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QCTO DRAFT CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY

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The QCTO Curriculum and Assessment Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) was established in 2008 by the Skills Development Act to perform the following functions as set out in Chapter 6C – Section 26H, 26F and 26J of the SDA (Act No 97 of 1998):

- Design and develop occupational standards and qualifications and submit them to the South African Qualifications Authority for registration on the National Qualifications Framework;
- Establish and maintain occupational standards and qualifications;
- Ensure the quality of occupational standards and qualifications and learning in and for the workplace;
- Promote the objectives of the National Qualifications Framework;
- Liaise with the National Skills Authority on the suitability and adequacy of occupational standards and qualifications and on the quality of learning in and for the workplace;
- Liaise with the South African Qualifications Authority, other Quality Councils and professional bodies responsible for establishing standards and qualifications or the quality assurance of standards and qualifications; and
- Perform any other prescribed function.

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Among the tasks undertaken by the QCTO with a view to operationalise its responsibilities are the development of a qualifications sub-framework for trades and occupations and the design of curricula leading to the qualifications recognised in the sub-framework. This document presents the QCTO curriculum development and assessment model. A second document will address the accreditation of providers and assessment centres. A third document will cover monitoring and evaluation. Together the three documents constitute the QCTO's quality assurance model.

2. CURRICULUM FRAMING CONCEPTS

2.1 Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework

The Occupational Qualifications sub Framework is built on occupations as defined in the Organising Framework of Occupations.

2.2 Occupation

An ***"occupation"***[1] is a cluster or group of similar jobs that share many common occupational tasks of similar complexity and require similar performance across different processes and industries.

The range and depth of the occupational tasks to be clustered under the heading of a single occupation is a technical and organisational matter as well as a matter requiring social agreement.

2.3 Occupational Profile

The occupational profile includes a statement of the purpose and tasks to be performed by an individual.

Each occupational task is defined as a combination of the product or service to be delivered, the occupational responsibility towards that product or service and the occupational context within which that product or service is provided. An occupational task is therefore not a mechanical or rote completion of actions and is frequently internationally benchmarked. There are seldom more than 8 occupational tasks associated with a specific occupation.

The occupational profile is developed by expert practitioners (practitioners in the occupation).

2.4 Knowledge, Skills and Occupations

The performance of occupational tasks is underpinned by knowledge and skills. Knowledge and skills can be classified depending on its content, structure, the manner in which individuals are inducted into it, and the nature and type of mechanisms for its regulation. Occupational (including professional) knowledge and skills are characteristically determined by contextual coherence, that is by a set of external requirements which guide the performance/practice of the occupation. Taking this into account it is possible to identify three components involved in occupations:

- Conceptual knowledge / theory and information (this knowledge is acquired systematically through a set of purposefully organised learning activities – this component is offered by a skills development provider)

- Practical / applied knowledge and skills (this knowledge focuses on the ability to perform certain skills at a particular level safely, productively, within legal prescripts and with due regard for social responsibility – this component may be acquired in a simulated environment)

- Work experience (this experience focuses on the ability to integrate conceptual knowledge and practical skills in concrete situations in the work place)

A combination of all three components is necessary to obtain competence in terms of qualifications in the occupational sub-framework and the selection and proportion of these is driven by the occupational purpose as well as the need to ensure progression. These three curriculum components are described further in section 3.2.

[1] Occupations include trades and professions.

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2.5 Occupational Qualification

The purpose of an occupational qualification is to specify the requirements that a learner must meet to be certified as competent to practice an occupation, or a specialisation related to an occupation, reflected on the Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO).

