

Draft Policy Statement – Naming of NQF Qualifications

Background

Stakeholders at the NQF Review Conference held at Swakopmund in 2013 gave consideration to amendments to the nomenclature for the qualification types on the NQF. The focus of the considerations was a suggestion that certificate and diploma qualifications be assigned different names (eg, Advanced, Higher, Foundation, etc) rather than continuing to use the requirement that the NQF Level must be part of the title of such qualifications. The suggestion was made principally because of an assertion that users of the NQF did not understand the status of qualifications that were, seemingly, named in the same way.

The consensus recommendation from stakeholders at the Conference was that new names not be assigned to the qualification types.

In order to give effect to this recommendation it was considered necessary to amend the specifications for qualification titles in the Regulations, particularly the permitted use of additional, qualifying text in qualification titles.

Results

Recommended amendment of text for the NQF Regulations has been developed in the following Policy Statement regarding the naming of NQF qualifications. In general, the restatement:

- retains the need for the exit level of the qualification to be stated in the title for certificate and diploma qualifications
- precludes the use of any free text in a qualification title before the qualification type except for the (as protected) use of 'National' or 'Namibian' OR the name of the awarding provider
- retains the availability of free, qualifying text in a qualification title after the qualification type where this adds to understanding of the predominant subject area of the qualification or any specialisations contained in the structure of the qualification
- retains the exclusion of trademarked products, training and assessment material, or commercial organisations in the title of a qualification.

This restated Policy will inform amendments to the Regulations in due course. **The information shown in the policy statement would become operational on a date to be set by the NQA Council.**

Whilst stakeholders suggested that no additional names be assigned the development of this Draft Policy Statement has identified the desirability of:

- adding two new qualification types able to be registered at NQF Level 8 in order that the internationally accepted reference to postgraduate certificates and diplomas, and, as a result, and
- limiting the registration of NQF Certificates to NQF Levels 1 – 7, with the exit level of certification retained as being a requisite component of the title of each certificate qualification, and
- limiting the registration of NQF Diplomas to NQF Levels 5 – 7, with the exit level of certification remaining as a requisite requirement in the name of the diploma.

Should the above bulleted points be accepted, it is recommended that:

- new specifications be developed for Postgraduate Certificates and Postgraduate Diplomas as reflecting international practices and as suggested in this document – with such new specifications to be recorded with the specifications for other qualification types (as currently shown in Annexure C of the NQF Regulations)
- the current minimum NQF Credit requirements at the exit level of the relevant qualifications be retained for Certificate and Diploma qualifications.

Transitional arrangements to accommodate the new policy requirements have also been suggested.

Policy statement: Naming of Qualifications on the NQF of Namibia and the use of additional, qualifying text in qualification titles

- a) Qualification titles must be:
- concise
 - distinctive
 - clearly indicative of the content area of the qualification
 - an accurate representation of the nature of the ability being certificated.
- b) The qualification title must specify one of the approved terms used to describe the NQF qualification type.
- c) The qualification type must state an approved NQF Classification System category.
- d) The format for expressing the title of a qualification shall, therefore, be:

Qualification Type in NQF Classification Category

- e) Where the NQF qualification is a Certificate or Diploma, the NQF Level must be shown in brackets at the end of the qualification title.

Qualification Type in NQF Classification Category (NQF Level)

- f) Additional text may prefix the Qualification Type in the title only when the text indicates:
- that the qualification is entitled to use the terms 'National' or 'Namibian' as protected under the NQF Regulations, or
 - the name of the awarding provider where such inclusion shall distinguish the title from similarly-named qualifications.
- g) Additional text may be used after the NQF Classification Category where:
- such text significantly and accurately clarifies an area of specialisation covered by the qualification, or
 - such text accurately refers to any structural Strand contained within the qualification, or
 - an approved Qualifier is being used in any qualification registered at or above NQF Level 7.
- h) Any text used after the NQF Classification Category must be shown in brackets in the title.

i) Qualification titles may not include reference to:

- any trademarked product
- any commercial organisation
- training or assessment materials used in preparing people for qualification attainment.

Transitional arrangements

Registered qualifications affected by this new Policy Statement shall be allowed to retain their current titles until such time as the scheduled review date for the qualification.

Registered qualifications that have been awarded will continue to be recognised as NQF qualifications. There is no requirement that the wording on issued parchments must be replaced and the certification be re-issued.

Possible Policy Statement: Specifications for new qualification types on the NQF of Namibia

The following qualification types have been added to the list of NQF qualification types:

- Postgraduate Certificate
- Postgraduate Diploma

Both of these qualification types are to be registered at NQF Level 8.

Both qualification types recognise attainment of deepened, broadened and/or specialised academic, professional or work-related knowledge and skills (both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary) in advance of qualifications in the same or different subject areas at NQF Level 7. The qualifications do not necessarily require the completion of supervised research.

Entry to these qualifications would, normally, require attainment of a qualification at NQF Level 7 or work or community-related experience of a comparable volume and complexity as required by a Bachelor degree.

