MINISTERIAL TASK TEAM APPOINTED FOR THE REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL POLICY REGARDING FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES: APPROVAL OF DOCUMENTS, POLICY FOR THE NATIONAL CERTIFICATES (VOCATIONAL): QUALIFICATIONS AT LEVELS 2 TO 4 ON THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK, GAZETTED IN GOVERNMENT NOTICE NO. 28677 ON 29 MARCH 2006

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

[A] Conceptual background to the development of the NC(V) qualification

The Report 191 (NATED) programmes – or so-called ‘N-courses’ - offered by colleges are generally well-known and have been in colleges for more than 3 decades. These programmes were designed to support the artisan development system in the Department of Labour, as required by the Manpower Training Act of 1981, and remain the case to date.

Institutional memory (rather than documented records) reflects that the NATED programmes were developed by industry partners. The approval process for the offering of these programmes in colleges, as well as the funding of the programmes, remains unclear as the offerings were provincially determined and consequently highly variable.

Further, given that at the time the colleges generally operated on the fringes of mainstream education, and coupled with the fact that this period preceded the implementation of the national qualifications framework, the routes leading to the registration of the NATED programmes and their implementation were confined to the internal Department of Education processes, based on Ministerial approval.

Curriculum development for colleges was not a function located in the Department of Education as was the obligation in respect of curricula developed
for the schools. This perhaps accounts for the absence of such curriculum development activity over the 2-3 decades and, accordingly, the limitations in the curricula presented in the colleges.

Following the merger of the 152 Technical Colleges into 50 multi-campus FET Colleges in 2002/3, the next major government intervention in the college sector was the Recapitalisation Programme for the financial period 2006/7 to 2008/9. The aim of the Recapitalisation Programme was to reposition the 50 colleges into vibrant and responsive institutions, catering to the education and training needs of the youth aged between 17-24 years, with a view to developing middle to higher end vocational skills over the medium to long term. To this end, R1.9bn was allocated to infrastructure, systems and staff development, teaching and learning resources, and student support.

However, in the absence of a substantive qualification in colleges, finding the context for recapitalization was problematic. Thus, the conceptualization of a new qualification was born out of the need for purpose-driven and targeted development and resourcing of the FET Colleges. In the absence of dedicated funding for curriculum development for college programmes, a portion (comparatively negligible) of the Recapitalisation fund was used for the development and implementation of the NC(V) qualifications and their new curricula.

The new curriculum for the National Certificate (Vocational) - NC(V) – qualifications were developed internally by the Department of Education during 2005/6, approved by the Minister (then DoE), and registered with SAQA at NQF levels 2-4, and introduced in colleges in January 2007, starting with the NC(V) Level 2. In 2008, the NC(V) Level 3 was introduced, and the Level 4 qualification was rolled-out in 2009 for the first time. It was the first fully-fledged set of vocational qualification for young people ever offered in South

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1 It must, however, be pointed out that whilst the curriculum development for the schools ‘was better than for the Colleges’ this was by no means in and of itself satisfactory. Initiatives on curriculum development were very fragments pre-1994 and Umalusi actually notes that it experienced difficulty locating Senior Certificate syllabi for its maintaining standards research.

2 Discussions with and feedback from Dr Molapo Qhobela VP: Institutional development, Unisa.
Africa. The defining character of the three qualifications is that they are discipline-based as opposed to being an ‘occupational’ programme.³

The development of the initial 11 vocational programmes, which are discipline-based specializations, was funded from the Recapitalisation Fund (R1.9 bn) allocated to colleges over the 3 year life of the fund. The development of the additional 8 programmes subsequent to the recapitalization process has been largely funded by stakeholders, which to date includes the chemicals and metals industries, and several national government departments. These government departments include the Department of Safety and Security in the development of the ‘Safety in Society’ programme for the South African Police Service, as well as the Department of Tourism in terms of support for the Tourism and Hospitality programme, and the Department of Public Works in aspects of the Building and Civil Construction programme.

The curriculation process for the NC(V) was managed as a special project in the Department of Education, drawing mainly on college lecturers and augmented by experts in the respective vocational and occupational fields. Although efforts were rendered to engage a wide spectrum of stakeholders, particularly from industry, the design and duration of the qualification found little favour among employers, resulting in poor participation in the development process. Nonetheless, the Department undertook extensive referencing of the draft curricula, which disappointingly yielded limited concrete input. However, wherever possible practitioners and experts were consulted and engaged in the finalization of the curricula of the several specializations.

[B] Purpose of the NC(V) qualification (when introduced)

The National Certificate (Vocational) and its counterpart, the National Senior Certificate (NSC), were designed to allow learners the possibility of entry into higher education. The NSC, however, would allow learners to access a variety of

³The distinction between the two qualifications as understood by the Ministerial Task team is that the ‘occupational’ programme is distinctly job focussed; whilst the discipline-based qualification is of a somewhat broader mien.
qualifications and areas of interest, while NC(V) learners would be more narrowly directed towards study in a field related to the vocational designation reflected on their certificate. As indicated above, the introduction of the NC(V) was intended to revitalize the FET College *milieu* through the introduction of a major qualification which would have a distinctly vocational cast. However, the fundamental similarity between the NSC and the NC(V) is that both qualifications effectively map out separate routes towards the achievement of an NQF Level 4 exit qualification, with the distinct priority of equipping learners to be responsible citizens in a democratic society.\(^4\) The relevant difference, however, is in the content of the qualifications particularly in respect of the compulsory practical character of the NC(V) curricula. Thus, whilst the two qualifications are equivalent, they are certainly not the same. In this regard, reference is made to the purpose statements as set out in the SAQA Qualification ID in respect of both qualifications.

According to the SAQA Qualification ID 50441, National Certificate: Vocational, Level 4:

The National Certificate: Vocational, Level 4, is aimed at learners in FET colleges. These learners leave the FET college either for higher education or for employment in the workplace.

The National Certificate Vocational, Level 4, aims to equip learners adequately for entry into the world of work by providing them with practical knowledge and skills related to a particular socioeconomic or vocational sector. It also has as its objective to provide learners with ways to cope with the social, economic and cultural challenges they face in their daily lives.

Similarly, SAQA Qualification ID 49647, National Senior Certificate states:

These [National Senior Certificate] learners leave schooling either for further learning or for employment in the workplace...

The [NSC] has the objectives of:

\(^4\) However, at this juncture it must be noted that this has been one of the challenges of the NC(V) in that students sometimes take up the NC(V) after completing the NSC. This is considered to be repetitive and an unreasonable duplication and a waste of time for the affected student.
Equipping learners irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender or disability with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country.

Providing access to higher education and vocational education and/or occupational qualifications in the further education or higher education bands.

Facilitating the transition of learners from education institutions to the workplace ...

Further reference to the NC(V) qualification policy [National Certificate (Vocational), Chapter 1, 1(3)] reinforces the dual purposes that the NC(V) qualification is intended to serve. It is specifically pointed out that:

The National Certificate (Vocational) at Level 4 on the NQF enables learners to acquire the necessary knowledge, practical skills, applied competence and understanding for employment in a particular occupation or trade, or entrance into Higher Education... [my emphasis]. The National Certificate (Vocational) at Level 4 on the NQF will offer programmes in the form of subjects that will consist of academic knowledge and theory integrated with the practical skills and values specific to each vocational area.

In addition, the purpose statement [Chapter 1, 1(2)] includes the statement that the qualification is to be offered in public and private colleges, as well as other institutions offering FET vocational programmes. This signals an acknowledgment that the FET colleges will be an alternative location for learners completing their last years of education. Accordingly, the (obvious) conclusion is that the NC(V) policy document also established the colleges with a new and vital role in the education and training system.

To sum up, in terms of the South African education and training system, the NC(V) was conceptualized as serving a new purpose, namely that of a viable alternative to the more academic-focussed matriculation qualification (and in
fact, if the circumstances were different, the aim is eminently achievable). The viable alternative was designed to cater for learners with a more practical bent and a nascent interest in a particular vocational field. Institutionally, the purpose behind the introduction of the NC(V) was limited to provide a sophisticated and contemporary vocational set of qualifications that would draw a new cohort of learners to colleges, which, in turn, would address the skills shortages already pressing hard on the South African economy. The NC(V) was intended to educate learners up to the level of Grade 12 and create the appropriate readiness either for higher education or the world of work – it was not intended to support that cohort of students who, after completing Grade 12, could not gain entry into higher education institutions or the world of work.

[C] Construction of the NC(V) qualification

The NC(V) was clearly constructed as a meaningful alternative learning pathway for the post-compulsory schooling cohort going into the last three years of education (FET phase). While the NSC would cater for those school-leavers with immediate aspirations to enter higher education after Grade 12, the NC(V) was designed to offer a powerful general education with a programmatic bias towards a vocation of choice. The structure of the NC(V) was geared to provide a strong theory base as well ample opportunity to engage with practical work within the college environment. This is an important consideration since many of the students enrolling for the N courses were (and are) unable to access the necessary workplace experience that is supposed to complement the institutional learning. With both the theoretical and practical components, the NC(V) could help direct sufficiently motivated learners into specialist programmes such as engineering in higher education, or could provide a very solid basis for meaningful entry into the workplace – in other words, the character of the NC(V) qualification allows an wider articulation immediately upon completion namely, into higher education; and/or the world of work.
[D] The NC(V) as a qualification for 15-19 year old (adolescent) student cohort

Whilst the NC(V) is aimed at servicing a wider body of students, it is acknowledged by many for being a school-leaving qualification opportunity parallel to the NSC, catering to a different sector of the 15-19 year old student cohort.

A close examination of the NSC and NC(V) qualifications highlights a number of similarities and differences. It is clear, from their structures, that the NSC and the NC(V) were conceived as complementary qualifications. Both have requirements such as:

- the achievement of a language,
- mathematics or mathematical literacy, and
- life orientation.

Both require that a learner do four additional subjects. The subjects available to NSC learners direct them into a general education with a more academic bias, while the rules of combination for the NC(V) direct learners into a vocational field.

The NSC, however, is defined as a single three-year qualification while the NC(V) has been defined as three more distinct one-year qualifications. This model was espoused in accordance with the rhetoric associated with learnerships where, if one had completed a certain amount of learning, there should be formal recognition given to it. The approach was intended to allow greater ease of access as well as more than one opportunity to leave the system with acknowledgement of a meaningful amount of learning achieved.

Both models - the 1 x 3 years in respect of the NSC; and the 3 x 1year referring to the NC(V) - bring their own constraints to the education system and to the people who wish to study further. The NSC, with its 3-year structure and prescribed internal assessment requirements, makes it impossible for adults to access the qualification because it literally requires a return in some form to three years of schooling. The NC(V), with its multiple entry and exit levels,
should in theory be much easier for learners to access, but facilitating this access has not been properly explored and has not found application in the current system. The main challenge, however, in the 3 x 1 year model of the NC(V) is that the quality assurance for each of the exit level qualifications needs to be addressed properly to ensure the ongoing credibility of each of these qualifications, so that their weight and meaning in industry and commerce becomes apparent.

In summary, the NC(V) qualifications are, like the NSC, primarily intended for learners in the 16 to 19 years age group, i.e. learners who have just completed the nine years of compulsory schooling (cf paragraph 3 (1) a, Government gazette 28677, 29 March 2006), even though both the qualifications are formally silent on the matter of the age entry requirements. The NC(V) is, in other words, conceptualized as a general vocational equivalent to the general academic NSC and is intended to serve the needs of many more than half of all adolescent learners in further education and training. In short, the NSC and NC(V) between them are designed to service the needs of all adolescent learners, and are as such, qualifications aimed at supporting massification of education at school-leaving level. As such, it is imperative that quality assurance must be dealt with efficiently on a large scale and cost effectively.

[E] The NC(V) as a qualification for adult learners (to be read with para [D] above)

Having explained the primary rationale for the NC(V) as directed towards adolescent learners, it is also important to recognize that the 3 x 1-year structure -and the extended entry requirements for the NC(V) (see paragraph 3 (1) b – e, Government gazette 28677, 29 March 2006) - were geared towards allowing for the qualification to be offered to a different target group also namely, adult learners.

The challenge that was not, it is submitted, properly considered is the combination of adolescent and adult learners in the same classroom. Enrolling adults in the NC(V) must (i) reflect distinct pedagogic differences, notably in the
manner of delivery of the programme, and (ii) adults should, arguably, not be placed in the same classes as the adolescent learners. These issues should have been thoroughly investigated and clearly structured in terms of an appropriate epistemological framework prior to implementation.

[F] The practice of the NC(V) qualification

Is it a single 3-year qualification or 3 X 1-year qualifications?

In practice, colleges have treated the NC(V) as a single qualification when it has suited them to do so. Colleges have allowed students to ‘carry’ subjects, a practice which is not contemplated in qualification definition, and which has resulted in students staggering under unreasonably large subject loads. Whilst the motive for the concession may be to assist the student, this has been an inefficient exception which sets many affected students up for further failure. This practice—a hangover from carrying short-term N-courses—has also created resulting and certification challenges.

[G] The NC(V) as a qualification and its relationship with the Nated (N)-courses

It is not reasonable to expect the NC(V) qualifications to be all things to all people in the vocational education and training system. Although the NC(V) replaced the NATED programmes N1 to N3 in terms of the transitional arrangements in the NC(V) Policy, and the current DHET thinking is that the NC(V) was never intended to serve the same purpose as the NATED programmes; the reality is that the NC(V) was introduced with the intention that it was to replace the NATED programmes.

The effect of this is that:

- The NC(V) as a set of qualifications is intended to build up a substantive ‘big picture’ of a vocational area—including both the necessary theory and practical knowledge and skills.
• It is very different from the limited, part-qualification structure of the N-courses.
• In short, the NC(V) is a fully-fledged discipline specific vocational curriculum (as opposed to providing occupational learning).

There is, however, a connection between the N courses and the NC(V) in that it is apparent that many people were enrolling for the N-courses in the absence of anything else to study, even when they were not in employment and therefore not receiving workplace experience concurrently. The fact of this is that the N-courses on their own did not necessarily open doors to employment for successful N-course candidates. The NC(V) was thus visualized as providing both a more substantive theoretical base as well as sufficient practical experience - in the face of the dearth of apprenticeship opportunities - to allow successful NC(V) candidates to be much more highly employable than the N-course programmes were able to do.

