some changes may have been made in response to conditions of reaccreditation stipulated by the HEQC.

- 4.5** The regulators also recognise that Professional Bodies may also have required institutions to make changes to programmes.
- 4.6** The CHE will continue to engage with Professional Bodies to ensure that qualification-related concerns are raised initially with the CHE with a view to developing systemic solutions where appropriate and to ensure that institutions get support to implement changes where these are agreed on.
- 4.7** To address current concerns, the regulators have agreed that the current reregistration process will allow for the qualifications to be captured as currently offered. This means that this process will not involve a comparison between what previously has been submitted and what is submitted now. The submission that is received as part of this reregistration process will form the baseline against which changes are captured and evaluated going forward. It remains the responsibility of institutions to ensure that HEQSF requirements continue to be met.
- 4.8** Whilst the CHE and SAQA jointly develops guidance on changes to existing programmes and qualifications, institutions are reminded that as per the guidance provided in the Higher Education Qualification Framework (HEQF) Implementation handbook, the following changes constitute major changes and will require submission of new applications for accreditation:
- Change in the purpose of the qualification
  - Change in the rationale
  - Changes in the exit level outcomes
  - Change in the mode of provisioning (the CHE has put in place a process for institutions that wish to change the model of delivery of already accredited programmes and has communicated to the sector about it).
- 4.9** The CHE will continue processing applications for changes to programme titles and requests for addition of new fields of study to accredited programmes following processes in place.

**4.10** The CHE and SAQA will also engage further to explore ways of streamlining reregistration and/or periodic updating of content including ultimately enabling institutions to update their own qualifications as part of the development and enhancement of online systems and in line with any relevant Policies and criteria applicable.

**5. Concerns from private higher education institutions about their qualifications having been registered against SGB qualifications**

For private higher education institutions where degree programmes were accredited with qualifiers, institutions are urged to check the qualification documents they submitted with their applications for accreditation, taking into account amendments made as part of the accreditation process e.g. representations and responses to conditions, and taking into account the Policy and Criteria for Registration of Qualifications and Part-Qualifications on the NQF and submit these to the CHE. Where the view of the institution is that the content as submitted to the CHE as part of accreditation meets the requirements, they may communicate this to the CHE and SAQA. This applies to cases where the programme concerned was subsequently recorded as a learning programme against an SGB qualification.

**6. Concerns that SAQA has not actioned requests made as part of responses during the Data Validation Project (DVP)**

Some institutions raised concerns that as part of responses on their HEQSF-aligned record communicated under the DVP, content was submitted to SAQA but was never uploaded on the NQF. The regulators can confirm that this content is available. Where the view is that the content submitted earlier meets the requirements, they may communicate this to the CHE and SAQA and this content will be taken through the process.

**7. Qualifications registered as “RDC’ with no qualification content on the NQF and related concerns from prospective students and funders:**



- 7.1. Institutions were concerned about the impact of the lack of content for qualifications that appeared as RDC. Institutions were particularly concerned about the risk to enrolments for 2025 as well as implications for sponsors and funders.
- 7.2. The qualification table, together with the current content (where this is available) has been made available on the SAQA website. The content will be updated as qualifications are evaluated and approved following the process approved by the SAQA NQF Qualifications Committee (QualCom).
- 7.3. For qualifications that were previously recorded as learning programmes against SGB qualifications where no content is available, the qualification table has been made available. The content will be added on the website after it has been received by the CHE, evaluated by the CoP and approved by QualCom.

**8. Concern about the capacity of CHE and SAQA to carry out this process effectively and efficiently.**

The regulators remain committed to seeing the process through to completion with the target of ensuring that it is completed prior to the lapse of the current reregistration cycle. As much as possible, effort will be made to ensure there is adequate capacity to support it.

