

## Communiqué 10 of 2022

**To:** Universities (Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors for Teaching and Learning, Registrars), Public Nursing Colleges (Principals and Registrars), Private Nursing Education Providers (Principles, Academic Heads), South African Nursing Council (Registrar), Department of Higher Education and Training (University Branch), Department of Health (Nursing Education)

**Subject:** Alignment of legacy nursing qualifications to the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF)

This communiqué seeks to inform the Nursing Education sector in South Africa and other stakeholders of the decisions of the Higher Education Qualifications Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) on alignment of legacy nursing qualifications to qualifications on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). The communiqué addresses articulation into HEQSF aligned qualifications to improve access and career progression opportunities for nurses who have completed legacy qualifications.

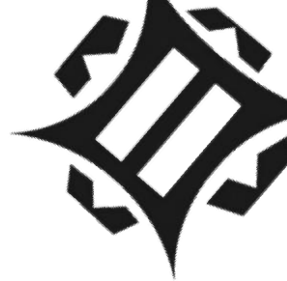
This communiqué applies to the following legacy nursing qualifications:

1. Certificate in Auxiliary Nursing
2. Certificate in Enrolled Nursing
3. Diploma (Bridging) in Nursing (General or Psychiatric Nursing)
4. Diploma in Midwifery
5. Diploma in Nursing and Midwifery

The information relating to the Certificate in Auxiliary Nursing, the Certificate in Enrolled Nursing and the Diploma (Bridging) in Nursing (General or Psychiatric Nursing) has been previously communicated in CHE Communiqué 1 of 2022 and is repeated here for purposes of completion. This communiqué therefore replaces Communiqué 1 of 2022.

### 1. Introduction

The revised Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF) published in 2013 (CHE, 2013) provides the basis for integrating all higher education qualifications into the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). For purposeful integration, all qualifications must comply with the provisions of the HEQSF to allow for articulation of programmes, and of students between programmes and higher education institutions.



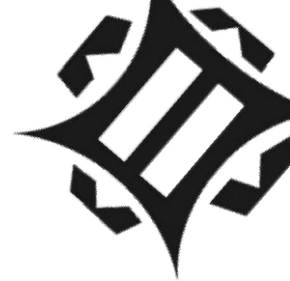
Following a national project to ensure alignment of all higher education qualifications with the HEQSF, undertaken by the CHE between 2011 and 2015, the South African Nursing Council (SANC) expressed concerns about articulation related to non-HEQSF aligned legacy nursing qualifications that would have serious consequences for career progression and the supply of nurses in various categories. Since nursing colleges and nursing schools, both public and private, were not part of higher education at the time, the qualifications they offered had not been included in the HEQSF-alignment exercise. In the process of registering nursing qualifications with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the assignment of NQF levels predated the HEQSF and the national alignment processes. Some of these qualifications were arbitrarily assigned NQF levels based on the institutional type awarding the qualification, resulting in inconsistencies in the levels. Table 1 shows the NQF levels assigned to legacy qualifications and the NQF levels assigned to HEQSF-aligned qualifications.

**Table 1: NQF levels and credits of legacy nursing qualifications and HEQSF-aligned qualifications**

LEGACY NURSING QUALIFICATION TYPES	NQF LEVEL	CREDITS
1-year Certificate (Auxiliary Nurse)	3	112
2-year Certificate (Enrolled Auxiliary Nurse)	4	224
2-year Diploma (General or Psychiatric Nurse)	6*	352
1-year Diploma (Midwife)	6*	122
4-year Diploma (Nurse and Midwife)	6	>700
Bachelor's degree (Nurse and Midwife)	7	480
1-year Post basic diploma (in a range of specializations)	7	120

NEW HEQSF NURSING QUALIFICATION TYPES	NQF LEVEL	CREDITS
Higher Certificate in Nursing	5	120
Diploma in Nursing	6	360
Advanced Diploma in Midwifery	7	120
Bachelor of Nursing	8	480
Postgraduate Diploma (in a range of specializations)	8	120

This communique provides the HEQC decisions regarding how holders of the legacy nursing qualifications listed in the table on the left can access HEQSF qualifications listed in the table on the right.