However, given the difference in duration, qualification design and structure, assessment requirements, and promotion and progression requirements between the two programmes, the NC(V) met with a level of resistance and skepticism from some stakeholders but more especially, from industry. Over time some of the resistance has lifted but there remains a residue of opposition that impacts on the successful implementation of the qualification to become one of the flagship qualifications to be offered by the FET colleges (as identified at the FET College Summit in September 2010). In line with the resolution of the Summit, it is suggested that far from being a ‘cul-de-sac’, the NC(V), offered as it is intended to be, will provide commerce and industry with well-prepared young adults, capable of entering the workplace with skills that would make them quickly useful.

[H] Conclusion

At the time of the inception of the NC(V), there was widespread consultation with all role-players to gauge the efficacy of the ‘alternate’ option. However, with the passage of time and with the benefit of hindsight, it has become apparent that there is a need to review the NC(V) and its application and
implementation. The reality is that, in general, the original goals, aims, and purpose remain steadfast: however, it would appear that there has perhaps not been adequate clarity (or pedagogic thought) regarding the business and the processes. A specific challenge deriving from the current application of the NC(V) qualification, however, is the need to determine the precise purpose of the programme (i.e. occupational or vocational) and the identified cohort of intended graduates.

As stated in the Terms of Reference provided to the Committee:

Over the last 3 completed years of implementation and examination of the NC(V) qualification, much has come to bear from a multitude of stakeholders to necessitate the review of the NC(V) qualifications. Further, before additional monetary, human resources and infrastructure investments are made in the NC(V), it is important that these qualifications are positioned to serve their intended purpose, and achieve the desired levels of success. It is for this compelling reason that the review is initiated ahead of its full 5 year implementation period, which is generally considered the appropriate timeframe for a substantial review of any qualification.

It must, however, be stressed that the mandate of the task team is to review the NC(V) qualification – it is not the MTT’s brief to review curriculum or the staff competencies and capacities. The direct negative impact and practical implementation difficulties of resource challenges and staff capacity building needs are all noted but it is anticipated that these issues will follow on the final report of the qualification review.

[1] Membership of the Ministerial Task Team to conduct the review

One representative: SAQA

5 It was, however, agreed that this fact will not preclude the MTT from providing input into possible models for curriculum development. For example, the Umalusi document on curriculum may be considered by DHET as a significant basis for the NC(V) curriculum review rather than beginning the process afresh.
One representative: Umalusi
One representative: HESA
One representative: Public FET Colleges
One representative: Provincial Education Departments
One representative from the QCTO
One representative from industry
Two representatives: Unions: CTUs – SADTU and ITU

There is a clear understanding by all members of the MTT that participation in the discussions is not sectorally-based but rather, that every member provides input based on what will be in the best interest of and provide the most value to the sector.

[J] Timeframes for finalisation of the review process

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<th>ACTIVITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Briefing meeting</td>
<td>16 August 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing of background reading and reference materials</td>
<td>August – September 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting of the MTT to approve the workplan; discuss identified challenges, and allocate study units for detailed preparation</td>
<td>September 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of the conceptual framework for consensus</td>
<td>October 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting of MTT to discuss and reflect upon the issues raised in the terms of reference provided to the MTT – Chapter 1 the mandate</td>
<td>October 2011</td>
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<td>Preparation of the (limited) draft document for circulation and input</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting of MTT to discuss and reflect upon the issues raised in the terms of reference provided to the MTT – Chapters 2-4 of the mandate</td>
<td>November 2011</td>
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Preparation of the (limited) draft document for circulation and input | December 2011
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Meeting of the MTT to review first completed draft in re: Chapters 1-5 of the mandate | December 2011
Submission of first draft to Minister | 15 December 2011
Proposed amendments to Policy | After feedback from DHET and the Minister
Review of draft document | 10 February 2012
Conclusions and recommendations finalised | 20 February 2012
Submission to Minister | 15 March 2012

It is agreed that a draft report will be available to the Department: Higher Education and Training by 15 December 2011.

However, given the agreement that the draft should be circulated to all stakeholders for input prior to finalisation, it was resolved that the DHET be requested to grant an extension on the finalisation of the project up to mid-March 2012.
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CHAPTER TWO: CHALLENGES IN RESPECT OF THE CURRENT QUALIFICATION

READING LEGEND:
The challenges are outlined in the larger font.

However, in some instances, the MTT also reached preliminary conceptual agreement on the principles of a solution to address the challenges. In such cases, this is reflected in italics and a smaller font. The issues are then fully canvassed in Chapter Three and formal recommendations are made in Chapter Four of this document.

In addition to issues reflected in Chapter One above, other noteworthy challenges that needed to be addressed in a review of the NC(V) qualification include:

[A] The purpose of the qualification – is it intended as an occupational training/learning/skilling initiative or is it a fully-fledged vocational qualification? If it is the latter, will there be alternate provision for the replacement of the N-style skilling of adult learners?

It is very important that there is a common definition and understanding of the terms vocational and occupational.

Further, it is noted that the purpose of the qualification will, effectively determine (a) the location/custodianship of the qualification; and (b)
the relevant quality Council to take responsibility for quality assurance of the qualification.

It was agreed that as a core qualification, the NC(V) should remain a vocational qualification. In this regard, ‘vocational’ was understood to refer to a discipline-based qualification as opposed to an occupational programme, which is strictly ‘job focussed’. The linkages/relations to occupationally-directed programmes would need to be clearly defined. This option was not excluded but there was clarity that greater definition would have to be provided.

There was agreement that primarily the purpose of the NC(V) was to be a first level career-directed qualification taken over 3 years.

As such, it was agreed that the role of industry as moderators and/or partners in terms of the delivery of the NC(V) qualification as well as towards assuring the quality and relevance of the qualification could not be sufficiently emphasised.

In respect of the appropriate quality Council, regard must be had to the provision of the draft Trade Test Regulations which provides:

2. ..., the requirements for accessing a trade test in any listed trade will be:

2.1 The achievement of at least a 50% pass in Mathematics at NQF Level 2 as certified by UMALUSI and ... [my emphasis]

The draft Regulations appear to be unequivocal that Umalusi will be the certifying quality assurance authority – but that may also be as a result of the current legislative provision in the GENFETQA Act.

[B] What is the optimal mode of delivery of the NC(V)?

[C] The admission requirements for entry in to the NC(V) should be properly stated.

It was agreed that the entry-requirements for the NC(V) qualification should be seen as an indicator of the cognitive prerequisites for a learner
rather than an indication of the age of the learner. It was further agreed that the qualification entry requirements should remain at Grade 9. [However provision could be made for an age requirement to be applied to certain specialisations, (such as in the ‘Safety in Society’ specialisation.).]

[D] The reality is that many **students who complete the NSC are referred to the NC(V)** as a possible opportunity to embark on a trajectory towards a career-driven qualification; or simply because there is no other learning opportunity for them. However, given that both the NSC and NC(V) are level 4 qualifications, this is considered repetitive and a waste of time.

It was agreed that to alleviate this perception, consideration must be given to (i) greater advocacy in the schools at Grade 9 to introduce students to the NC(V) qualification and its merits and benefits; and (ii) the implementation of RPL to ensure that students from the NSC so not unnecessarily repeat subjects for which they have been deemed competent.

[E] Is the design and structure of the current qualification with the **multiple entry and exit points** appropriate? If agreed, what will be the **implementation** thereof?

It was agreed that a key challenge in terms of the design of the qualification is that it is **currently composed of 3 discreet qualifications** as opposed to one coherent qualification – the current structure, with three different exit levels is a problem as these exit ‘qualifications’ towards the final NC(V) qualification do not lead to anything.

Furthermore, the 3 discreet exit levels demand that there be **appropriate quality assurance** processes and standards at each exit level. This makes for a very expensive process but more important, is subject to capacity constraints that result in an ineffective or non-existent quality assurance regimen.
It is, accordingly, proposed that proper consideration be given to providing for a single qualification taken over a period of 3 years (similar to the structure of the NSC).

It was thus agreed that the qualification be delinked from a reference to THREE NQF levels i.e. instead of making reference to the 3 exit levels namely, NC(V) level 2, 3 and 4; it should be referred to as Year 1, 2 and 3 with an exit at NQF level 4 (after the completion of Year 3).

[F] Whilst recognising that the MTT is not mandated to do a detailed curriculum review, is the composition (curriculum) of the current NC(V) qualification appropriate? For example:

- Should the NC(V) focus on internships/apprenticeships – but if agreed, how should WIL be facilitated and implemented?

It was agreed that work-integrated learning should not be a compulsory component of the curriculum. However, the practical components of the qualification should become more clearly defined in the policy statement.

An identified problem with the current offering is that the practical component of the qualifications is not sufficiently embedded in the curriculum and learners do not get the necessary practical training. Even in the simulated environment, the training is frequently given from a very academic/theoretical perspective.

It is suggested that this issue be given deeper consideration particularly taking due cognisance of the qualifications of the staff at the colleges and the need to ensure that they have the appropriate and necessary practical skills/knowledge in order to assess the vocational aspects of the training. It serves no purpose if a purely academic staff member is given the duty to assess a vocational skills based component of the curriculum.

The reality is that the Colleges experience resource constraints which limit their ability to offer the practical component of the qualifications. However, it is also a fact that many of the learners do not have the
appropriate/necessary background that familiarises them with the vocational practice of their qualification – and they need the practical training to give them the real glimpse of the work/role that is expected of them.

- Should the curriculum be structured in terms of unit standards based learning and teaching which will allow for ‘progressional’ (or scaffolded) learning and incremental logical progression to take place?
- Is there a need to enhance the literacy and numeracy skills of learners taking the NC(V) qualification.

It was agreed that the NC(V) is grounded in an ethos which recognises that learners should be trained not only for their occupational aspirations but fundamentally for the long-term/future learning requirements and aspirations of learners and communities as a whole – this must be reflected in the curriculation of the NC(V).

However, a study by Umalusi found that in respect of the ‘fundamental subjects’ in the curriculum, the mathematics requirement in the NC(V) was actually higher than that of the NSC; and the standard of maths literacy and the languages was also comparably good in the NC(V). However, this in itself also creates a problem in that the learners enrolled for the NC(V) are not prepared for the standard that is set and accordingly, they do not succeed in the assessments/examinations.

- When the NC(V) was conceptualised, there were no occupational outcomes. Employers thus experience difficulty locating the graduate in the workplace. The learning outcomes for the subjects in the NC(V) are also not sufficiently clearly spelled out in order for the teaching programme to be effective.

Closely aligned to the issue of the curriculum, is the question of career guidance to learners. Experience demonstrates that a serious shortcoming in the colleges is that absence of sound career guidance to the learners regarding subject combinations as well as employment opportunities.
Additionally, in the domain of the academic offering, Colleges acknowledge that there is **inadequate lecturer capacity** in place to deliver the curriculum in terms of the intended purpose. During the annual SACPO meeting (September 2011) there appeared to be a high level of consensus that the quality of teaching staff at the Colleges needed to be reviewed and measures put in place to upskill and train the lecture complement. The member of the MTT shared this concern. There is an awareness of the strategic budget that has been allocated by DHET to support this need. However, the project must be fast-tracked if the Colleges and the qualification are to retain their credibility.

There is a very high drop-out rate from Grade 1 to Grade 12 – can the NC(V) serve as the catchment qualification to ameliorate this national problem?

*The experience of DUT is that the curriculum for the NC(V) is appropriately designed for the age cohort 16-19 years old and it provides the opportunity for learners who are not purely academically orientated to flourish: however, you have to teach the learners properly for them to succeed.*

*One of the means of achieving this aim, will be to separate the classes of 16-20 year-olds and 20-24 year-olds.*

Also, consideration must be given to a proper enrolment planning framework for the Colleges taking cognisance of (a) the total numbers; and (b) the specific numbers in respect of each of the 2 cohorts of students. The framework should be based on the infrastructure and success/throughput rates at the College. Currently, the Colleges target enrolment numbers only with no consideration being given to the other issues of planning.

There must be a clear understanding of the purpose of the qualification i.e. when a learner completes the NC(V) does s/he exit for (a) employment; and/or (b) higher education? If it is the former, the difficult
question that must be answered is: does the NC(V) equip the learner better than the NSC for the workplace?

The positive feature of the NC(V) qualification is that it trains people to begin to think ‘like a person in a vocation’. Unfortunately, views differ on whether the NC(V) is better geared towards the preparing the learner for the workplace\(^6\) – and where there pertains a negative view, it is also accepted that this is often because of poor implementation of the curriculum. Experience shows that where the curriculum is properly implemented, learners are well-prepared for the workplace.

Thus, it is important that (a) the curriculum must be effectively designed to ensure that the learner is ready for the work environment; and (b) the curriculum is properly implemented to ensure that the learner is prepared for the work environment.

It is also recommended that consideration be given to extending the NC(V) qualification to add-on the NC(V)-5 as a further learning/articulation pathway.

\[^{[K]}\] There is no gainsaying the role of the NC(V) as an access route to higher education. There are minimum admission requirements for entry to the degree, diploma, and higher certificate qualifications gazetted by DHET and so the minimum pre-requisites for entry are clear. However, there is concern that the articulation pathway is remains contested space given the autonomy of higher education institutions to determine admission requirements.

It is proposed that consideration must be given to the design of an articulation pathway from school into the post-school sector, along the form of an NC(V)-level 5 that seeks to bridge the current gap that pertains. More thought needs to be given to the manner in which the NC(V)-level 5 could be structured to ameliorate the current gap.

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\(^6\) The intention of the NC(V) is to have a better prepared learner but there is a perception in industry that this is not always the case. Anecdotal evidence indicates that in some cases, industry would rather select potential candidates for employment from the NSC Grade 12 cohort of learners.
Whilst the value of the NC(V) for both adolescent learners and adult learners is not contested, there was consensus that the adolescent and adult learners should not be taught in the same class. The challenge is to define how the separation should occur and whether the role of the technical Colleges should not be further investigated.

In addition to the foregoing, the comprehensive report from the South African College Principals Organisation is acknowledged. The challenges raised in the document are recognised and read evenly into the deliberations of the MTT. A copy of the document is attached hereto as ‘Annexure MTT NCV – 1’.

