

# Verifying public service QUALIFICATIONS

**STAMP OF APPROVAL: Verifying qualifications will help identify possible fraudulent qualifications or any misrepresentation by employees and individuals applying for positions in the public service.**

**Shirley Lloyd**

**T**HE Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, tasked the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to develop and publish a Register of Fraudulent Qualifications in response to many high-profile cases of qualification misrepresentation being highlighted.

The Minister has stated that fraudulent qualifications undermined the public service as well as the entire post-school education and training system in South Africa and that the register and all the other measures will help to address this issue.

Seeing that only a court of law can declare a qualification as fraudulent, work commenced towards establishing a Register of Misrepresented Qualifications and a Register of Fraudulent Qualifications.

The Register of Misrepresented Qualifications will comprise two parts:

Part A will comprise a list of individuals who hold qualifications that are not authentic, or are from institutions that are not accredited or registered; and

Part B will comprise a list of providers that are not registered and/or accredited to offer the qualification in question, or mislead the public in their claims about their programmes or institution.

An individual or provider's name will be entered into the Register of Misrepresented Qualifications after the misrepresentation has been confirmed by SAQA or one of the three Quality Councils.

While work was done on the registers, the Minister also requested that the policy environment around misrepresented and fraudulent qualifications be strengthened.

To this end the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) asked SAQA to spearhead the development of a Draft Policy on Misrepresented Qualifications and Fraudulent Qualifications.

This policy is being used to inform the proposed changes to the NQF Act.

The proposed new NQF Act Bill includes some of the key recommendations contained in the Draft Policy

on Misrepresented and Fraudulent Qualifications.

Once the new NQF Bill becomes a law, the Register of Misrepresented Qualifications and the Register of Fraudulent Qualifications will be established.

Both these registers will be accessible to the public.

Underlying the work of the two registers is the ongoing processes of verifying national qualifications and the evaluation of foreign qualifications that are being carried out on a daily basis by SAQA.

"The verification of qualifications of South African public servants is on track," said Mr Joe Samuels, CEO of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

SAQA is a statutory body that must ensure the further development and implementation of South Africa's National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which

contributes to the full development of each learner and to the social and economic development of the nation at large.

"SAQA verified 72 543 national qualifications during the 2015/16 financial year, and 51 009 national qualifications in the previous year," said Mr Samuels.

"A further 30 foreign qualifications held by public servants were among the 23 622 foreign qualifications that were compared and recognised."

Of the 72 543 national

qualifications that were verified, 94 qualifications had been misrepresented by public servants.

The number had marginally decreased from 106 in the previous financial year. No foreign qualifications were submitted on behalf of public servants had been misrepresented in the past two years.

SAQA began verifying qualifications of public servants in 2009 at the request of the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA).

The DPSA issued a Circular, "Request for Departments to Undertake the Bulk Verification of Employee Qualifications with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)," requesting national and provincial

of prospective employees, members of boards and councils of public entities and consultants used by government.

Provincial and Local Government will also be requested to do likewise.

The cases of teachers' qualifications that are found to be misrepresented or declared fraudulent are dealt with in the DHET, by the University Branch, or by either the South African Council of Educators (SACE) or the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC).

Once these cases are referred to SAQA, a similar process as that relating to public servants, boards and council members of public entities, will happen.

The evaluation of foreign qualifications includes both verification of the qualification and comparison with South African National

● To assist in improving the reliability of data on qualifications captured on systems such as PERSAL; and,

● To establish a comprehensive and reliable aggregated database of the qualifications of public service employees in respect of qualifications verified by SAQA.

The verification of qualifications is also meant to assist in the implementation of the vetting strategy and to identify possible fraudulent qualifications or any misrepresentation by employees and individuals applying for positions in the public service in terms of the qualifications they claim to possess.

Qualifications have been misrepresented if:

The qualification claimed by an individual was not awarded by the provider;

A claimed SAQA Certificate of Evaluation was not issued by SAQA;

The qualification documents or the SAQA Certificate of Evaluation was altered in any way;

The provider is not registered and/or accredited by the relevant authority; or

The qualification is not registered by the relevant authority, or does not form part of a national system of education.

Once SAQA

finds that a qualification is misrepresented or declared fraudulent, the person's name and relevant details are placed on the List of Misrepresented Qualifications.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act will also be proposed for amendment to make misrepresentation or fraudulent qualifications disclosure by the private sector obligatory.

Further, if SAQA pronounces on misrepresentation, the private sector employers ensure steps are taken against perpetrators.

Information on this list is confidential and is mainly for internal use only.

A charge will be laid with the police and once a court has found a person guilty the name will be transferred to the Register of Fraudulent Qualifications as indicated.

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**Fraudulent qualifications undermine the public service as well as the entire post-school education and training system in South Africa.**

Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels.

Therefore, SAQA evaluates foreign qualifications with a view to determining:

Their validity; and

The appropriate level of recognition that each should receive within the South African educational qualifications context – that is in terms of its NQF level which will be indicated on a SAQA Certificate of Evaluation.

This verification undertaking aims to realise the following objectives:

departments to verify their employees' qualifications with SAQA.

This would ensure that the qualifications of all existing government employees were verified and a public service qualifications database could be established.

A following DPSA directive intends extending the directive to include the verification of both national and foreign qualifications