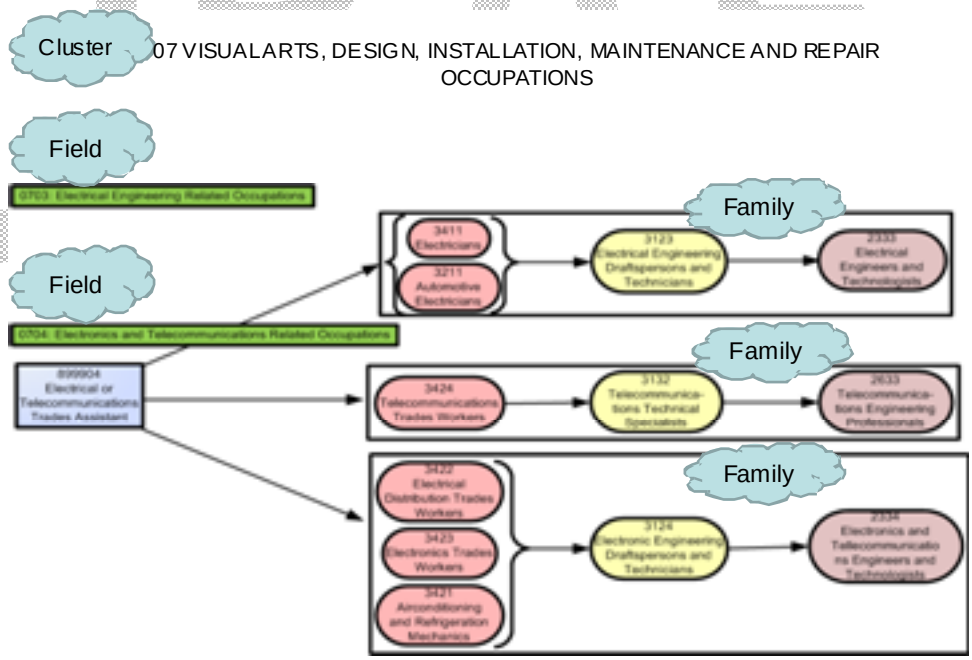
The SDA defines an occupational qualification as 'a qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession, resulting from work-based learning and consisting of knowledge unit standards, practical unit standards and work experience unit standards'.

Occupational qualifications or part qualifications will be awarded after a summative assessment for an occupational qualification or award in terms of the rules of combination. The assessment is based on the exit level outcomes which are derived from the occupational purpose and tasks. Formal recognition of competence is recognised by certification.

2.6 Progression

The QCTO will develop related occupational qualifications and associated curricula within a National Occupational Pathway Framework (NOPF) family to ensure progression from the lower levels to higher levels in progressive steps[2].

The diagram below presents an example of what constitutes a NOPF family.



[2] See Annexure A for more information on progression pathways.

3. OCCUPATIONAL CURRICULA

3.1 Occupational Curriculum

An occupational curriculum is derived from the occupational profile and is the purposeful combination of conceptual, practical and work experience knowledge and skills in order to achieve a certain occupational qualification. An occupational curriculum is a guide

- on the content to be covered within the three learning components (conceptual knowledge, practical skills and work experience)
- to ensure consistency in the provision and internal assessment of the associated occupational qualification
  - to Skills Development Providers
  - to develop lesson plans, learning material and assessments (internal)
  - on requirements for accreditation
- for the development of the external summative assessment

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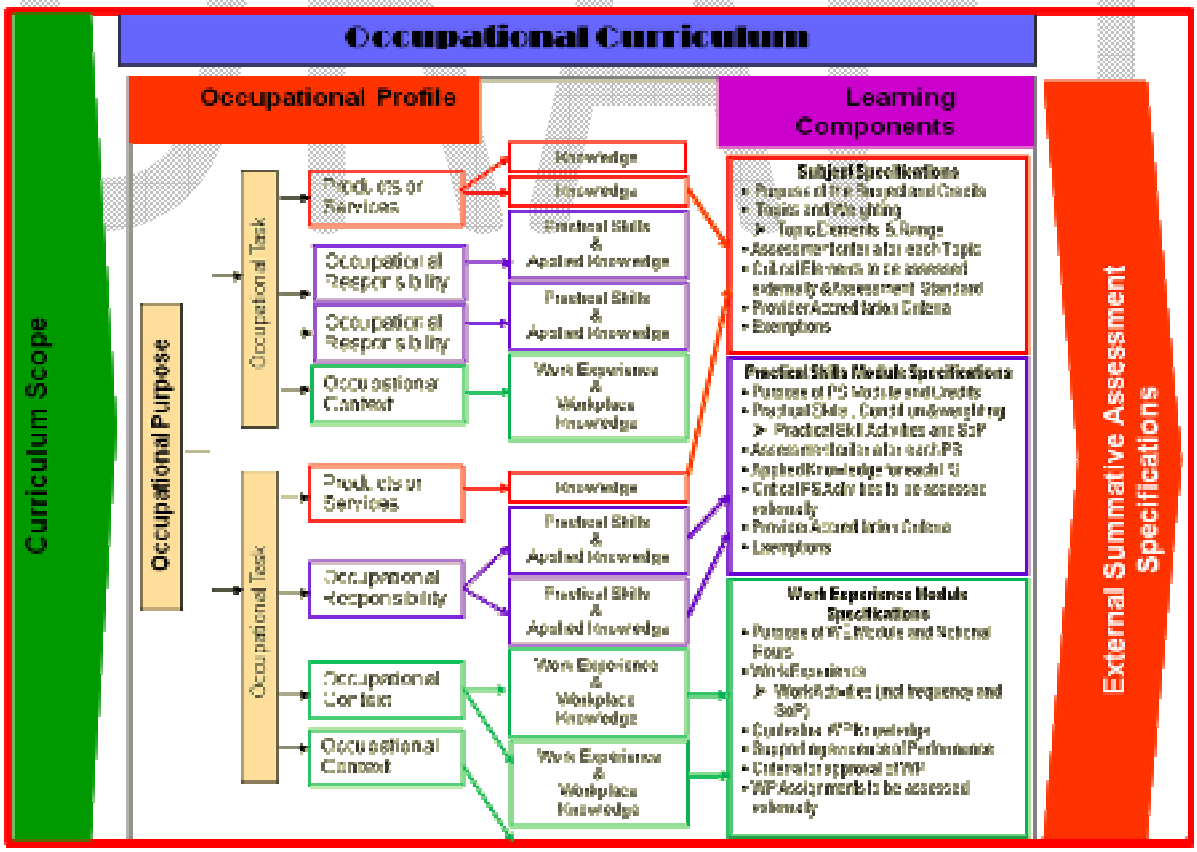
An occupational curriculum comprises an occupational profile and specifications for each of the three learning components of the curriculum. The figure below provides an outline of framework and relationships.