**Conclusion**

Each of the challenges and other issues will be interrogated and discussed *ad seriatum* in the Chapter Three dealing specifically with the issues raised in the Terms of Reference provided by the Minister.

Chapter Three – Report of the Ministerial Task Team:

3.1 Purpose of the NC(V)
3.2 Entrance Requirements
3.3 Duration and General Requirements of the NC(V)
3.4 The Structure of the NC(V)
3.5 Requirements for Certification
3.6 Assessment Structure
3.7 Conclusion

Chapter Four is a summary of the recommendations emanating from the discussions in Chapter Three.
CHAPTER THREE: REPORT OF THE MINISTERIAL TASK TEAM

CHAPTER 3.1
Purpose of the NC(V) qualification

The statement on the purpose of the NC(V) qualification is probably the most important contribution to the discussion given that it will constitute the bedrock upon which all other proposals and recommendations are predicated. In responding to this vital issue, there was perforce considerable interrogation on the question of whether the NC(V) was an occupational or a vocational qualification.

The NC(V) is ideally suited as a discipline-based vocational qualification. Its main purpose is, thus, to equip a learner with the appropriate skills and competencies. The character of the NC(V) qualification aims to lay a foundation for specialist learning, further learning, and employment in a manner that is occupationally focused. In other words, it is intended to provide the learner with access to further study in order to specialise in the specific vocational area. It does not, however, allow the learner ‘to practice as …’.

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7 Age will become relevant in (i) defining the student cohorts; and (ii) the manner in which the teaching programme should be rolled about to the different identified student cohorts. This will be clarified and discussed later in the report.
The current policy obligation, however, appears to set the aim of the NCV qualification as being to provide the qualifying learner with employment at an intermediate level in the particular trade/class of occupation (or access to higher education).\(^8\)

It is suggested that the goal is perhaps exaggerated – learnings from practice indicate that the NC(V) should more realistically be geared towards providing the learner with (i) skills at an intermediate level but (ii) employment at an entry level (with the understanding that the learner will have been sufficiently well-prepared to be able to move rapidly within the workplace). Thus, whilst the MTT is *ad idem* with the current policy regarding the level of the skills that should be learned in the NC(V) qualification, there is disagreement regarding the entry point in the workplace. Experience demonstrates that learners with the completed NC(V) enter the workplace at no higher than entry level. There is no reasonable information platform available which suggests that the NC(V)-4 does or will be able to equip a learner to enter the workplace at an intermediate level.\(^9\)

Recognising the purpose of the qualification, the design of the qualification must equally ensure that the learner who completes the NC(V)-4 is well-prepared to enter and participate in the workplace. In addition, given the vocational bent of the qualification, the learner should be equipped through the learning in the NC(V)-4 qualification to be fast-tracked to take the trade test – if required – earlier than the proposed minimum period set in the workplace for such activity. (That having been said, it must be re-iterated that the employer will always remain the final *arbiter* of the apprentice’s readiness to take the trade test!)

An interesting development with regard to the NC(V) lies with the notion of learners who have completed the NSC Grade12 entering the NC(V) qualification because of limited access to higher education or the jobbing market. It is suggested that this is actually counter-intuitive and consideration should be

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\(^9\) One reason for this is the poor levels of practical training and the very limited WIL programmes in the current qualifications – with little anticipation of change in the foreseeable future, for various reasons. See further discussion later in the Chapter.
given to better capacititating the FET Colleges to offer vocationally-orientated Higher Certificates and Diplomas that will help achieve the targets of the national growth plan.

In addition to preparing the learner for the workplace, the NC(V) is also geared towards facilitating articulation into higher education. The design and content of the qualification must also serve the purpose of facilitating articulation from a vocationally-orientated qualification to a formal higher education qualification.

The current view on the NC(V) qualification is that the design is generally acceptable: however, the major constraint that prevents the qualification from achieving its stated aims lies in the implementation of the qualification. It is recommended that if the issues regarding implementation are to be addressed, the policy statement for the NC(V), must clearly and cogently emphasise the provision of:

- Necessary academic knowledge as an integral component of the qualification;
- A practical skills component that is integrated into the qualification; AND
- The necessary component of applied competence and understanding that will facilitate either (i) employment at entrance level in the particular trade/class of occupation; or (ii) entrance to higher education on completion of the NC(V) qualification, or preferably both.\(^\text{10}\)

The underlying character of the qualification must be to prepare the learner for the transition from formal learning to the workplace.

**CHAPTER 3.2**

**Entrance Requirements**

In analyzing the minimum admission requirements for entry into the NC(V) there are clear and specific parameters that will have to be considered, taking

\(^{10}\) The policy should be drafted to set the guidelines for the curriculum design; but a dedicated curriculum task team must be established to consider the details of operationalizing the provisions.
cognizance of the purpose of the NC(V) and the continuing national strategic imperative for massified skills development.

Firstly, the question that must be answered is whether there should be a minimum and/or maximum age limit for learners in the NC(V) qualification. It is trite that the NC(V) domain is generally acknowledged as being that space for learners from the ages of 15-years-old (Grade 9) to 24-years-old who are interested in pursuing a vocational discipline-based qualification. The minimum age of 15-years-old is predicated on the national policy directive that basic education remains compulsory up to and including Grade 9. Taking account of the Policy on the Age of Admission to Schools, a learner completing Grade 9 should not be younger than 15-years-old.¹¹

In addition to the physical age requirement is the minimum cognitive awareness of the learner entering the NC(V) qualification. In order to ensure the design and development of an appropriate curriculum; as well as success and throughput of the registered learners, it is confirmed that the minimum admission requirement into the NC(V) must be a completed Grade 9 level of schooling with specified minimum requirements as stipulated in the National Curriculum Statement.¹² The minimum admission requirement for entry to the NC(V) qualification will thus be the indicator of the cognitive prerequisites for a learner rather than merely as an indication of the age of the learner.

In this regard, it is relevant to note that if the NC(V) aspires to becoming an alternate learning pathway for students towards a vocationally-orientated trajectory, it is imperative that appropriate and relevant career guidance begins in Grade 9. Experience demonstrates that learners are not given proper advice regarding the NC(V) options in the schools and are merely allowed to continue with the NSC into Grades 10-12. School career counselors must be forced to raise the NC(V) alternatives with all learners to enable them to make sound and properly informed choices. This will automatically alleviate the problems encountered as a result of the high numbers of grade12 NSC learners exiting the

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¹¹ Based on the national instruction, there should be no learner younger that 16-years-old in a College; all of them should still be in school.

¹² Issued by the national Department of Basic Education, see pages 15-17.
system; and not being accommodated in the institutions of higher learning and not having any alternate opportunities. It will also ensure that learners who are not purely academically focused are properly channeled, thereby mitigating the issues of drop-out and failure.

Given the purpose of the NC(V) to also cater for adult learners, it is not suggested that there be any maximum age restriction on learners intending to register for the NC(V) qualification. Notwithstanding this sentiment, practice has demonstrated that there are three distinct cohorts of learners entering the NC(V) qualification:

- The learner who follows the NC(V) qualification upon completing Grade 9. These learners are generally in the age category 15-19 years of age.
- The learner who completes Grade 12 and the decides to enter the NC(V) qualification. These learners are in the age category 18-24 years of age.
- The learner who continued with Grade 10 and/or 11 but who does not complete the qualification up to Grade 12 and drops out of the schooling system. Should such a candidate wish to return to complete Grade 12 (for any reason whatsoever), the NC(V) may be one of the more appropriate routes to follow.  

The NC(V) must be so structured to provide an effective learning environment for each of the three identified groups of learners. It is a fundamental flaw in thinking were one to operate from the platform that the same programme will be suitable to the first category of learners as could be applied to the second and/or third groups of learners. The research is unequivocal that the identified cohorts of learners would demand distinct pedagogic points of reference and it would, arguably not be in the best interests of the learners for them to be placed together in the same classes. Regrettably, this is the current situation where learners with a Grade 9 and placed in the same classroom as learners with a completed Grade 12 and is possibly the cause of some of the teaching difficulties.

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13 The NC(V) is not the route for the student who drops out of the school system prior to Grade 9 and joins the world of work. These candidates will need to be served by the occupationally-directed qualifications.
Thus it is proposed that whilst the qualification design and structure may be the same, the learning and training sites for the adolescent learner and the adult learner must be separated.\textsuperscript{14}

Accepting this as a solution of best practice, the following scenarios may be considered:

- **SCENARIO 1**
  Colleges will have to set up separate classes for the adolescent learner and the adult learners despite them being registered for the same qualification and specialisation. This will bring with it concomitant capacity challenges, both in respect of infrastructure and resource considerations.

- **SCENARIO 2**
  The role of the technical high schools may need to be reviewed and consideration given to the feasibility of taking adolescent learners to the technical high school to complete the NC(V); whilst the adult learners will be referred to the FET Colleges to complete the qualification.\textsuperscript{15}

**Implementation of a selection process for entrance to the NC(V)**

The stated purpose of the NC(V) is to provide a pathway for adolescent and adult learners into a discipline-based vocational qualification, which is distinct from the more academically-directed NSC qualification. It is acknowledged that the majority of the learners who opt for the NC(V) qualification are not geared for the more academic option and may not always present with the best academic point scores. It is, therefore, proposed that there be no selection

\textsuperscript{14} There is, however, another school of thought that calls for the curriculum design and structure to be different for the adolescent and adult learners. Such a proposal would receive greater support were RPL to be excluded from the process of credit accumulation in the NC(V): however, if RPL is implemented effectively and with appropriate flexibility as proposed below, it is suggested that an alternately structured NC(V) for adults will not be necessary. Looking specifically at the adult learner who has accumulated skills and experience in the workplace to satisfy the practical requirements of the NC(V), there is little rationale to prevent him/her from being admitted to the NC(V), given RPL credit for the practical component if s/he qualifies, and only requiring that s/he complete the prescribed theory component of the curriculum. The test in such cases will be whether or not the prospective learner complies with the admission requirement of a Grade 12: however, in such instances given the character of the learners and the strategic goal of the NC(V), it is proposed that RPL for access must be an aspect of NC(V).

\textsuperscript{15} An unintended benefit if Scenario 2 is that the adult learner is placed in a College environment which is regarded as a level up from the school environment; whilst the adolescent learner remains in a school setting like his/her NSC counterpart.
process based on academic performance. The point score is often a discriminatory tool that continues to prejudice students who have been historically (and are often currently) disadvantaged. Research has shown that many students labelled 'poor performers' in fact, simply require a longer time for assimilation and embedding of knowledge before they, too, flourish.

Colleges are currently not functioning at full capacity insofar as students registered for the NC(V) qualification. Whilst the status of the NC(V) is gaining momentum, it is suggested that Colleges should be required to commit to the principles of responsible open access, as far as is reasonably possible, with appropriate measures for success and throughput in place. In keeping with the dictates of responsible open access (and to ensure that the Colleges do not admit numbers higher than the infrastructure capabilities) and to ensure that standards are not compromised, DHET must consider the appropriateness of setting enrolment targets for Colleges, as currently applied to the University sector. The Colleges will then have the limited discretion to define the selection criteria and processes of admission to ensure that the national purpose of the NC(V) is neither diluted nor compromised.

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

The format of the NC(V) does not admit RPL either in respect of access to the NC(V) or as a credit-bearing exemption provision in the NC(V). This is an unfortunate shortcoming of the current policy and does not resonate with the established principles of acknowledging prior experience howsoever obtained.

One of the established goals of the NC(V) is to provide a platform of learning for adult learners, many of whom will have been in the world of work and consequently garnered particular skills and experience. The national policy on higher education recognises that if South Africa is gearing towards massification of education, there is little benefit to be had from requiring learners to repeat

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16 The DHET task team that has been established to review RPL in the post-schooling system must also consider articulation and RPL crediting between the NSC and NC(V). This section should, thus, be read with the findings and recommendations of that task team.
and/or duplicate learning that is already in place. Accordingly, it is suggested that the principles of RPL are not repugnant to the NC(V) qualification.

RPL in the NC(V) qualification may be applied in two formats:

- To grant an adult learner who left school without completing Grade 9 access to the qualification on condition that s/he is able to demonstrate the minimum cognitive competence required for admission to the NC(V) qualification that is, RPL for access; and
- To grant RPL credits/exemptions in respect of prescribed courses constituting the NC(V) curriculum.

The latter proposal also responds to the need to recognise learning from the NSC towards the NC(V). This approach will address the concern by many learners who are directed to the NC(V) after completing their NSC because (i) there are no alternatives for them in higher education and/or (ii) realise that they would rather follow a vocational pathway. Comparative studies could not identify any other system that requires learners to repeat subjects in the manner required of a student who undertakes the NC(V) after completing the NSC - in South Africa, we do a horizontal/backward referral of the students which, it is suggested, is counterproductive to the national goals. In order to avoid unnecessary duplication of learning, it is proposed that regard should be had to the theoretical subjects of the NC(V) and NSC and credited grant in all areas of overlap. Thus, the learner is not frustrated by having to re-do subjects already passed.

The recommendation in respect of RPL for the NC(V) qualification inclines firmly towards not restricting the implementation of RPL to formal credits obtained elsewhere, but to also permit that experience and skills acquired in the workplace should constitute a basis for access or exemption by RPL.

However, in order to assure the integrity of the NC(V) qualification, it will be necessary to have a rigorous RPL policy in place; as well as regulations of approved business processes that clearly define the procedures for RPL and the rules of application. One of the issues which will need to be defined is: where RPL is being applied for credit/exemption, what percentage of the NC(V) qualification may a learner complete through RPL?
The regulatory guidelines in respect of process in RPL applications must take cognisance of the assessment modalities that may be applied by the Colleges in evaluating prior learning. Options that may be available include the ‘challenge assessment’ where the prospective student is required to demonstrate his/her competence through a formal examination process; alternatively, there is the option of a portfolio of evidence (which may or may not be followed by an oral assessment, if needed). The challenge assessment is to allow the student to take the regular examination that is set for the qualification without him/her having to attend classes. In some instances, a special examination may be set depending on the academic capacity in the College. All of the options are currently available and have been variously tested as indicators of competence: however, the test for the Colleges will be to ensure that they have staff who are skilled and able to administer the RPL assessments.

