

SAQA welcomes NQF Amendment Bill

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) has commended the role players who have worked to get the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Amendment Bill through Parliamentary processes.



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SAQA on Monday thanked Higher Education and Training Minister Naledi Pandor and the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training for being at the forefront of the amendment bill, which is now awaiting the President's signature.

The NQF Amendment Bill aims to protect the integrity of the South African education and training system by giving SAQA the legal responsibility to verify qualifications and part-qualifications (an assessed unit of learning that is registered as part of a qualification).

The bill makes provision for the registration by the Higher Education and Training Department of all private education institutions and skills development providers, as well as for the accreditation of these providers by the Quality Councils.

It further makes provision for organs of State, employers, education institutions, skills development providers and Quality Councils to refer qualifications and part-qualifications to SAQA for verification and evaluation.

The bill also provides for the formulation of criteria for evaluating foreign qualifications.

“This means that in the case of national qualifications and part-qualifications, SAQA must verify that they are authentic. In the case of foreign qualifications, SAQA must first verify that they are authentic and then compare them with South African qualifications for placement within the South African NQF. By so doing, the quality of both national and foreign qualifications would be protected.

“The bill clearly defines authentic qualifications and part-qualifications. It also defines misrepresented as well as fraudulent qualifications. In the event that a qualification or part-qualification is found to be misrepresented or fraudulent, it will appear in the register of misrepresented qualifications and part-qualifications or fraudulent qualifications and part-qualifications. This will deter would-be qualification fraudsters from misrepresenting qualifications,” SAQA CEO Joe Samuels explained.

Another form of deterrent is the imposition of penalties to not only the qualification fraudsters but also to education institutions and skills development providers that falsely claim that they are registered and accredited to offer qualifications and part-qualifications, Samuels said.

“Hence, it is a criminal offence for an education institution or education skills provider to falsely claim to be registered and accredited, let alone offer qualifications that are not registered on the NQF. The penalties range from five to 10 years imprisonment or a fine or both. This means that learners will not be taken for a ride by unscrupulous providers,” Samuels said.

The penalties are not limited to qualification holders and providers but, also extend to anyone who makes or causes a false entry into the National Learners' Records Database or the misrepresented or fraudulent database.

Samuels welcomed the changes brought about by the bill as they seek to protect the public against unscrupulous education and training providers, and also protect government and businesses from hiring people who do not have authentic qualifications.

“SAQA will continue to work together with all stakeholders to ensure that the quality of our education system is maintained and enhanced. SAQA will also ensure that once the bill is signed into law, it will be implemented for the benefit of all living in South Africa,” Samuels said.

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