## 2. A review of the legacy qualifications to enable alignment and articulation with HEQSF-aligned qualifications.

The HEQC acknowledges that nurses who completed legacy qualifications have spent many years working as nurses and have gained immense practical training experience and increased their knowledge in clinical practice. The value this could add to the qualification alignment and articulation solution was tested by a CHE appointed Advisory Task Team with representation from the CHE, SANC, Forum of University Nursing Deans in South Africa (FUNDISA), College Principals and Academic Staff (CPAS) Forum, Private Health Education Providers of South Africa (PHEPSA) and South African Committee of Health Sciences Deans (SACOHSD).

Based on a review of key policy documents, a gap analysis from the SANC, as well as its own analysis, the Advisory Task Team formulated several recommendations on the alignment and articulation of legacy nursing qualifications. The recommendations were considered by the HEQC, and several decisions were made by the HEQC. The first set of decisions was communicated in Communique 1 of 2022 on 28 April 2022. These decisions are repeated here. The second and full report of the Task Team and further recommendations contained in it were considered by the HEQC at its meeting held 15 July 2022 and enabled the HEQC to make further decisions described below.

## 3. The full set of HEQC decisions regarding alignment and articulation of legacy nursing qualifications with HEQSF qualifications

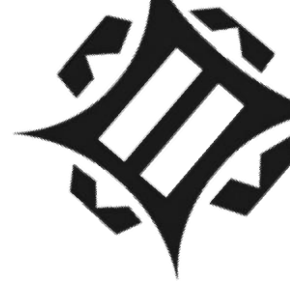
The HEQC made the following decisions:

### 3.1 Certificate in Auxiliary Nursing and Certificate in Enrolled Nursing

The HEQC concluded that the legacy Certificate in Auxiliary Nursing and the Certificate in Enrolled Nursing, are appropriately pegged at NQF level 3 and NQF level 4 respectively. Formal learning is required to address the shortfall in the depth, volume and scope of learning.

**Decision 1:** *Candidates in possession of a Certificate in Auxiliary Nursing or a Certificate in Enrolled Nursing may apply for admission to an appropriate NQF level 6 programme in line with institutional rules on admission and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policies and processes. A concession is granted for up to 50% of the student intake to be admitted via RPL, instead of the normal 10% limit. It is estimated that a period of three years would be adequate to enable career progression through the relaxed RPL requirement. Thereafter, the 10% RPL rule will apply.*

**Decision 2:** *In line with Decision 1, Enrolled Nursing Auxiliaries in possession of a National Senior Certificate may apply for admission into the first year (YOS 1) of the 3-year Diploma in Nursing in accordance with institutional rules on admission and complete 360 credits in their entirety.*



**Decision 3:** *In line with decision 1, Enrolled Nurses in possession of a National Senior Certificate may apply for admission into the 3-year Diploma in Nursing in line with institutional rules on admission and RPL policies and processes. Such a candidate may apply for formal learning to be assessed via RPL processes, against NQF level 5 outcomes as an alternative access route into the second year (YOS 2) of the Diploma in Nursing.*

### 3.2 Diploma (Bridging) in Nursing (General or Psychiatric Nursing)

The learning outcomes of this qualification match the standards and descriptors of an NQF level 6 qualification, simultaneously meeting the professional requirements for Registration as a General Nurse with the SANC.

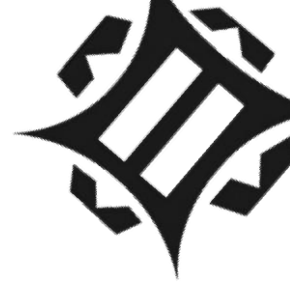
**Decision 4:** *Having established both quantitative and qualitative equivalence to the new 360-credit Diploma in Nursing, the HEQC decided that the legacy Diploma in Nursing be pegged at level 6. Registered Nurses (RNs) with this qualification would be able to access the Advanced Diploma in Midwifery at NQF level 7.*

### 3.3 One-year Diploma in Midwifery

The HEQC concluded that the programme that leads to the **1-year Diploma in Midwifery** shows only partial sufficiency in the depth and volume of learning to fulfil the learning outcomes commensurate with Level 7 SAQA descriptors. From the gap analysis, and considering the contextual application of the level descriptors, the Diploma in Midwifery was found to be in alignment with NQF level 6. It was further found that the practical hours, hence credits, fulfil the WIL learning requirements of the Advanced Diploma in Midwifery and that further learning in this regard would not be required.