Alternatively, consideration may be given to a centralised office to deal with the RPL applications for the NC(V) qualification. This will ensure proper standardisation of the process, provide the appropriate quality assurance regimen, and remove any possible taint of subjectivity, inconsistency and poor application which often attach when individual bodies are granted singular discretion.

CHAPTER 3.3

Duration and general requirements of the NC(V)

The current NC(V) curriculum is structured as a 3 X 1 year qualification. This structure was proposed as a *via media* approach to assuage the dissatisfaction of industry when the NC(V) was proposed to replace the NATED programmes. The argument raised was that a single 3 year qualification would be too long and not serve the purpose of industry. However, looking back on the 3 X 1 year formulation of the qualification, the question that must be answered is: what is the real benefit of providing for distinct exit levels at NC(V)-2 and NC(V)-3?

Anecdotal responses from industry indicate that a learner who leaves with level 2 or level 3 is not formally equipped to find any position in the workplace, least
of all to achieve the purpose of embedding sufficient knowledge and skills that will enable/allow the learner to be placed on an accelerated artisan training programme and take the trade test earlier than prescribed by the industry.\(^{17}\)

The factual reality is that neither level 2 nor level 3 of the NC(V) is able to articulate with the provisions of the *Manpower Training Act*, 1981 in respect of the trade test. Furthermore, practice indicates that there is little or no uptake in industry for learners with an NC(V) level 2 or 3 qualification (probably because of the last-mentioned constraint). It is thus difficult to show any effective employment and/or skills value in having three distinct exit levels; yet they add a considerable quality assurance burden to the system.

When conceptualised, the three levels of the NV(C) were intended to be distinct ‘qualifications’: however, this has not materialised and the practice is for overlap between the years. Based on the above, the MTT was unanimous in advocating that (i) the NC(V) must be structured as a 1 X 3 year qualification; but (ii) a clear distinction must be drawn between the NC(V) - as a vocationally-based qualification;\(^{18}\) and the occupational programmes.\(^{19}\)

### CHAPTER 3.4

**The Structure of the NC(V)**

**Learner capacity**

There are definite challenges to the design of the curriculum regarding learner capacity (foundational knowledge) of students exiting at the GET level. It is difficult to posit with any level of certainty that all learners completing Grade 9 have an equal cognitive awareness and ability. Further, given the three identified cohorts of students who are eligible to access the NC(V), the issues of

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\(^{17}\) The MTT was cautious not to make a categorical statement on this issue given that it has no empirical research to back up the opinion. However, the fact is that there is currently such a surplus of young people without work and with a Grade 12 that employers are making that the minimum entrance requirement, which tends to suggest that L2 and L3 qualifications are up against stiff competition.

\(^{18}\) The vocationally-based qualification refers to the more generically focussed discipline or sector and the learning is accordingly structured for the more ‘general’ environment.

\(^{19}\) The occupationally-based programmes focus on a specific occupation and the learning is geared towards gaining the necessary skills for that specific job.
curriculum design are further exacerbated. However, developing an all-encompassing qualification is not impossible, if this is the agreed aim. However, what will require attention is the follow-on action namely, that an appropriate teaching pedagogy accompany the qualification. It is re-iterated that the success of the NC(V) will ultimately rest in ensuring that (i) the adolescent and adult learner cohorts are differentiated and kept distinct in the classroom; and (ii) appropriate teaching methodologies implemented to reflect the age maturity of the two groups of learners.

**Compulsory and elective modules**

Given the value proposition that the NC(V) is, in fact, a vocationally-based qualification, the model for the design of the curriculum is accordingly formulated. However, in the end, the structure will be determined by the rules of combination. There is a strong recommendation that the most appropriate curriculum model is that which is currently in place and includes:

- the *fundamental subjects* namely, mathematics, 1 language, and Life orientation, which are compulsory;\(^{20}\)
- the *vocational subjects*\(^{21}\) namely 3 modules that are discipline-based; and
- the *elective subjects* namely 1 module that is a specialist module given the requisite skill of the workplace to which the student aspires.

With specific reference to the fundamental subjects and life orientation is particular, the original aim was that it would provide the learner with a level of generic skills that would raise a social awareness and make him/her a better member of society: however, in practice this has not occurred and life orientation and the content thereof has been the subject of much criticism. It is identified that in the implementation of life orientation, the lecturers focus only on aspects that are to be assessed in the examinations.\(^{22}\) Furthermore, Life Orientation is taken less seriously because higher education admission

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\(^{20}\) And Physical Science for learners going into engineering-related NC(V) and Life Science for those going into health-related NC(V) qualifications.

\(^{21}\) This is a reference to the compulsory subjects in addition to the fundamental subjects.

\(^{22}\) Interestingly, in the Umalusi research comparing Life Orientation in the NSC and NC(V), the preliminary finding is that NC(V) Colleges actually take Life Orientation more seriously and demonstrate greater commitment to achieving the outcomes.
requirements do not place significance on the Life Orientation score and rather focus on the pure academic performance of the entrant. (On the other hand, higher education may argue that the devaluation of Life Orientation is as a result of the superficial teaching and learning that takes place in the subject.)

If one looks back to why Life Orientation was introduced into the curriculum, one notes that the purpose was to provide opportunities to learners from previously disadvantaged backgrounds that would enable them to compete equally in the social network for example, computer literacy in the FETC is necessary because the reality is that most of the learners in the Colleges do not develop these skills at home. If Life Orientation is intended to prepare the learners for life, then computer skills are an essential aspect of this paradigm. Similarly, with reference to the focus on ethics – South Africa is becoming a violent society and many of the social *mores* of ‘good neighbourliness’ are dissipating as people become more insular/nuclear. Government is, thus, looking to youth regeneration as a means of achieving its goal of re-introducing the spirit of *Ubuntu* into the national awareness.

Against this understanding, the MTT took the position that Life Orientation has an important role to play in the schools towards moulding an *ethical citizen*. However, of primary importance is the need that lecturers (and teachers) commit to giving the subject content the appropriate focus. As a means of ensuring that that commitment is attained, the Life Orientation curriculum must (i) be properly conceptualised;\(^\text{23}\) (ii) make provision for the acquisition of ‘hard’ skills; and (iii) be clearly stated to ensure that there is lucidity on the skills to be acquired. In summary, the purpose of Life Orientation as a subject must be clearly defined and clarified, and there must be the appropriate quality assurance processes in place to ensure that it is taught in a manner that adds value.

The MTT is cognisant that the assessment of the ‘ethical citizen’ may be coloured with its own subjective difficulties. However, drawing from the experience of business where learners are given a community project and then assessed on

\(^{23}\) It is important that the same content not be repeated annually in NC(V)-2, NC(V)-3 and NC(V)-4 but that there must be a provision for scaffolded learning building towards embedding the values of an ethical citizen.
how the project is managed, it is indicated that a similar initiative may be implemented. The project should span the 3-year period and at NC(V)-4 the learner must be required to submit an academic paper describing the project against certain clearly specified critical cross-field outcomes.

The curricula of all the NC(V) qualifications were analysed, with particular focus on the compulsory vocational subjects. The test was to evaluate whether the prescribed courses had the necessary quality/character of the proposed model i.e. whether they were sufficiently generic in nature to properly define them as ‘discipline-based’. Thereafter, the elective courses per qualification were assessed to gauge whether they are, in fact, of a specialist or generic nature. The findings of the exercise are as set out in the ANNEXURE A, attached to this report.

**Exit level outcomes**

The Departmental policy referring to the design and structure of the NC(V) qualification; as well as the Government Gazette detailing the content of the NC(V) qualification both reflect a glaring omission namely, the failure to clearly document the exit level outcomes for each of the prescribed and optional subjects (as can be found in the SAQA documents). It is relevant to note that whilst the SAQA documentation details the exit levels of the courses, *this does not constitute a curriculum*. There are separate curriculum frameworks that have been prescribed. However, in practice the trend in the Colleges is that the curriculum frameworks are often ignored and guidance is sought from the less detailed Departmental policy and Government Gazette to define the teaching syllabi for the qualification. The unintended consequence is a lack of standardisation and a lowering of the quality assurance parameters as each facilitator teaches what s/he believes to be relevant and important under the specific heading/topic. An additional problem attached to the implementation of the curriculum is the *status quo* whereby each teacher teaches in a silo without due regard for the need to adopt the integrated approach that would properly define the vocational character of the qualification. Whilst this report does not intend to prescribe to the curriculum Task Team, it is recommended that whilst
the complete qualification should be implemented as a 1 X 3 year model, competence descriptors should be introduced for each year so that teachers, prospective employers, and the learners are clear as to the skills and knowledge that will attach to the successful completion of each year in the qualification.

**Lack of adequate practical learning in the curriculum**

The NC(V) qualification curriculum was originally designed to provide for a 60:40 theory: academic ratio. However, this goal did not materialise and the reality is that in many of the Colleges, the NC(V) qualification comprises up to 80% in academic theoretical knowledge with a 10-20 per cent allocation to the practical skill and knowledge component. This is not a problem at all sites of delivery – there are several success stories where the practical skills component is very well managed by the College. However, what is required is appropriate quality assurance audits that focus on the measures in place to ensure that the character and spirit of the NC(V) qualification is not compromised. One mechanism is that by policy, Colleges should be required to provide reasonable proof of the ability to present the practical skills training prior to approval being granted for the College to offer the qualification.

It is, however, not suggested that there may be a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution to this problem which can be mandated by regulation and a checklist: rather, it is recommended that the nature of the practical component will have to be dictated by the nature of the programme. This should be an assessment undertaken by the curriculum working group – but once the standard is established for a programme, it should be evenly applied in respect of every College offering the programme.

Furthermore, the practical assessments are conducted in-house at the Colleges with no external objective standard/assurance taking place. Given the importance and focus of the practical component in the NC(V) qualification, it is
recommended that the process of standardisation will also have to be considered as a priority.\textsuperscript{24}

At the heart of the concerns regarding curriculum implementation, is the issue of lecturer competence and ability. The successful implementation of the NC(V) curriculum assumes lecturer capacity in place to deliver in terms of the intended purpose – this is unfortunately not the reality and is an issue that DHET needs to address with urgency and as a priority initiative. This is often evident with regard to the practical training where College staff members have themselves never practices the trade being taught.\textsuperscript{25}

A fundamental question that must be addressed in support of the NC(V) qualification is: how do we improve the systems and processes to make the College system and structures a more attractive alternative? And the short answer is that considered focus needs to be placed on ensuring that what is offered makes the learner occupationally ready. The purpose will certainly not be achieved if the NC(V) is viewed as merely being another ‘school completion certificate’.

**Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in the NC(V) curriculum**

The issue of work integrated learning remains a debated issue. Given the nature of the NC(V) qualification, there is an easy inclination towards making WIL a mandatory requirement of the qualification and under ideal circumstances this would be the best option. However, lessons from current practice indicate that workplace linkages between Colleges and industry remain few and WIL is simply not in place. Also, taking note of the location of some of the Colleges, compulsory work integrated learning will be an insurmountable constraint.

Furthermore, a major challenge in respect of WIL is the health and safety requirements, as well as the matter of compensation if a learner is injured on

\textsuperscript{24} The challenge is that this will require new models for moderation. Umalusi is currently investigating the possible options.

\textsuperscript{25} This is a very serious problem which may be addressed to some extent by the introduction of OERs and online learning modes of delivery. However, these proposals also come with their own constraints in that infrastructure, bandwidth and connectivity at many of the colleges remain an issue.
duty. The South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been in discussion with the national Compensation Commissioner to set a standard to absolve the employer from liability in such cases – but with no success. Whilst the MTT took the point that the role of industry in supporting the WIL engagement should be an inherent component of the social responsibility and culture of industry but this is not the South African ethic\textsuperscript{26}: accordingly, the legal implications will need to be investigated and an appropriate legislative framework developed that is conducive to a relationship between the various stakeholders regarding their rights, roles and obligations. In accord with the aforementioned, any proposal must ensure that employers are not unreasonably burdened (financially or otherwise) by taking learners into a WIL programme.\textsuperscript{27}

Consequently, given that at this juncture WIL may not be practically possible, in the ethos of realism it is suggested that for the short to medium term future WIL should not be a regulated component of the curriculum of a programme (i.e. it should not be compulsory for it to be written into the curriculum): rather, the policy framework should reflect WIL as a strong ‘highly recommended’ requirement in the curriculum design of the qualification, which should be included wherever reasonably possible.\textsuperscript{28} However, it needs to be clearly stated that WIL remains an aspiration of the NC(V) qualification and that the issue will be reviewed at a stage in the future.

\textbf{A proposed framework for (and articulation between) the NC(V) and the occupational pathways}

The MTT is unanimous in advocating that (i) the NC(V) must be structured as a 1 X 3 year qualification; but (ii) a clear distinction must be drawn between the NC(V) - as a vocationally-based qualification;\textsuperscript{29} and the occupational

\textsuperscript{26} It is acknowledged that if there is a closer relationship between industry and the Colleges and industry is more closely involved in the development of the curriculum, WIL implementation will become easier.

\textsuperscript{27} A suggestion for the legal framework is to consider allowing the Colleges to register as the main ‘employer’ and take the accruing responsibility. Colleges would then have to take the relevant steps to ensure appropriate protection against claims and/or damages.

\textsuperscript{28} The quality assurance body should be mandated to specifically review curricula and engage with the Colleges on the issue of WIL implementation to ensure that where WIL is not included, it is because of an impossibility of performance.

\textsuperscript{29} The vocationally-based qualification refers to the more generically focussed discipline or sector and the learning is accordingly structured for the more ‘general’ environment.
In its current format, the NC(V) creates only an artificial distinction between the occupational and vocational qualifications/programmes. The recommended learning pathways would thus be threefold:

- **Academic**
- **Occupational**: This allows the learner to acquire relevant skills and knowledge in smaller ‘chunks’ (or units) along the principles of the former NATED programmes of learning. Experience shows that industry requires the ‘need-to-have’ skills as opposed to the ‘nice to have’ learning - which is what is currently included in the NC(V). Thus, it is proposed that adult learners will find greater advantage from the experiential taxonomy of the occupational pathway: however, an efficient credit accumulation and transfer system will enable them to complete the NC(V) should they so desire.
- **Vocational**: This will be a once-off 3 year qualification which is an essential and effective interceding pathway between the academic and occupational options. The vocational qualification provides a general knowledge base in a particular discipline and allows people to ‘scout the market’ to identify their niche.