**9. Concerns were raised about the necessity to undertake this process every three years**

- 9.1. The CHE remains committed to simplifying processes and strengthening collaboration including with SAQA as part of implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF).
- 9.2. The regulators, at management level, have agreed on aligning the registration period of qualifications on the NQF with the QAF's cyclical institutional review periods, in line with the differentiated approach. This means that, after the QAF's cyclical approach has been approved by the

HEQC, and after SAQA's QualCom has considered and approved aligned registration periods, reregistration will take place on 5- year or 8-year cycles for different institutions, and it will be linked to the institutional review of the institution as part of the implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework.

- 9.3. The CHE is accordingly unpacking its quality assurance processes including allowing for updating of qualifications by institutions and processes that are aligned to the differentiated approach as well as digitization of processes.
- 9.4. Processes will also be buttressed with capacity development so that more institutions are able with time to demonstrate capacity to manage their own qualifications.
- 9.5. The regulators will create opportunities for more focused capacity development including for academics who are directly involved in processes related to programme and qualification review and renewal.
- 9.6. Going forward, the CHE, will also facilitate platforms for HEIs and the CHE to engage with SAQA policy documents that will impact on HEIs directly throughout the cycle of development and finalisation of such policies to ensure that requirements are taken into account as part of design, review and update of qualifications by institutions.

#### **10. Institutions also raised concerns about the administrative burden the reregistration will place on quality assurance offices that are already stretched**

- 10.1. The regulators wish to assure institutions that cognizance is taken of the realities at institutions. It is hoped that the staggered approach described in Part C 4.1 will assist to make the process manageable.
- 10.2. For purposes of the current registration process, the regulators wish to encourage public universities with large qualification records to seriously engage with the opportunity of consolidating their records as this will go some way towards relieving the burden going forward.

## **PART C: FURTHER STEPS IN THE REREGISTRATION PROCESS**

### **1. Proposals for consolidating HEQSF-aligned records for public HEIs as part of the re-registration process**

- 1.1** Public higher education institutions that have degrees at the level of a designator only (i.e. with no qualifier) with approved areas of study on their Programme Qualification Mix (PQM Mix), and that form part of the institution's HEQSF aligned record, may opt to have some or all their accredited qualifications with qualifiers recorded against the relevant qualification. Included here are Bachelors, Honours, Masters and Doctoral qualifications.
- 1.2** For any programmes that public HEIs wish to be recorded against a specific qualification as laid out in 1.1.above, institutions are requested to send a request to consolidate the programmes against the qualification to [mheqsf@che.ac.za](mailto:mheqsf@che.ac.za) and copying [Dlamini.p@che.ac.za](mailto:Dlamini.p@che.ac.za). The request must include the qualification against which the programmes will be registered or listed (e.g. Bachelor of Arts, NQF level, HEQC Reference, SAQA Qualification ID) as well as the list of programmes i.e. programme title, NQF level, HEQC reference number). If the programme has an existing SAQA ID, this will also need to be provided.
- 1.3** For all specialisations that were previously recorded as learning programmes against an SGB qualification that the institution wishes to have registered as standalone/ distinct qualifications, the institution will be required to submit qualification documents on the template supplied.
- 1.4** Institutions that have qualifications as described in 1.1. on their PQMs but have no such qualification on the HEQSF-aligned record may approach the CHE with a request to consolidate their offerings. Requests should be via email to [Dlamini.p@che.ac.za](mailto:Dlamini.p@che.ac.za) and copying [mheqsf@che.ac.za](mailto:mheqsf@che.ac.za). An application form will be shared with the institution for the purpose. Institutions are requested to take note that the process requires approval of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). Submission of the form to

the CHE should reach the CHE at least two months ahead of the meeting of the HEQC targeted.