For career progression, this means that Registered Nurses (RNs) with a Diploma in Midwifery, in its current form, cannot progress to a Postgraduate Diploma for the purpose of specialization. It would be expedient for Registered Nurses to complete “top-up” modules for the award of an Advanced Diploma in Midwifery. The HEQC made the following decision in this regard.

**Decision 5:** *The determination of outcomes, content, credits and modes of delivery for learning areas found to be lower than NQF level 7 outcomes, is the responsibility of the nursing education sector. It is recommended that the FUNDISA Education Portfolio Committee and the Nursing Education Institutions that have been accredited to offer the Advanced Diploma in Midwifery engage further with a view to reaching an agreement on for additional learning in the form of top-up modules that would result in the full achievement of the NQF level 7 descriptors and which on successful completion would result in the RN achieving an Advanced Diploma in Midwifery. This in turn, would enable progression to a Postgraduate Diploma.*



### 3.4 4-year Diploma in Nursing and Midwifery

The HEQC concluded that there is little alignment of the 4-year Diploma with the Bachelor's degree (General – NQF level 7) and that the current pegging of the programme at NQF level 6 is appropriate. Holders of 4-year Diplomas will not be able to articulate into postgraduate studies without further studies at undergraduate level as there is only partial alignment between the *Diploma in Nursing and Midwifery* and the Bachelor's degree (Professional – NQF level 8). Crucial components of the specifications for the Professional Bachelor's Degree are missing. These include preparation for postgraduate studies and the level and depth of theoretical content and the balance between theoretical learning and work integrated learning. Therefore the 4-year Diploma is not aligned to a level 8 qualification.

The HEQC took the following decisions which provide several alternatives to enable career progression:

**Decision 6:** *Candidates who have completed the 4-year Diploma in Nursing and Midwifery (R425 programme) will be given the opportunity to register for a NQF level 8 Bachelor of Nursing degree and can be granted a maximum of 240 credits from their Diploma towards completing the Bachelor of Nursing programme. The students will then exit with a Bachelor of Nursing degree and a transcript of credits which can be used for application for admission to postgraduate study.*

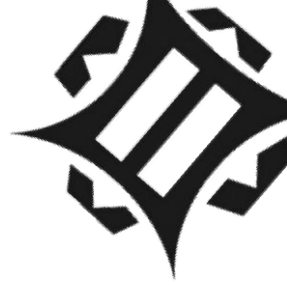
**Decision 7:**  *Holders of the 4-year Diploma in Nursing and Midwifery that are registered as nurses and midwives with the SANC, will be given the opportunity to register for either a purpose-designed Advanced Diploma or a purpose designed 3-year degree for which they could be granted credits for 50% of the programme in order to obtain a qualification at NQF level 7. Completion of such a programme would grant nurses/graduates access to a Postgraduate Diploma to obtain a specialist nursing qualification.*

## 4. Conclusion

The critical importance of a sustainable nursing workforce for health systems strengthening and improving health outcomes, is well known. Key to this is a greater investment in improving the educational, professional development and regulatory environment for nurses.

To ensure the retention of nurses within the profession, and growth in the nursing pipeline, clear progression opportunities for diplomates and graduates from legacy nursing programmes, is integral to sustainability, requiring a novel and practical approach to their alignment with the HEQSF.

The articulation and progression pathways presented in this document will assist in making this happen.



The HEQC would like to extend its appreciation to the Advisory Task Team and all the stakeholders represented for their commitment in taking this work forward.

Yours sincerely,



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**Whitfield Green,**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

**Date: 12 September 2022**