The academic option (NSC) is clearly structured and designed. The diagram hereafter proposes a structure that reflects the structure and design of the discreet occupational and vocational pathways. It also addresses the articulation opportunities and the process of credit accumulation and transfer between the two latter pathways should the learner wish to transfer between the two. Effectively, the model assumes that the content of the vocational qualification will cover more than the occupational programme and will provide a broad generic discipline understanding. However, the success of the model and concomitant articulation rests on the recognition that the content of the related

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30 The occupationally-based programmes focus on a specific occupation and the learning is geared towards gaining the necessary skills for that specific job.

31 It is important to recognise that the advantage of the N-courses was in their model of delivery and this remains apposite today. The fact that there was an intention to replace them was based on factors of quality assurance and delivery.

32 NB: Under the ‘occupational stream’ the diagram must make provision for ‘modules of employable skills’ offered under the auspices of the QCTO.

An AWARD comprises a few units/modules which have been pre-determined.

A certificate is a wider conglomeration of units/modules which lead to the Higher Certificate.
occupational programme must be covered as far as reasonably possible in the allied NC(V) qualification for, it is only with this design that optimal articulation will be achieved.\textsuperscript{33} Similarly, it is important to reflect that a learner who successfully completes the NC(V) and finds employment, should not have to return to complete the related occupational modules before taking the trade test. The learner will need to build workplace learning hours as part of the NC(V) and the amount of workplace learning required prior to him/her being eligible to take the trade test must consequently be reduced. It is essential that the NC(V) be designed (packaged) in smaller discreet modules that will make it effective and efficient and, most of all, fit for purpose.

If one of the aims of the NC(V) is to place learners on an accelerated programme to complete the trade test, it is incumbent that the practical task at NC(V)-4 must align with the task(s) required for artisan qualification (i.e. the trade test). The tasks from level 2 to 3 to 4 and the practical training conducted through the year must lead up this task. College facilities (workshops etc.) must be accredited so that hours spent in the workshops contribute legitimately to the time requirements for specific trades.

The advantage of the model is that it makes provision for a vocationally orientated qualification – the NC(V) – yet also supports the industry/business requirement of compacted training so that people may acquire only the necessary relevant practical training for their particular job. The further strategic advantage of the proposal is that it advocates two further opportunities for learning and training in addition to the traditional route of a completed NSC followed by admission to higher education.

\textsuperscript{33} There is acknowledgement that there will probably never be a total overlap in content as the NC(V) will in probability be less focussed than the modules in the occupational programmes.
‘OCCUPATIONAL’ defined as a qualification that allows one to practise as ...’ and is governed by the Organisation Framework for Occupational Codes. The nature of the learning is ‘SPECIALISED’ and is directed to the relevant workplace.

‘VOCATIONAL’ defined as a qualification that allows you access to further study in order to specialise in the specific vocational area. It does not allow the learner ‘to practice as ...’ and only enables access/entry into further training.

‘THEORY AND ACADEMIC’ modules in either qualification comprise the learning component that forms part of the general curriculum of the qualification.
Most importantly, in order for the proposed structure to be successful and ensure effective and efficient articulation between the NC(V) and the occupational programme, the qualification curricula must be modularised and flexible.

If this recommendation - of the two discreet streams - were to be accepted as an option for training and learning, then it becomes imperative that a proper review be conducted with regard to the current NC(V) qualifications with the clear aim of defining which of the current qualifications should remain as NC(V) qualifications and which should be re-focused towards the occupationally-based programmes of learning. What is patent from an analysis of the current NC(V) qualifications is that not all the qualifications are properly placed in the NC(V) domain – some would be much better placed in the occupational programme stream.

Further, it is proposed that if there is a review of the NC(V) qualification curricula, industry must be invited as a partner in the process of re-design and development of the curricula. This is necessary and important to garner industry (sector) buy-in and acceptance of the qualifications, without which the new qualifications will suffer the same scepticism as is currently in evidence in respect of many of the existing qualifications.

A further issue requiring in-depth consideration is the rules of combination in the curriculum of many qualifications - for example, should a qualification allow a student with mathematics literacy to take physical science? A suggestion is that rather than ‘mathematics literacy’ or ‘physical science’, the mathematics and/or physical science courses may be uniquely developed modules specifically related to the qualification/discipline i.e. in the nature of applied or functional discipline modules. This, however, begs the issue: if the NC(V) is also geared towards providing access to higher education, will the unique mathematics and/or physical science modules be appropriate for University admission? In response, a strong argument may be made that the applied/functional modules should be developed to an equivalent standard of the mathematics/physical science

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34 It is also acknowledged that it will be an enormous capacity burden to develop applied/functional mathematics and physical science courses for each qualification. An alternative solution may be to consider clustering the mathematics and physical science requirements and develop discipline-based ‘versions’ of the applied/functional modules e.g. commercial mathematics, mathematics for engineers, etc.
offering in the NSC. However, the reality is that higher education institutions are by legislation allowed to define their admission requirements and they have autonomy to decide whether or not the functional/applied module will be adequate for purposes of admission into specific higher education qualifications. If the concept of functional/applied modules is accepted, it will require a conversation with higher education to gauge the reaction to the proposal and to try and build an articulation route (which may or may not perhaps require the NC(V) learner to register for specific bridging modules) into higher education.\(^{35}\)

And yet further, it must be emphasised that the success of the NC(V) will be predicated upon ensuring that the theory subjects in the qualification are carefully aligned with the practical knowledge and skills that are being embedded.

Finally, the MTT raises an issue that needs further consideration and that is the introduction of an NC(V)-level 5 on to the HEQ Framework. Experience demonstrates that many students with a completed NC(V) attempt to go into the world of work: however, they are not completely equipped for employment and still require additional training through either higher education institutions or the industry programmes. Not all NC(V)-4 graduates gain access to these opportunities and become part of the growing mass of unemployed youth. The NC(V)-level 5 should be aimed at bridging the skills gap and providing the appropriate/relevant \textit{skills} for the selected vocation, in other words it should be primarily a 1 year skills-focused qualification.

**CHAPTER 3.5**

**Requirements for certification**

Currently, the NC(V) is regulated as three qualifications – on Levels 2, 3 and 4 of the NQF – and until such time as the policy is changed by means of Regulation,\(^{35}\)

\(^{35}\) In fact, it is recommended that there be serious consideration given to identifying incentives for higher education (particularly institutions offering distance education) to partner with the FET Colleges in support of the NC(V) qualification. This will foster quality assurance, enhance capacity, and take the learning opportunity to the students. However, concomitantly articulation between the FET Colleges and higher education must be strengthened.
the NC(V) will need to be certified as three separate qualifications, with certification at a higher level being tied to certification of the qualification at the level below.\textsuperscript{36}

However, the practice is that at this stage in the NV(C) certification process, due to quality assurance and capacity constraints, only the NC(V) level 4 is certified. This approach will align itself well with the proposal that the NC(V) become a 1 X 3 year qualification with certification taking place only at the end of the three year period.\textsuperscript{37} If this approach were to be followed, the learnerships offered at NC(V) level 2 and NC(V) level 3 will need to become a QCTO qualification. Evaluating the impact that this may have on enrolment figures at the FET Colleges, the conclusion is that it will not be significant given the view that these numbers are generally very small.\textsuperscript{38}

Umalusi has already developed a sophisticated guide for the certification of the NC(V) level 4. Most important to the success of the project is that (i) the rules of engagement and (ii) the minimum requirements for a PASS must be agreed.

In respect of the minimum requirements: insofar as the fundamental subjects are concerned, there is a built-in condonation norm where the required pass mark is not attained. However, this principle is not in place in respect of the vocational subjects. The rule in respect of the vocational subjects is that a learner must pass all the vocational subjects and, as a consequence, learners fail the qualification because of this requirement.

It is proposed that the same principle as pertains to the NSC be applied in respect of the NC(V) namely that a learner should be able to PASS the qualification if s/he passes six subjects and there is evidence that s/he also wrote the examination in the seventh subject.

It is further recommended that the rule requiring a learner to PASS all the prescribed vocational subjects should be ameliorated in the ethos of supporting

\textsuperscript{36} This is currently being undertaken by Umalusi.
\textsuperscript{37} By recent agreement, Umalusi will be retrospectively certifying levels 2 and 3 of the NC(V).
\textsuperscript{38} This conclusion in unfortunately not verified by scientific data but based on industry awareness and practice.
success and throughput. The proposed amendment is to permit a condoned pass by up to and including 5% in one (1) vocational subject (on the final raw mark attained). On the other hand, it may be argued that the condonation route should be avoided for the vocational subjects as the subject ‘failed’ may be one that is critical to the discipline.\textsuperscript{39} Having regard to the two considerations, the MTT commits to the former on the understanding that the required PASS mark for the vocational subjects is set at 50% which is, in any event, already higher than the pass mark of 40% required for the compulsory subjects.\textsuperscript{40}

**Condonation in the NC(V) Levels 2, 3 and 4**

Currently the regulations for NC(V) Levels 2, 3 and 4 allow a candidate to be certified (awarded the qualification) if he/she has achieved a mark in a fundamental subject that is within 5% of the pass mark for one subject, provided that all other subjects have been passed. The current rule is that a learner may receive a ‘condoned pass’ in all of the 3 levels; effectively resulting in him/her gaining recognition for a subject that s/he has actually failed for the 3 years of the qualifications.

If the single qualification (1 X 3 year qualification) approach is adopted this situation will be immediately obviated. However, if DHET persists with the

\textsuperscript{39} Umalusi recommends a 2% condonation privilege regardless of whether the subject is fundamental or vocational, as discussed in the section to follow, on condition that the candidate can be awarded the whole qualification.

\textsuperscript{40} Umalusi and the DHET are drawing data to see what the effect would be if the possibility of the condonation could be applied to any one subject in the programme, that is, including the vocational subjects. (Anecdotal information suggests that this relaxation would allow significantly more learners to achieve the qualification, but the information being accessed should help provide an indication.)

The exclusion of the vocational subjects from the condonation rule has come from the application of the competency-based model (that informs occupational training) to the vocational subjects. In that approach to learning, one is either competent or not yet competent. The NC(V) is, however, not an occupational qualification but a general vocational one where a somewhat different philosophy is applied: learners are acquiring skills and it is possible to report on them differently, and not simply in an all-or-nothing way.

If this approach is agreed upon, a candidate would able to pass the NC(V) if he/she has passed all but one subject as per the requirements, but is short of, say, 2% on a single subject.

The counter-argument is that one would not want to pass, say, a pilot who is not proficient in the critical skills that make him/her a pilot with the safety of passengers at stake. The reality is that learners emerging from the NC(V) are not going to go into a workplace without the necessary supervision.

Alternatively, the optional subject under the Vocational programme or Maths or LO could be failed, allowing a pass in 6 subjects (as is the case with the National Senior Certificate). The 3 vocational subjects compulsory to the programme would, however, and the language competency need to be achieved. Such a strategy would, however, limit the student to programmes where Maths is not required for admission to further studies or as a workplace requirement. Such a decision might also have an impact on HE admission – as the scores in 6 subjects (excluding LO) are usually calculated for admission.
The notion that the NC(V) is a 3 X 1 year qualification, this *de facto* position should be reviewed.

**The pass and admission to higher education requirements for the NC(V) and the NSC**

Certification reflects on another issue namely that the promulgated minimum admission requirements for entry into a higher certificate, diploma, and degree with an NC(V) are higher than the requirements should a learner present with an NSC. This has many unintended consequences for the NC(V) learner and places him/her at a disadvantage in the higher education admission stakes.

As indicated above, there is a concern with the NC(V) resulting because of the lack of quality assurance in respect of the practical aspects of the qualification. This limitation needs urgent attention as the practical component of the NC(V) curriculum is what makes it attractive to industry partners and establishes the goal of the qualification. When this is resolved, the NC(V) admission requirement to higher education should be reviewed to equate with the NSC.

The difference in entrance requirements to higher education between the NSC and NC(V) is often cited as the single most significant issue with regard to the certification of the NC(V). The NC(V) pass and admission requirements as regulated and applied by higher education institutions are regarded as considerably more stringent than those that apply to the NSC.

Comparison of minimum pass requirements for the NSC and NC(V) Levels 2, 3 and 4:

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41 Anecdotal evidence is that the FETC have been reluctant to allow business to partner with them and provide support/assistance (rather than a total reluctance from business). It is recommended that DHET intervene to direct that industry be engaged to become a partner in the quality assurance of the practical components of the qualification. DHET might consider using the model of the QCTO for this purpose, also taking note of the obligations on business through the signing of the skills accord, in addition to using the SETAs to support the process. (Note: NSDS3 requires the SETAs to participate with the sector.)
### National Senior Certificate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSC</th>
<th>With admission requirements to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Language</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics/ Maths Literacy</td>
<td>3 subjects passed with &gt;40% (including the HL) and 3 passed with &gt;30%. Can fail one subject, provided there is full evidence of the SBA having been completed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 subjects offered from group B

and

### National Certificate (Vocational)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NC(V)</th>
<th>With admission requirements to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language (HL or FAL) but it must be the LOLT of the HE institution</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Orientation</td>
<td>40 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics/ Maths literacy</td>
<td>30 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 compulsory subjects from vocational field</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 elective subject, possibly from a related field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initially, it was a requirement of the NC(V) that all subjects needed to be passed. The condonation offered to NC(V) students currently means that they must pass all four subjects that form part of the vocational part of the qualification but may be granted a condonation on 1 fundamental subject, provided the mark is within 5% of the prerequisite pass mark.
Notwithstanding the opinion of difference, both qualifications require a pass in the LOLT (not very stringent at ≥30%, and probably not adequate to ensure success in higher learning).

Also, both qualifications require that the candidate has, at least, attempted mathematics or maths literacy. The big difference between the NSC and NC(V) is that any subject can be failed in the NSC, except the home language, and yet the candidate will still be able to achieve the qualification.