Postgraduate Certificates require a minimum of 60 NQF Credits clearly related to the broad outcomes descriptors for NQF Level 8 or above.

Postgraduate Diplomas require a minimum of 120 NQF Credits of which a minimum of 72 Credits are related to the broad outcomes descriptors for NQF Level 8 or above.

The attainment of postgraduate qualifications would likely enable people to undertake professional and/or highly skilled work. Postgraduate Diplomas could, additionally, be pathway to further learning and, consequently, may allow progression to studies towards the completion of a Masters degree at NQF Level 9.

Rationale and Practice

Naming of qualifications

1. Sub-regulation 3 (2)¹ of the NQF Regulations (2006) states that the NQF shall consist of the following qualification types upon confirmation by the NQA that relevant qualifications: met the specifications for the type of qualification (as shown in Annexure C of the Regulations) and were of registration quality (ie, that they met the registration criteria provided in Annexure G of the Regulations):

- certificates
- diplomas
- bachelor degree
- bachelor honours degree
- professional bachelor degree
- masters degree
- doctoral degree.

Annexures C and G state that, broadly, the NQF qualifications would be:

- Certificates
- Diplomas
- Degrees.

2. Annexure C of the NQF Regulations states that:

- Certificates may be awarded between Levels 1 and 8 inclusive. Distinguishing the different awarding levels *may* (emphasis added) be able to be made by the inclusion of the awarding Level in the title of the qualification
- Certificates may be awarded between Levels 5 and 8 inclusive. Distinguishing the different awarding levels may be able to be made by the inclusion of the awarding Level in the title of the qualification.

The same Annexure includes the following rules regarding the Credit make-up of certificate and diploma qualifications:

- Certificates must represent a minimum of 40 NQF Credits of which a minimum of 40 are at or above the level of certification
- Diplomas must represent a minimum of 120 NQF Credits of which a minimum of 72 must be at or above the level of certification (ie, at or above Level 5).

¹Sub-regulation 3 (3) states that the NQF shall also consist of unit standards duly recognized by the NQA as being of registration quality. 'Registration quality' is defined in the Regulations as being in "full compliance with criteria established by the NQA under these regulations for the registration of qualifications and unit standards on the NQF".

3. Specific criteria for the developing titles for qualifications in each permissible type on the NQF have been given in Annexure G of the NQF Regulations. Principally, the title must:
 - specify the nomenclature for one of the qualification types
 - be distinctive and relevant
 - include a NQF Classification category² that accurately indicates the predominant subject area of the qualification
 - include the level of certification if a Certificate or Diploma.

4. Additional, free text is permitted under the 2006 Regulations where necessary to enhance people's understanding of the *coverage* (emphasis added) of the qualification. The additional, free or qualifying text *may* refer to:
 - the significant discipline area or work area subsets (ie, for any significant specialisation for the qualification – as a Qualifier does for degree qualifications)

For example: Certificate in Tourism and Hospitality (Housekeeping) Level 3 where Tourism and Hospitality is the Classification category and Housekeeping is the specialisation area
 - the type of Certificate or Diploma

For example, National or Namibian Certificate in ...; or Vocational Certificate in..., or Foundation/Advanced/Higher Certificate in
 - Strand names recognising specific skill sets (similar to the first bullet point)

For example, Certificate in Mining Technology with Specialist Strands in Opencast, Underground and Marine (Level 3).

5. A number of the international NQFs do have specific terms in front of the type of qualification. For example, 'Higher', 'Advanced', etc. These frameworks (such as the Malaysian and South African systems) are essentially sub-framework systems rather than the unified system in Namibia. In some of the sub-framework systems, there are potential problems where the term 'Higher' may be wanted in the different frameworks, yet at different or same NQF Levels.

6. Given the discussions at the NQF Review Conference it is suggested that the use of free text not be used before the qualification type except in the case of the use of the terms National or Namibian (as protected under the provisions Sub-Regulation 6 and Annexure D of the NQF Regulations). The only other possible use of a prefix could, perhaps, be the

²Fields, Subfields or Domains or, generally in the case of degrees, a Designator and Qualifier – see Annexure B of the NQF Regulations

insertion of the provider name as this could be the only way of making each title of a qualification distinctive (see 11 following).

7. A decision to preclude the use of free text in the title before the type of qualification would have consequences for many of the qualifications registered on the NQF of Namibia. The majority of those affected would be those presently carrying the title 'National Vocational Certificate'.

Of the 197 qualifications received by the NQA in 2013, 51 had titles that could be affected by the suggested amendment to the use of free text before the qualification type. The majority of these were National Vocational Certificates. Of the titles possibly affected, only 2 have been registered.

Of the 103 qualifications received in 2012, 20 would be affected. Of these 20, 12 have been registered.