*At the higher levels the range of tasks to be performed are defined in relation to the scope and depth of the context.

For the purposes of learning and assessment one or more components can be integrated.

3.2 Learning Components

The Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998) identifies three components in its definition of occupational qualifications: "… a qualification …… consisting of knowledge unit standards, practical unit standards and work experience unit standards"The curriculum model recognizes that expert practice requires a complex interplay of knowledge and skills in a range of working environments; however the pathway to that end requires the disaggregation of the different component parts and the development of a reflexive ability to apply the knowledge and skills to new contexts. Each component will embody the critical cross field outcomes.

The curriculum specifies the requirements to be covered in each of these components as described below. Together the components will constitute 100 %, however no component will constitute less than 20 %.

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3.2.1 Knowledge Component

The knowledge component comprises various subject specifications. Knowledge here refers to discipline or conceptual knowledge (including theory) from a recognised disciplinary field found on subject classification systems such as the Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) which an individual has to have in order to perform the tasks identified in the occupational profile proficiently. The knowledge identified is frequently common to a group of related occupations at the same level in the same NOPF family and the level of knowledge to be covered will be built on the knowledge base held by those entering from lower level occupations within the relevant NOPF family.

The subject specifications are developed by educationists based on inputs from expert practitioners and are packaged as standardised courses to enable providers to plan their delivery and access standardised funding.

The subject specifications guide skills development providers on:

- the topics and elements thereof that should be covered in the development of lesson plans and learning materials
- recognized programme or course exemptions (including RPL)
- internal assessment activities
- provider programme accreditation requirements

3.2.2 Practical Skills Component

The practical skills component derives from the roles to be performed. It comprises various practical skill module specifications. Practical skills are defined as the ability to do something, with dexterity and expertise. Skill grows with experience and practice, and could lead to unconscious and automatic actions. Practical skills are more than just the following of rule based actions and includes practical / applied knowledge.

The purpose of practical skills training is to develop the needed skills (including applied / practical / functional knowledge) to operate safely and or accurately in the actual working environment (so as not to cause damage to people, equipment, systems and the business). Practical skills are therefore mostly developed in a safe, simulated environment (such as a workshop) in preparation for actual work.

The module specifications are developed by expert practitioners and trainers based on the practical skills (including the applied / practical / functional knowledge) required to execute the occupational responsibilities in terms of the tasks identified in the occupational profile.

Each module specification provides guidance to skills development providers on:

- the various practical skills, associated practical skill activities and applied / practical / functional knowledge that should be covered in the development of lesson plans and learning materials.
- recognized programme or course exemptions (including RPL)
- assessment activities (to be conducted as part of the internal assessment)
- provider programme accreditation requirements

3.2.3 Work Experience Component

Work experience is defined as the exposure and interactions required to practice the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes required in the workplace. Work experience includes the acquiring of contextual or in depth knowledge of the specific working environment.

The work experience module specifications are developed by expert practitioners based on the work experience activities required within the specific occupational context in terms of the tasks identified in the occupational profile. Work experience modules will be reflected as work experience unit standards in the occupational qualification.