The other difference is that the NSC external component for all subjects compromises 75% of the final mark whereas in the NC(V) this is only true for the fundamentals; only 50% is external for the vocational subjects.

Both qualifications require that the candidate offer Life Orientation, but the NC(V) includes an external assessment and a compulsory 5-credit component to ensure that the candidate has the basics in computer literacy: it is therefore, at this stage, the more valuable version of LO.

**Misgivings regarding the NC(V)**

One of the most difficult issues surrounding the NC(V) is its lack of immediate acceptance as a part of the national educational and training system. The reasons for this situation are various but include: the qualification did not grow directly out of an existing, well established qualification the way the NSC did from the old Senior Certificate; employers appear to regard themselves as not having been sufficiently involved in the development of the NC(V); the time to complete the qualification makes it unattractive to industry (e.g. the fact that the qualifications are delivered full-time rather than part-time, and require a full three years of full-time study); its hasty implementation at a time when the colleges were in a profound state of flux and without the necessary staff having been trained to implement the ambitious new qualification. Furthermore, a weakness of the current NC(V) is that it is neither a general education qualification nor a purposeful qualification that signifies something specific for the labour market.

This lack of acceptance is evident in the workplace as well as at higher education institutions (although there are exceptions in both contexts).
As a result of its newness, the NC(V) will need to prove that its successful candidates offer value both in the workplace and at institutions of further and higher education and by doing so, allay the distrust that has come with its introduction.

**Changes in assessment and certification**

Furthermore, if the NCV is to face both ways (academic and vocational/occupational), as Umalusi argues, then it is important that the certification (and assessment)\(^{42}\) also reflect this.

The proposal here is that the vocational subjects should have separate theory and practical components – each with their own subject codes – which are separately reflected on the final certificate, even if they finally form a single ‘super-subject’ where the overall pass mark needs to be 50%. The candidate who is strong in the practical aspect/trade could then be readily identified and this could lead to employment. At the moment, the NC(V) has the external exam which includes the Integrated Summative Assessment Task (ISAT) and the ICASS (Internal continuous assessment). There are elements of practicals in both the external and the internal component, which complicates matters to the extent that the practical work is subsumed by the theory (mainly written tests and assignments).

It is submitted that the “fudging” of theory and practical does not allow for well-developed skills to be clearly identified for uptake by employers, which this new proposal would solve. Higher education institutions would probably wish to focus on a combination of the theory and practical for admission.

Wherever applicable, the practical task at NCV 4 must then be aligned with the task(s) required for artisan qualification (trade test). The tasks from level 2 to 3 to 4 and the practical work conducted through the year must lead systematically up this task. College facilities (workshops etc.) must be accredited so that

\(^{42}\) See later.
hours spent in the workshops contribute legitimately to the time requirements for specific trades.

**A Statement of Results**

If the qualification is to be a three-year qualification, it is recommended that the possibility be created for candidates to receive (on application) an “official” statement of results that has some currency in the market place. The cohort that this qualification attracts (grade 9) will in all likelihood be at the lower performing end and therefore progression could be a problem – it is therefore necessary to ensure that all learning acquired is acknowledged, notwithstanding that it is not the full qualification. Students can then accumulate learning at their own pace and according to their circumstances.

**CHAPTER 3.6**

**Assessment Structure**

Whilst the mandate focuses primarily on the external assessment modalities, it is necessary when reviewing the NC(V) to take cognisance of both the internal and external assessment guidelines and practices.

**Internal assessment of fundamental subjects**

With regard to the internal assessment of the fundamental subjects of the NC(V) qualification, the policy on the *Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Certificate (Vocational)* and the Subject Assessment Guidelines, provide that fundamental subjects have two assessment components namely, the Internal Continuous Assessment (ICASS) mark which counts for 25% towards the final promotion mark for each candidate at the end of the year; and a written examination, which carries the remaining 75% weight. There are

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43 This means that without having to certify every student who has not completed the qualification, the learners could still receive a formal Statement of results which will indicate achievement either for the particular year or as a consolidation of all success over several years. This practice of providing a consolidation of accumulated results reflects on the acknowledged value proposition of lifelong learning.
guidelines for the implementation of ICASS on which the choice of the types of assessment tasks that make up the ICASS marks is based. These indicate the options of (i) formal tests, assignments and projects; and (ii) tasks that cover the theoretical aspect of the subject and tasks that cover the practical aspect. However, a major challenge with regard to the ICASS assessment is the fact that there is no approved policy on what constitutes ICASS with the result that there is no normative reference. Furthermore, there appears to be no clear difference between tasks that pertain to the application of the theoretical aspects of the course, and practical tasks for fundamental subjects (e.g. Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy and Languages).

To ameliorate the subjectivity of assessment, the final ICASS mark for fundamental subjects is programmatically moderated by Umalusi to be within a reasonable range of the standardized marks of the written papers. This action seeks to address inflated or very low ICASS marks.

**Internal assessment of vocational subjects**

In respect of the *internal assessment* of the vocational subjects there is again two assessment components namely, the ICASS mark (50%) and external examinations (50%). The ICASS mark covers both the theoretical and practical aspects of each vocational subject. However, the practical challenge is that the split between theory and practical within the ICASS mark is not clearly articulated in any of the approved policy documents. Again Umalsui has the role of quality assuring and standardising the results of the vocational subjects. Thus, when it notes that students have performed poorly in the theory component of the subjects during the summative assessment, as part of the standardisation process the practical marks are consequently adjusted downwards (to align with the theory results). An unintended consequence of this is that students fail the subject because when the ICASS marks are lowered, the student’s result may fall below the prescribed 50% sub-minimum requirement for the practical component of the course.

The MTT has no issue with the sub-minimum requirement pertinent to the practical component of the qualification and, in fact, strongly supports its
retention: however, there must be a more stringent quality assurance regimen implemented to ensure that the formative practical assessments are done with appropriate rigour so that reliance can be placed on the reflected achievements of the learners.

One standard that may be implemented in assuring the quality of the practical component of the vocational subjects is to consider applying ISAT. It is recommended that ISAT may be considered to constitute the 50% component of the prescribed internal assessment as there is acknowledgement for the fact that learners do get assistance with the ISAT work and it ensures that the internal assessment is more structured.44 Similarly, on the prescribed 50% component of the external practical requirement, there must also be a structured model built into the curriculum plan with appropriate assessment guidelines.

External assessment of fundamental and vocational subjects

With regard to the external assessment practices for the fundamental and vocational subjects, the external examinations for fundamental subjects consist of written papers only and count for 75% of the total pass mark. The examination papers are set by the DHET and moderated by Umalusi and there is no issue to be raised. On the other hand, the external examinations for vocational subjects consist of 70% theory (written papers) and 30% practical (Integrated Summative Assessment Tasks - ISAT). These are set by the DHET and moderated by Umalusi/or the relevant ETQA: however, see recommendation above regarding the increased ISAT component of the assessment.

Aligned to the issues with the quality assurance of the vocational subjects is the application of the policy guidelines that learners who do not complete the required activities should (i) not receive a DP mark and (ii) not be admitted to the examination. This directive should be implemented with immediate effect as a failure to do so also impacts negatively on the overall quality and throughput of the final cohort of results.

44 Similar problems are being experienced with the NSC and a single model may be developed for both qualifications.
A further fact is that in other school-leaving qualifications, learners are awarded supplementary examination opportunities - this concession must be accorded to learners taking the NC(V), as well. Whilst this matter is being reviewed, it is also proposed that the logistics and timing of the supplementary examinations come under scrutiny: currently, the supplementary examinations are not properly scheduled to enable a learner to access higher education institutions in the year of the supplementary examination. The Department: Basic Education must be requested to review its scheduling to allow for supplementary examination in time for students to meet higher education registration dates.

Furthermore, it is proposed that in order to support the strategic mission and purpose of the NC(V), it is necessary to ensure that the assessment approach is conducive to improving the rate of achievement. For example, if adult learners are eligible to acquire credits through a process of RPL, it must be recognised that there is a concomitant accelerated learning pathway with regular examinations three or four times a year to give proper effect to the intention.

In summary, regarding the assessment regimen, the following issues must be foregrounded for review and/or further regulatory attention: The ISAT is the primary external assessment for practical skills with which a student exits the college with at NC(V) level 4. The subject guidelines give each college an option to either administer the ISAT from the beginning of the year in the mode of continuous assessment and make a final judgment on the learner’s skills at the end of the year when the task is completed; or to administer the ISAT in a single examination session to assess practical skills learnt throughout the year. The option of administering the ISAT throughout the year creates a situation where the ISAT becomes part of the learning process with the assistance of the lecturer but awarded marks at the end of the as an external examination. Many students score marks in the 80s for the ISAT; yet fail the written papers more than once. This may be attributable to the assessment rubric for ISAT in terms of which a learner may score up to 50% before any knowledge of practical work is tested. This obviously yields a false sense of knowledge which is then adjusted to the detriment of the student during the standardisation processes. The ISAT assessment guideline must be reviewed.
Secondly, the management of student files for ICASS is problematic. Lecturers have to deal with up to 7 files per student and this creates an administrative burden which impacts on the effective management and internal quality assurance of the ICASS including submission of results on time, record keeping of portfolios (particularly where students have missed assessments), filing and storage of portfolios etc.

The quality of the question papers for the NC(V) is cause for concern. The papers often reflect errors that result in both industry and higher education questioning the standard and integrity of the exit outcomes. Also, particularly with regard to levels 2 and 3, the marks capture process is controversial as the system allows submission of a completed electronic marksheet with blank spaces on marks and without verification. Additionally, at levels 2 and 3, there is no joint discussion of the marking memoranda prior to the assessment processes by the appointed assessor; consequently, the marking memoranda are not standardized and quality is again compromised.

Finally, and supremely relevant to the issue of quality is the fact that the stated intention is that the curriculum spans a period of 40 weeks: however, in reality, the actual teaching time is only 22 weeks in duration due to the time required to conduct assessments in the ICASS and ISAT processes, management of examinations in June and October; as well as the consequences of late registrations and a delayed commencement to the academic year (all of which impact on the actual teaching contact time).

It is essential to the success of the NC(V) curriculum that the the ICASS and ISAT practices be properly administered given their contribution to the curriculum content, particularly the practical component. In light of the limitations raised above it is recommended that consideration be given to a proper review of the staff competencies at the Colleges be undertaken with a specific focus on appropriate understanding and management of the ICASS and ISAT processes. The practice of allowing the Colleges to exercise an individual discretion has seriously compromised the quality and consequently acceptability of the qualification. It also prejudices the learner. The Policy and/or Guidelines...
must also clarify the split between the theory and practical components within the ICASS of vocational subjects. Further, in order to give credence to the ISAT, it is important that it be regarded as an external examination of practical skills learnt and administered as such at the end of each year – and this should equally be a Policy stipulation.

With regard to the more operational aspects of assessment, it is also recommended that the integrity of the NC(V) needs to be bolstered. Firstly, it is proposed that learners should not be promoted to the next level in a subject unless the learner has passed the subject on the previous level. Secondly, all candidates must achieve proposed ICASS sub-minima for entry to the written examinations. Thirdly, there must be a national decision that subject ISATs will be implemented in all four vocational subjects. And fourthly, with regard to the supplementary examinations, all candidates must meet proposed sub-minima per subject for admission to supplementary examinations. Supplementary examinations must be written and results issued before the start of the academic year.

CHAPTER 3.7
Conclusion

The MTT applauds the courage of the Minister in constituting the working group to review the qualification given the murmurs of discontent. However, it is also noted that this review may be premature as insufficient time has been given to the existing model in order to enable any kind of cohort analysis of the success of the programme/qualification. The end of 2010 marked the very first group of learners to have completed the 3 years of the qualification and their success either in higher education can only reasonably be gauged after 2011. Insofar as their success in the workplace, it is difficult (if not impossible) to draw any meaningful conclusion based on one cohort after only one year. It is submitted – with great humility – that there is too much proposed change in the NC(V) workspace that is all being fast-tracked for implementation. This exuberance could create its own difficulties and so it is suggested that consideration be given
to slowing down the changes and taking time to allow current practices to become embedded (unless patently wrong or irregular\textsuperscript{45}).

Further, it cannot be sufficiently emphasised that the MTT accepted the specific mandate given to it by the Minister that is, to focus on the defined aspects of NC(V) identified in the Terms of Reference supplied. Consequently, the issue of the role and contribution of the FET Colleges to the national challenge of broadening the post-school education sector has not been canvassed in this report and is left for a separate study.

Lastly, throughout its deliberations, the MTT was cognisant of the importance of developing an effective quality assurance regimen for the NC(V). Accordingly, it would be remiss not to mention the concerns regarding the quality assurance arrangements for the NC(V) qualification. The Ministry needs to provide the necessary leadership that focuses Umalusi, the CHE, and/or the QCTO on their role regarding the NC(V).

However, despite the aforementioned reservations, the MTT complied with its mandate with due rigour and a dedicated focus on improvement strategies. It is submitted that the proposals presented will achieve the two stated aims of the Minister namely (i) to unblock the system and (ii) create a seamless alternate route for learners to bring learners into the system with necessary effectiveness and efficiency.

The task team wishes to thank the Minister for the opportunity to engage with this very important issue and for the trust placed in the members to provide this advisory report.

\textsuperscript{45} For example, the concerns regarding the resource and capacity constraints; as well as curriculum implementation and assessment are well-known and should be addressed as an immediate priority.
QUALIFICATION RULES
The National Certificate: Vocational, is made up of a Fundamental Component and a Vocational Component.

1. Fundamental Component:

The following three subjects are compulsory:
1.1. Language in one of the eleven official languages provided for by the South African Constitution, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996), provided that the official language chosen is offered at least on First Additional Language level, provided further that the language is the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) of the FET college/provider.

1.2. Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy.

1.3. Life Orientation.

2. Vocational Component:

The Vocational Component defines the qualification as being of a specific type and involves learning experiences in situations contextually relevant to the particular vocational field and also provides for the attainment of specific learning required for depth and specialisation within a particular programme. The Vocational Component will therefore indicate the specialisation of the programme.

Learners are to choose four subjects of 20 credits each at Level 4 provided that at least three of the four subjects are selected from one sub-field. The remaining subject may be chosen either from sub-fields in the same organising field, or from any other organising field.