8. A decision to preclude the use of free text preceding the qualification type could be made, however, applicable only from the date that the decision was formalised by the NQA Council. Affected qualifications could be amended at the time of their scheduled review.
9. The use of free or additional text after the statement of the qualification type in the title could be retained where such text added additional clarity as to the scope of recognition given by the qualification – that it referred to the specialisation area or Strand. The current policy that additional text should only be used where it *meaningfully* enhances peoples' understanding of the nature of the qualification should remain. Any additional text should, however, be shown in brackets so as to distinguish it from the NQF Classification category being used in the title.

Of the qualifications submitted for registration in 2012 and 2013 only 3 had the provider name in the title. These had not yet been registered.

10. Annexure G of the NQF Regulations (2006) makes a statement on terms that are excluded from titles of qualifications:

- trademarked products – a Certificate in Motorola Phone Maintenance (Level 3) would not be permitted
- training and assessment material – a Certificate in Cambridge Syllabus History (Level 3) would not be permitted
- provider bodies – a Top College Certificate in Excellence (Level 1) would not be permitted
- commercial organisations – a Certificate in First National Bank Customer Care (Level 2) would not be permitted nor would the McDonalds Certificate in Hamburger Production (Level 2) be permitted.

11. A key requirement for the naming of qualifications is that each title must be distinctive. Given the provision for provider-awarded, portal qualifications to be registered on the NQF, the inclusion of the provider name may be the only way of providing for distinctiveness. For example:
- Top School Certificate in Qualification Naming (Level 3)
 - Top College Certificate in Qualification Naming (Level 3)
12. Alternatively, where there are more than one (provider) qualifications using the same title, the provider name could appear on the register of the NQF qualifications but not be shown in the title.
13. Of the 103 qualifications submitted for registration in 2012, only three used what are already stated as exclusions – these had a provider name and have not yet been registered. Again, if the use of a provider name is retained as an exclusion, any qualification affected could have its title amended at the time of the scheduled review.

Certificates and Diplomas at the higher levels of the NQF

14. Reference is made in Annexure C of the NQF Regulations of the term *Post Graduate Certificate* where certificates are awarded in advance of the level of certification for a Bachelor degree (ie, NQF Level 7) and that, generally, recognise ongoing or continual professional development in the same subject as an earlier degree.
15. A similar reference is given for diploma qualifications issued in advance of the level of certification for a Bachelor degree. Here, *Post Graduate* can refer to extended or deepened knowledge and skills, awareness and familiarity of current thinking and research, and instruction in relevant research methodologies for the principal subjects of an earlier degree or other degree.
16. Across international NQFs the registration of Graduate and/or Postgraduate qualifications is common. In general, 'Graduate' qualifications (certificates and diplomas) are at the same level of ability as a Bachelor Degree and Postgraduate (certificates but often only diplomas) at the same level of ability as a Bachelor Honours degree. For example:
 - Australia has both Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas at the same level of certification as a Bachelor Honours degree
 - New Zealand has Graduate Certificates and Diplomas at the same level of certification as a Bachelor degree and Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas as exit qualifications at the same level of certification as an Honours degree
 - England has Graduate Certificates and Diplomas at the same level of an Honours degree and Postgraduate certificates and diplomas at the same level of a Masters degree
 - South Africa has Postgraduate Diplomas only, registered at the same level of certification as an Honours degree. Undergraduate certificates and diplomas are permitted from Levels 5 to Level 7 inclusive (Level 7 being an exit Bachelor degree)
 - Malaysia allows for Graduate and Postgraduate qualifications as key supports to lifelong learning. Graduate certificates and diplomas are at the same level as a Bachelor degree. Postgraduate certificates and diplomas usually require a Bachelor-level qualification and have a predominance of learning at a Masters degree (there is no Bachelor Honours degree).
17. As well as the level of the qualification, the distinction between 'graduate' and 'postgraduate' can sometimes be delineated by the field of study. Graduate qualifications are often in a new discipline and allow bridging to postgraduate or Honours-level studies in the new area. Postgraduate qualifications are often professional or academic specialisations in the same discipline as an earlier qualification at the preceding NQF Level (or equivalent work or professional experience). Postgraduate diplomas are often used as an alternative entry pathway to a Masters degree in the same discipline area.

18. The delineation between graduate and postgraduate can, therefore, be an area that creates confusion. For this reason, it may be simpler for Namibia to adopt the term 'postgraduate' only as an additional qualification type on the NQF. Undergraduate qualifications can be accommodated using the present specifications for certificates and diplomas, with an amendment that these only be registered up to and including NQF Level 7. Certificates and Diplomas at NQF Level 8 would carry the term 'postgraduate' in the title.
19. Learning volumes associated with these types of qualifications vary, both in volumes and volumes at certain Levels. Certificates generally require less learning than diplomas – about half as much in Australia and New Zealand. In England, certificates usually require at least 1/3 of an academic year to complete, diplomas requiring at least 2/3 of an academic year. In South Africa, postgraduate diplomas must be a minimum of 120 credits (less than a full academic year of about 1800 notional hours).

References

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