Each work experience module provides guidance to workplaces on:

- the various work activities (including frequency and range) and associated contextual knowledge that the learner must be exposed to and interact with
- the statement of work experience that must be completed
- approval requirements

The purpose of work experience is to structure the experiences and activities (including contextual knowledge) the learner needs to be exposed to in order to become competent in the relevant occupation.

4. ASSESSMENT

4.1 Internal Assessment or Assessment Against Curriculum Components

Knowledge, practical skills and work experience will be assessed by accredited skills development providers and approved workplaces in accordance with the criteria outlined in the various

curriculum components. This assessment is referred to as internal assessment or assessment against curriculum components and culminates in statements of results by accredited skills development providers. For work experience statements of work experience will be issued by approved workplaces.

The same assessment criteria linked to each curriculum component will be applied when conducting assessments for the purpose of recognition of prior learning (RPL) already completed in some prior site and for identifying learning gaps.

4.2 External Summative Assessment of Occupational Qualifications or Part Qualifications

The purpose of an external summative assessment or assessment against the occupational qualification or part qualification is to promote consistency and credibility of the occupational qualifications or promote articulation of part qualification issued. The criteria for this assessment is specified in the assessment specifications document and is also captured in the occupational qualifications document.

Assessment of the individual components is not sufficient to confirm competence to perform an occupation and the associated occupational tasks. Assessment of occupational competence is conducted by registered assessors applying nationally standardised assessment instruments and procedures at accredited assessment centres or registered sites.

This assessment may also be required for part qualifications (not leading to occupational competence). This assessment is referred to as external summative assessment or assessment against the occupational qualification or part qualification and results in a QCTO certification.

Skills development providers may apply for accreditation or registration to conduct the external summative assessments.

In order to qualify for an external assessment, learners must provide proof of completion of all required components by means of statements of results and work experience.

4.3 Assessment of Foundational Learning

The QCTO requires that all learners undertaking occupational programmes registered on NQF levels 3-4 are assessed against the Foundational Learning part qualifications and if found "not yet competent" must complete the specified communication and mathematical literacy courses. These are not an entry requirement but must be completed prior to the external summative assessment. The completion of this curriculum is over and above the knowledge components outlined above.

5. QUALITY PARTNERS

The QCTO uses Development Quality Partners to manage the development of occupational qualifications and Assessment Quality Partners to develop standardised assessment instruments for external summative assessment and to manage external assessment.

6. COORDINATION OF COMPONENT PROVISION

The QCTO will ensure, for occupational qualifications, that a single agent is responsible to assist learners to navigate through all three learning components and have access to the external summative assessment.

7. CERTIFICATION

The QCTO will issue certificates for all external summative assessments of occupational qualifications or part qualifications.

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ANNEXURE A: PROGRESSION

Progression from one occupational level to the next, as envisaged by the National Occupational Pathway Framework, will be designed into the system of occupational qualifications. Quality Development Partners for occupational qualifications within a single NOPF family will be required to collaborate together to ensure that learners are able to progress from one qualification to the next by completing a progressive series of occupational programmes to ensure that an occupational progression route is available to workers.

This will not prevent learners from pursuing alternative routes provided for by the other two Quality Councils. However in addition there should be 'bridges' between the programmes overseen by the different Quality Councils.

These arrangements are illustrated in the following diagram:

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Progression system overview

NQF level	Education qualification title					Example:
			Occupational Qualifications			
		Articulation	*Knowledge*	*Practical*	*Work Experience*	
	ABET 1	ABE (T from occupation)		***National Occupational Award***		**Survivalist activity**
	ABET 2					*e.g. EPWP, NYS etc.*
	ABET 3					
1	**ABET 4**	*Additional*	K 1	***National Occupational Qualification***		**Basic occupations**
2			K 2			
3			K 3			
4	**Adult Matric**	*Additional*	K 4	***National Occupational Qualification***		**Trade or Equivalent**
5	**Higher Cert.**		K 5			
6	**Adv. Cert. /**		K 6	***National Occupational Qualification***		**"Para-professional"**
7	**Diploma**	*Additional*	K 7			
8	**Degree**	*Additional*		***National Occupational Qualification***		**Professional / Manager**
9						
10						
11						

Umalusi and CHE accredited Providers

QCTO Accredited Programmes/ providers

QCTO Accredited Workshops / training centres

QCTO Delegated to SETA/ ESDA Approved Workplaces

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