The Vocational subjects are grouped into Vocational specialisations each of which indicates what subjects must be chosen.

The approved subjects are those listed in the policy document, National Policy on the Programme and Promotion Requirements of National Certificates and Non-formal Programmes Offered in Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges.

2.1. Civil Engineering and Building Construction:

Compulsory Subjects:
- Construction Planning.
- Materials.
- Plant and Equipment.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Carpentry and Roof Work.
- Concrete Structures.
• Masonry.
• Physical Science.
• Plumbing.
• Roads.

Recommendation:

*The compulsory subject “Materials” should be replaced as it speaks only to materials needed in Masonry, whereas the elective subjects include other construction types.*

### 2.2. Drawing Office Practice:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Architectural Graphics and Technology.
- Civil and Structural Steel work Detailing.
- Engineering Graphics and Technology.

Optional Subject:
- Drawing Office Procedures and Techniques.

Recommendation:

*Can remain as is.*

### 2.3. Education and Development:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Art and Science of Teaching.
- Human and Social Development.
- Learning Psychology.

Optional Subject:
- Early Childhood development.

Recommendation:

*More elective subjects could be added which must be continued through all three levels e.g. Adult Education*

### 2.4. Electrical Infrastructure Construction:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Electrical Principles and Practice.
- Electronic Control and Digital Electronics.
- Workshop Practice.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational special
- Electrical Systems and Construction.
- Physical Science.
Recommendation:

*Can remain as is*

### 2.5. Engineering and Related Design:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Engineering Fundamentals.
- Engineering Systems.
- Engineering Technology.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation, depending on the field of mechanical specialisation:
- Automotive Repair and Maintenance.
- Engineering Fabrication.
- Fitting and Turning.
- Physical Science.
- Refrigeration Principles.
- Welding.

Recommendation:

*Can remain as is*

### 2.6. Finance, Economics and Accounting:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Applied Accounting.
- Economic Environment.
- Financial Management.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- New Venture Creation.

Recommendation:

*Specific finance, economics and accounting subjects should be added as electives to bolster this specialisation.*

### 2.7. Hospitality

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Client Services and Human Relations.
- Food Preparation.
- Hospitality Generics.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Hospitality Services.

**Recommendations:**
Food Preparation is a specialised occupational subject that does not apply to all sections of the hospitality sector so should not be compulsory but an elective subject. It should be replaced by Hospitality service (the current elective subject) as a compulsory subject.

2.8. Information Technology and Computer Sciences:

Three Compulsory subjects:
- Electronics.
- Introduction to Information Systems.
- Introduction to Systems Development.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or a subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Client Services and Human Relations.
- Entrepreneurship.
- Multimedia Basics.

Recommendation:

Can remain as is

2.9. Management:

Three Compulsory subjects:
- Financial Management.
- Management Practices.
- Operations Management.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Entrepreneurship.

Recommendation:

Not sure what the value of this specialisation is at levels 2, 3 and 4. Perhaps it should be removed as a specialisation and the subjects incorporated into other specialisations

2.10. Marketing:

Three Compulsory subjects:
- Advertising and Promotions.
- Marketing.
- Marketing Communication.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Consumer Behaviour.
- Contact Centre Operations.
- Graphic Design.
Recommendation:

**Can remain as is**

### 2.11. Mechatronics:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Electro technology.
- Introduction to Computers.

Optional Subject:
- Mechatronic systems.

Recommendation:

*Consideration could be given to replacing “Introduction to computers” with “Mechatronic systems” as a compulsory subject with the former becoming an elective*.

### 2.12. Office Administration:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Business Practice.
- Office Data Processing.
- Office Practice.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Applied Accounting.
- New Venture Creation.

Recommendation:

**Can remain as is**

### 2.13. Primary Agriculture

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Animal Production.
- Plant Production.
- Soil Science.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Agri-business.

Recommendation:

**Can remain as is**
2.14. **Primary Health:**

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- The South African Health Care System.
- Public Health.
- The Human Body and Mind.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Community Oriented Primary Care.

**Recommendation:**

*Can remain as is*

2.15. **Process Instrumentation:**

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Electronic Control and Digital Electronics.
- Engineering Fundamentals.
- Physical Science.

Optional Subject:
- Instrumentation Technology.

**Recommendations:**

*Physical science should become an elective subject and its replacement should be the elective, “Instrumentation Technology”*

2.16. **Process Plant Operations:**

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Engineering Fundamentals.
- Physical Science.
- Process Technology.

Optional Subjects:
- Process Chemistry.
- Pulp and Papermaking Technology.

**Recommendation:**

*Physical Science seems a difficult compulsory subject, but what could replace it?*

2.17. **Safety in Society:**

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Introduction to Governance.
- Introduction to Law.
• Principles of Criminal Justice.
Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
• Criminology.
• Introduction to Policing Practices.

Recommendation:

*Can remain as is*

**2.18. Tourism:**

Three Compulsory Subjects:
• Client Services and Human Relations.
• Science of Tourism.
• Sustainable Tourism in South Africa.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
• Tourism Operations.

Recommendation:

*The following subjects could be included as optional*
• Tourism Marketing
• Tourism Development
• Ecotourism
• Urban Tourism
• Business Enterprise
• Hotel management

**2.19. Transport and Logistics:**

Three Compulsory Subjects:
• Transport Economics.
• Transport Operations.
• Freight Logistics.

Optional Subject:
• Entrepreneurship level 2, Project Management level 3 and 4. OR
• New Venture Creation level 2, 3 and 4.

Recommendation:

*Can remain as is*
3.1. Civil Engineering and Building Construction

Compulsory Subjects:
- Construction Planning.
- Materials.
- Plant and Equipment.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Carpentry and Roof Work.
- Concrete Structures.
- Masonry and Tiling.
- Roads.
- Physical Science.
- Plumbing.
- Drawings, Setting Out, Quantities & Costing

Recommendation:
As for Level 2 “Materials” should be replaced as a compulsory subject. Drawings, Setting Out, Quantities & Costing could replace it.

3.2. Drawing Office Practice:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Architectural Graphics and Technology.
- Civil and Structural Steel work Detailing.
- Engineering Graphics and Design (CAD).

Optional Subject:
- Drawing Office Procedures and Techniques

Recommendation:
Can remain as is.

3.3. Education and Development:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Art and Science of Teaching.
- Human and Social Development.
- Learning Psychology.

Optional Subject:
- Early Childhood Development.

Recommendation:
As for level 2, more elective subjects could be added e.g. Adult Education which continue through all three levels

3.4. Electrical Infrastructure Construction

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Electrical Principles and Practice.
- Electrical Workmanship.
- Electronic Control and Digital Electronics.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Electrical Systems and Construction.
- Physical Science.

Recommendation:
Can remain as it is.

3.5. Engineering and Related Design

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Engineering Graphics and Design.
- Engineering Practice and Maintenance.
- Materials Technology.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects depending on field of Mechanical specialisation or any subject from any other Vocational specialisation:
Manufacturing and Assembly:
- Automotive Repair and Maintenance.
- Physical Science.

Engineering and Related Design:
- Fitting and Turning.
- Engineering Graphics & Design (CAD)
- Physical Science.
  Or
- Engineering Fabrication-Boilermaking.
  Or
- Engineering Fabrication-Sheet Metal Worker.
  Or
- Refrigeration Practice.
  Or
- Welding.

Recommendation:
Can remain as is
3.6. Finance, Economics and Accounting

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Applied Accounting.
- Economic Environment.
- Financial Management.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- New Venture Creation.

Recommendation:
*As for level 2, specific financial management subjects added at level 2 should be followed through. The given choice is too wide.*

3.7. Hospitality

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Client Services and Human Relations.
- Food Preparation.
- Hospitality Generics.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Hospitality Services.

Recommendation:
*As for level 2; replace “Food preparation” with “Hospitality services” as compulsory subject.*

3.8. Information Technology and Computer Sciences:

Three Compulsory subjects:
- Computer Hardware and Software.
- Principles of Computer Programming.
- Systems Analysis and Design.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or a subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Client Services and Human Relations.
- Contact Centre Operations.
- Multimedia Content
- Project Management.

Recommendation:
*Can remain as is*
3.9. Management

Three Compulsory subjects:
- Financial Management.
- Management Practice.
- Operations Management.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Project Management.

Recommendation:

*As for level 2. Not sure if this has any value at all.*

3.10. Marketing

Three Compulsory subjects:
- Advertising and Promotions.
- Marketing.
- Marketing Communication.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Consumer Behaviour.
- Contact Centre Operations.
- Graphic Design

Recommendation:

*Can remain as is*

3.11. Mechatronics:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Electro technology.
- Machine Manufacturing.
- Stored programme Systems.

Optional Subject
- Mechatronic systems.

Recommendation:

*As for level 2; replace “Introduction to computers” with “Mechatronic systems” as a compulsory subject.*

3.12. Office Administration

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Business Practice
• Office Data Processing
• Office Practice
Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
• Applied Accounting.
• New Venture Creation.

Recommendation:

Can remain as is

3.13. Primary Agriculture

Three Compulsory Subjects:
• Animal Production
• Plant Production
• Soil Science
Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
• Agri-business

Recommendation:

Can remain as is

3.14. Primary Health:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
• The South African Health Care System.
• Public Health.
• The Human Body and Mind.
Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
• Community Oriented Primary Care.

Recommendation:

Can remain as is

3.15. Process Instrumentation:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
• Electronic Control and Digital Electronics.
• Engineering Practice and Maintenance.
• Physical Science.
Optional Subject:
• Instrumentation Technology.

Recommendation:

As for Level 2. **Physical science should become an elective and its replacement should be the elective “Instrumentation Technology”**

### 3.16. Process Plant Operations:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Physical Science.
- Process Control.
- Process Technology.

Optional Subjects:
- Process Chemistry.
- Pulp and Papermaking Technology.

Recommendations:

As for Level 2. **Position of physical science as a compulsory subject questioned, but what is the alternative?**

### 3.17. Safety in Society

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Criminal Justice Structures and Mandates.
- Criminal Law.
- Governance.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Criminology.
- Theory of Policing Practices.

Learners can choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:
- Office Administration
- Management
- Transport and Logistics

### 3.18. Tourism

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Client Services and Human Relations.
- Science of Tourism.
- Sustainable Tourism in South Africa and Regional Travel.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Tourism Operations and Technology.
Recommendations:
The following subjects could be introduced as optional

- Tourism Marketing
- Ecotourism
- Urban Tourism
- Business Enterprise
- Hotel management

Learners may also choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:

- Office Administration
- Information Technology and Computer Sciences
- Marketing
- Hospitality
- Management

3.19. Transport and Logistics:

The programme will consist of three fundamental subjects:

- A language.
- Life Orientation.
- Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy.

One optional subject: (an existing approved NC(V) subject will be used):

- Entrepreneurship level 2, Project Management level 3 and 4.
  OR
- New Venture Creation level 2, 3 and 4.
  The three Transport related core subjects are the following:

- Subject 1: Transport Economics.
- Subject 2: Transport Operations.
- Subject 3: Freight Logistics.

Recommendations:
The same format should be applied with all the other vocational specialisation:

Three Compulsory Subjects:

- Transport Economics.
- Transport Operations.
- Freight Logistics.

Optional Subject:

- Entrepreneurship level 2, Project Management level 3 and 4. Or
- New Venture Creation level 2, 3 and 4.

Learners can choose one subject as optional from the following vocational specialisations:

- Office Administration
- Finance, Economics and Accounting
- Management
NQF level 4

4.1. Civil Engineering and Building Construction:

Compulsory Subjects:
- Construction Planning.
- Construction Supervision.
- Materials.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Carpentry and Roof work.
- Concrete Structures.
- Masonry and Tiling.
- Physical Science.
- Plumbing.
- Roads.
- Drawings, Setting Out, Quantities & Costing
- Civil and Construction Technology

Recommendation:
There is a need for learners to gain experience based on the field, experiential learning could be simulated for learners’ exposure.
It is further recommended that the NCV specialisation could be removed to become a Nated cause (N cause).
The content covered in this specialisation is very similar to the N causes, therefore it is recommended that could be withdrawn and learners may follow the Nated learning framework.

4.2. Drawing Office Practice

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Architectural Graphics and Technology.
- Civil and Structural Steel work Detailing.
- Mechanical Draughting and Technology.

Optional Subject:
- Drawing Office Procedures and Techniques.

Recommendation:
Learners can choose one subject from Information Technology and Computer Sciences as vocational specialisations.
Computer Programming, Data Communication and Networking could be introduced as optional subjects.
Mechanical Drawing could be included to give learners an opportunity to be able to articulate further into higher education.

4.3. Education and Development:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Art and Science of Teaching Level 4.
- Human and Social Development Level 4.
- Learning Psychology Level 4.
Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects depending on the field of mechanical specialisation or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Early Childhood Development.

Recommendation:
Observations of Training Practice, Facilitating Learning and others could be added as optional subject.

4.4. Electrical Infrastructure Construction:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Electrical Principles and Practices.
- Electrical Workmanship.
- Electronic Control and Digital Electronics.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Electrical Systems and Construction.
- Physical Science.

Recommendation:
This NCV specialisation could be removed to become a Nated cause (N cause). The content covered in this specialisation is very similar to the N causes, therefore it is recommended that could be withdrawn and learners may follow the Nated learning framework.

4.5. Engineering and Related Design:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Applied Engineering Technology
- Engineering Processes
- Professional Engineering Practice

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects depending on the field of mechanical specialisation or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Automotive Repair & Maintenance.
- Engineering Fabrication-Boilermaking.
- Engineering Fabrication-Sheet Metal Worker.
- Fitting and Turning.
- Physical Science.
- Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Processes.
- Welding.

Recommendation:
The title should be Mechanical Engineering and related Design
Learners can choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:
- Drawing Office Practice
- Management

This NCV specialisation could be removed to become a Nated cause (N cause). The content covered in this specialisation is very similar to the N causes, therefore it is recommended that could be withdrawn and learners may follow the Nated learning framework.
4.6. Finance, Economics and Accounting:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Applied Accounting.
- Economic Environment.
- Financial Management.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- New Venture Creation.