## **2. Processing of qualification documents**

- 2.1** All qualification documents received will be evaluated by the CoP for Evaluation of HEQSF Qualifications that has been put in place.
- 2.2** The outcomes of the evaluation may be:
- a) The qualification meets the requirements of the Policy and Criteria for Registration of Qualifications and Part-Qualifications on the NQF. The outcome will be communicated to the institution. SAQA will proceed to upload/ update the content on the NQF.
  - b) The qualification does not meet the requirements of the Policy and Criteria for Registration of Qualifications and Part-qualifications on the NQF and requires amendment. Communications will be sent to institution, stipulating the specific concern. Amendment requests will be processed in the meeting of the CoP that follows to confirm that concerns have been adequately addressed.
- 2.3.** The regulators wish to emphasize that whilst the emphasis of this process is on the SAQA Policy and Criteria for registration of qualifications and Part-qualifications on the NQF, the CHE will request that any concerns related to compliance with the HEQSF that are picked up by the CoP, are also addressed through the process.
- 2.4.** Where this arises, the concerns will be addressed with the relevant institution in supportive ways to minimise impacts on students and graduates.

### **3. Withdrawal of accreditation of discontinued and dormant qualifications and deregistration from the NQF**

- 3.1.** The regulators would like to extend appreciation to all institutions who responded to the request made in Joint Communiqué 1 of 2024, to inform the CHE of any qualifications that are no longer being offered.
- 3.2.** The CHE is processing the list of qualifications in preparation for the request to have the affected qualifications deregistered from the NQF, allowing for teach out of pipeline students where appropriate.
- 3.3.** Institutional HEQSF-aligned records will also be updated on the HEQC-online.
- 3.4.** Institutions are urged to ensure that they formally update the CHE as decisions are made to discontinue programmes. This must be communicated to [mheqsf@che.ac.za](mailto:mheqsf@che.ac.za) and copying [Naude.r@che.za](mailto:Naude.r@che.za).
- 3.5.** This also applies to qualifications that have not had enrolments in the registration cycle.
- 3.6.** Institutions are assured that de-registration of the qualification on the NQF does not have any negative implications for achievements as the history of the qualification remains available on the NQF-MIS. Further, the last date of achievement allows for pipeline students to complete their qualifications.

### **4. Submission of content for evaluation and update on the NQF**

- 4.1.** For institutions that have many qualifications in Addendum B that they also wish to maintain as standalone/ distinct qualifications, institutions may opt to stagger their submissions, for example, submitting the qualification documents by qualification type or by Faculty/School to minimise the demand on academic and QA staff.

- 4.2.** Institutions are urged to take note of the dates of planned meetings of the CoP for 2025 to facilitate planning of submissions:
- 27-28 March 2025
  - 24-25 June 2025
  - 23 September 2025
  - 27-28 October 2025
- 4.3.** Submissions should be on the SAQA template in the link shared and should be addressed to [mheqsf@che.ac.za](mailto:mheqsf@che.ac.za) and copied to [naude.r@che.ac.za](mailto:naude.r@che.ac.za).
- 4.4.** Institutions are urged to ensure that they submit qualification documents at the latest, two months before the date(s) of the CoP they are targeting.
- 4.5.** Qualifications will be processed in the order that they are received.
- 4.6.** Should the CHE receive a larger volume of qualifications than can be processed for a specific meeting of the CoP, it will communicate this to institutions with a list of affected qualifications. These will then be prioritized for processing in the next meeting.
- 4.7.** In the event of further concerns or need for support, institutions are encouraged to reach out to the regulators to seek guidance through email to [mheqsf@che.ac.za](mailto:mheqsf@che.ac.za) and copying [Dlamini.p@che.ac.za](mailto:Dlamini.p@che.ac.za) and [jnel@saaa.org.za](mailto:jnel@saaa.org.za).

The regulators wish to express appreciation for the engagement of institutions with the process. Commitment to the process and support from institutions will ensure that the regulators learn with the institutions and continuously strive to improve processes for better outcomes for the sector, including protection of the interests of students and graduates.

**Dr W. Green**  
**Chief Executive Officer: CHE**



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**DATE:** 21 February 2025

**Ms Nadia Starr**  
**Chief Executive Officer: SAQA**



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**DATE:** 21 February 2025