Recommendation:
Pricing and costing could be added as optional subject.
Learners may also choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:
- Information Technology and Computer Sciences
- Marketing
- Office Administration
- Transport Logistics

4.7. Hospitality:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Client Services and Human Relations.
- Food Preparation.
- Hospitality Generics.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Hospitality Services.

Recommendations:
- Food Preparation could be replaced by Hospitality service as a compulsory subject.
Learners may also choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:
- Information Technology and Computer Sciences
- Finance, Economics and Accounting
- Marketing
- Office Administration
- Tourism

4.8. Information Technology and Computer Science:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Computer Programming.
- Data Communication and Networking.
- Systems Analysis and Design.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Client Services and Human Relations.
- Contact Centre Operations.
- Multimedia services.
• Project Management.

**Recommendations:**
In this sector computer application has become vital, rather than being able to perform application only.
• Troubleshooting and repairs,
• Web design,
• Networking,
• Upgrading could be included as optional subject.
Learners can choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:
• Marketing
• Office Administration

**4.9. Management:**

Three Compulsory Subjects:
• Financial Management.
• Management Practice.
• Operations Management.
Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
• Project Management.

**Recommendations:**
Client Services, Human Relations and Risk Management may be added as optional subjects.
Learners may also choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:
• Marketing
• Office Administration
• Transport and Logistics
As suggested at level 2 and 3 Management should be incorporated into other specialisations such as Finance, Economics and Accounting. Graduates at this level may be expected to supervise or monitor activities instead of managing others in a work place.
There is no progression from the specialisation and the content is covered in other specialisation such as Finance, Economics and Accounting.

**4.10. Marketing:**

Three Compulsory Subjects:
• Advertising and Promotions.
• Marketing.
• Marketing Communication.
Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
• Consumer Behaviour.
• Contact Centre Operations.
• Graphic Design.

**Recommendations:**
Marketing Principles should be the second compulsory subject instead of Marketing.
Learners can choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:
• Finance, Economics and Accounting
• Hospitality
• Office Administration
• Tourism

4.11. Mechatronics:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
• Computer-Integrated Manufacturing.
• Electro Technology.
• Stored Programme Systems.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects depending on the field of mechanical specialisation or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
• Mechatronic Systems, Level 4.

Recommendation:
Mechatronics centred on mechanics and electronics, other subjects that could be included as optional are:
• Computing,
• Software engineering, (application)
• Control engineering, (manipulation)
• Systems Design Engineering and
• Computer programming

Learners can choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:
• Information Technology and Computer Sciences
• Electrical Infrastructure Construction

4.12. Office Administration

Three Compulsory Subjects:
• Business Practice.
• Office Data Processing.
• Office Practice.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
• Applied Accounting.
• New Venture Creation
• Personal Assistance.

Recommendation:
• Contact centre operation
• Client service
• Human Relations could be included as optional subjects to choose from.

Learners can choose one subject from Information Technology and Computer Sciences as vocational specialisations.
4.13. Primary Agriculture:

Three Compulsory Subjects:

- Advanced Plant Production.
- Animal Production.
- Farm Planning and Mechanisation.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Agri-business.

Recommendations:
Learners can choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:
- Marketing
- Information Technology and Computer Sciences

4.14. Primary Health:

Three Compulsory Subjects:

- The South African Health Care System.
- Public Health.
- The Human Body and Mind.

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Community Oriented Primary Care.

Recommendations:
Learners can choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:
- Office Administration
- Education and Development
- Finance, Economics and Accounting

4.15. Process Instrumentation:

Three Compulsory Subjects:

- Electronic Control and Digital Electronics.
- Engineering Processes.
- Physical Science.

Optional Subject:
- Instrumentation Technology.

Recommendations:
Below are some of the subjects that could be included either as compulsory or optional.
- Safety Instrumented Systems
- Computer skill
- Programming
- Theoretical concepts of Physical systems
- Evaluation & Control of systems
- Application of Pressure, levels, temperatures and flows
- Electrical, Electronic & Pneumatics
Learners may also choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:

- Information Technology and Computer Sciences
- Mechatronics

### 4.16. Process Plant Operations:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Physical Science.
- Process Control.
- Process Technology.

Optional Subjects:
- Process Chemistry.
- Pulp and Papermaking Technology.

Learners can choose one subject from Information Technology and Computer Sciences.

### 4.17. Safety in Society

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Criminal Justice Process
- Governance
- Law of Procedures and Evidence

Optional Subject:
Choose one of the following recommended subjects or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Applied Policing
- Criminology

Learners can choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:
- Office Administration
- Transport and Logistics

### 4.18. Tourism:

Three Compulsory Subjects:
- Client Services and Human Relations.
- Science of Tourism.
- Sustainable Tourism in South Africa and International Travel.

Optional Subject:
Choose the following recommended subject or any subject from any other vocational specialisation:
- Tourism Operations.

Learners may also choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations:
- Office Administration
- Information Technology and Computer Sciences
- Marketing
- Hospitality

### 4.19. Transport and Logistics:

The programme will consist of three fundamental subjects:
• A language.
• Life Orientation.
• Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy.

One optional subject: (an existing approved NC(V) subject will be used):
• Entrepreneurship level 2, Project Management level 3 and 4.
  OR
• New Venture Creation level 2, 3 and 4.

The three Transport related core subjects are the following:
• Subject 1: Transport Economics.
• Subject 2: Transport Operations.
• Subject 3: Freight Logistics.

Recommendations:
The same format should be applied with all the other vocational specialisation:
Three Compulsory Subjects:
• Transport Economics.
• Transport Operations.
• Freight Logistics.

Optional Subject:
• Entrepreneurship level 2, Project Management level 3 and 4.
  OR
• New Venture Creation level 2, 3 and 4.

Learners can choose one subject as optional from the following vocational specialisations:
• Office Administration
• Finance, Economics and Accounting

Inclusive Recommendations:
• The qualification is a progression from NQF level 2, 3 and 4; consistency should be given emphasis in order to ensure continuity.

• There should be more emphasis on learning experiences in situations contextually relevant to the particular vocational field from level 2 up to 4 to equip learners with the skill required in the workplace as they exit.

• Simulated experiential learning through case study, role play, use of scenario and practical experience should be created where learners are hands on. This will improve problem solving skill and widen learners thinking ability.

• There is a need for a vocational specialisation on Human Resource to be established to equip the FET learners with the skill required in this field. This area could have the following as compulsory subject:
  Labour Laws
  Training and Development
  Procurement and Recruitment

Learners may also choose one subject from the following vocational specialisations as optional subjects:
• Finance, Economics and Accounting
• Office Administration
• Management
CHAPTER 4: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 3.1: Purpose of the NC(V) qualification

Recommendation 1: Review and amend the purpose statement of the NC(V) Policy Statement to take cognizance of the recommendation that the NC(V)-4 should realistically be structured to provide the learner with employment at an entry level as opposed to the intermediate level which is the stipulation in the current policy document. (There is agreement that the level of skills transfer should remain at an intermediate level.)

Recommendation 2: Develop vocationally-orientated higher certificate and diploma qualifications to be offered by the FET Colleges to support NC(V) and NSC graduates who have little/no mobility into higher education and/or the jobbing market.

Recommendation 3: Amend the NC(V) Policy Statement to clearly and cogently emphasise the overall curriculum content to be:

(i) necessary academic knowledge as an integral component of the qualification;
(ii) a practical skills component that is integrated into the qualification; and
(iii) the necessary component of applied competence and understanding
to ensure that the implementation of the qualification achieves the purpose and design objectives.

Chapter 3.2: Entrance requirements

Recommendation 4: The minimum admission requirements for entry to the NC(V) must recognize the age of the learner (set at a minimum age of 15-years in line with the national Policy on the Age of Admission to School and the national policy directive that compulsory education is up to Grade 9) as well as the indicators of the cognitive pre-requisites namely a completed Grade 9 status.

Recommendation 5: No maximum age for admission to the NC(V) is recommended (given the added acknowledged goal of the qualification to support adult learners already in the world-of-work).

Recommendation 6: Relevant and appropriate career guidance regarding the opportunities of the NC(V) must be embedded in the schools. This is especially important for learners in Grade 9 who have to make subject and career choices (and often do so without being properly informed of the spectrum of study options available to them).

Recommendation 7: Implement differentiated learning and training sites (albeit that the qualification design and structure remain consistent) in order to acknowledge the pedagogic demands of the different learner cohorts enrolling for the NC(V).

Recommendation 8a: Admission to the NC(V) should be premised on the values of responsible open access.

Recommendation 8b: The Department of Higher Education and Training should be responsible for setting enrolment targets for the Colleges to ensure that there is always the necessary infrastructure and human resources in place to assure a quality learning experience.
**Recommendation 8c:** Enrolment selection to accommodate the prescribed enrolment targets should be carefully considered on the predicates of the set equity targets - and not based solely on past academic performance.

**Recommendation 9:** The practice of recognizing prior learning should be implemented in respect of both access to and in order to obtain credit bearing exemption from specific modules in the NC(V).

**Recommendation 10:** Recognition should be applied in respect of both formal credits obtained in another environment, as well as for skills acquired in the workplace.

**Recommendation 11:** A rigorous RPL Policy and/or Regulations must be developed that reflects the aim, purpose, and application of the national goals and direction in respect of RPL in the NC(V) qualification.

**Recommendation 12:** Consideration should be given to a centralized RPL office to handle all RPL applications for the NC(V) qualification. This will ensure optimal standardization and mitigate against capacity and skills constraints that may pertain in the Colleges.

**Chapter 3.3: Duration and general requirements of the NC(V) qualification**

**Recommendation 13a:** A clear distinction must be drawn between the NC(V) – as a vocationally-based qualification – and the occupational programmes. The NC(V) must be structured as a 1 X 3 year qualification.

**Recommendation 13b:** Develop a dedicated set of critical cross-field outcomes for each of the 3 years of the qualification so that teachers, prospective employers, and the learners are clear as to the skills and knowledge that will attach to the successful completion of each year in the qualification.
Chapter 3.4: The structure of the NC(V) qualification

**Recommendation 14:** The current curriculum model which includes fundamental, vocational, and elective subjects should be retained.

**Recommendation 15:** Life Orientation serves an important purpose and should be retained as a fundamental subject in the curriculum. However, to ensure that the intended learning is achieved, there must be a re-invigorated focus on the content and application of Life Orientation in the curriculum as it is offered.

**Recommendation 16:** Conduct a systematic review of the curricula for the different NC(V) programmes to ensure that the compulsory vocational can be defined as ‘sufficiently generic to make them discipline-based’ and the electives are of a more dedicated/specialist character.

**Recommendation 17:** Conduct regular quality assurance audits to ensure that the practical component of the qualification is properly embedded in the curriculum.

**Recommendation 18:** Colleges must be required to provide proof of the ability to present practical training (infrastructure and skilled capacity) at the time of the application for accreditation to offer the qualification.

**Recommendation 19:** DHET should investigate the use of OERs and online practical training modules to support the Colleges with the skills gap that pertains in respect of offering the practical aspects of the curriculum.

**Recommendation 20:** Implement a clear process for the objective moderation and standardization of the practical assessment results across the sector.

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There must, however, be a re-invigorated focus on the content and application of Life Orientation in the curriculum as it is offered.
**Recommendation 21:** Address the real concerns and problems pertaining to the lack of skilled academic staff in the Colleges.

**Recommendation 22:** For the short to medium term, work integrated learning (WIL) should not be a mandatory component of the curriculum: rather it should be ‘highly recommended’ that it is included in the curriculum as far as is reasonably possible.

**Recommendation 23:** Identify and maintain the 3 distinct learning pathways namely academic, vocational, and occupational.

**Recommendation 24:** Develop and implement a distinct vocational qualification and an occupation-based learning experience with clear guidelines as to the articulation and credit transfer between the two pathways. See the structure proposed in Chapter 3.4.

**Recommendation 25a:** Review the various NC(V) programmes to identify which should remain as part of the NC(V) qualification cohort and which should be refocused towards the occupation-based programmes of learning.  
**Recommendation 25b:** In conducting the review, invite industry as a partner in the ‘re-packaging’ process in respect of the design and development of the curricula.

**Recommendation 26:** Consider the introduction of unique ‘applied’ or ‘functional’ discipline modules relevant to the qualification (especially in respect of mathematics and physical science): however, access to higher education should not be compromised as a consequence of this action.

**Recommendation 27:** Consider the introduction of an NC(V)-5 qualification into the HEQ Framework aimed at being a 1-year skills focused qualification. (See also Recommendation 2 above.)
Chapter 3.5: Requirements for certification of the NC(V) qualification

Recommendation 28: Review the rules regarding success and allow a learner to pass the NC(V) qualification if s/he passes six subjects and there is evidence that s/he also wrote the examination in the seventh subject. This will align the NC(V) with the practice applied in respect of the NSC.

Recommendation 29: Review the rules regarding success and allow a condoned pass by up to and including 5% in one (1) vocational subject (on the final raw mark attained).

Recommendation 30: In planning subject content, ensure that the vocational subjects have separate theory and practical components – each with their own codes – which are separately reflected on the final certificate (though the final result will be a combination of both marks). The reason for this is to provide stakeholders with a sense of the learner’s true potential in the practical aspects of the discipline, which is often what they are looking for when providing employment opportunity.

Recommendation 31: Notwithstanding the recommendation for a 1 X 3 year qualification, learners must be provided with an official Statement of Results that has currency with industry. This will serve to support students who may need to drop out of the system prior to completing the 3 years of the qualification: industry will, at least, have a sense of learning that has been achieved.

Chapter 3.6: Assessment structure of the NC(V) qualification

Recommendation 32: Implement a standardized system of quality assurance for the resulting process of the practical subjects.
**Recommendation 33:** The ‘duly performed’ and admission to examination requirements as set out in the Policy guidelines must be strictly applied.

**Recommendation 34:** Consideration must be given to the provision of a supplementary examination opportunity which takes into account the logistics and timing of the examination to support admission to higher education institutions.

**Recommendation 35:** Given the recommended role of RPL in the NC(V) qualification, there must be an option for an accelerated pathway towards completing the qualification.

**Recommendation 36:** Internal assessments in the Colleges must be clearly stipulated and the process defined to eliminate the problems that are currently characterizing the ICASS process.