



**REPORT OF THE REVIEW OF THE
HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK (HEQSF)**

21 August 2022

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAU	Association of African Universities
ACE	American Council of Education
AD	Advanced Diploma
ACFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASG-QA	The African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
AU	African Union
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
BTech	Bachelor of Technology
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CEOs	Chief Executive Officers
CESM	Classification of Education Subject Matter
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ECSA	Engineering Council of South Africa
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EQA	External Quality Agency
EU	European Union
GFETQSF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework
GG	Government Gazette
HAQAA	Harmonisation of African Quality Assurance and Accreditation
HC	Higher Certificate
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee

HEQCIS	Higher Education Quality Committee Information System
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework
HPCSA	Health Professional Council of South Africa
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LoCC	Language of Communicative Competence
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
Los	Learning Outcomes
LPF	Language Policy Framework
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NPPSET	National Plan for Post-School Education and Training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSFAS	National Students Financial Aid Scheme
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OER	Open Education Resources
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
PAQAF	Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework
PSET	Post-School Education and Training
PBL	Problem-based learning
PJBL	Project-based learning
QAF	Quality Assurance Framework
QLFS	Quarterly Labour Force Study
QCs	Quality Councils
RNFILO	Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAUS	South African Union of Students
SADC	Southern African Development Committee
SADCQF	Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework
SADCQVN	Southern African Development Community Qualifications Verification Network
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa

SIFA	Skills Initiative for Africa
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UoTs	Universities of Technology
WBL	Work-based Learning
WDTL	Work-directed Theoretical Learning
WIL	Work Integrated Learning
WPL	Workplace Practical Learning
WRLs	World Reference Levels

TABLES

Table 1: National Qualifications Framework (NQF) 2008 - 2013

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Table 1 : National Qualifications Framework (NQF) 2008 - 2013

National Qualifications Framework (NQF) 2008-2013	
NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK	
LEVEL	SUB-FRAMEWORK AND QUALIFICATION TYPES
8	Doctoral Degree (240 credits)
	D Tech (240 credits)
	Master's Degree (120 credits)
7	M Tech (120 credits)
	Bachelor Honours Degree (120 credits)
	Professional Bachelor's Degree (480 credits)
6	Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits)
	Bachelor's Degree (360 credits)
	B Tech (120 credits)
5	National Diploma (360 credits)
	Certificate (120 Credits)
4	National Certificate Further Education and Training
3	Further Education and Training
2	Further Education and Training
1	General Education and Training ABET level 4 Grade 9 National Certificates

Three sub-frameworks of the NQF	
NQF Sub-frameworks	NQF Levels
Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF)	5-9
Further Education and Training (FET)	2-4
General Education and Training	NQF level 1 Grade 9 - ABET level 4 National Certificate

DRAFT

National Qualifications Framework (NQF) 2013-2023

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK		
LEVEL	SUB-FRAMEWORK AND QUALIFICATION TYPES	
10	Doctoral Degree (360 credits)	
	Professional Doctoral Degree (360 credits)	
9	Master's Degree (180 credits)	
	Professional Master's Degree (180 credits)	
8	Bachelor Honours Degree (120 credits)	
	Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits)	
	Bachelor Degree (480 credits)	
7	Bachelor's Degree (360/480 credits)	
	Advanced Diploma (120 credits)	
6	Diploma (240 credits)	Occupational Certificate (Level 6)
	Advanced Certificate (120 credits) Higher Certificate (120 credits)	Occupational Certificate (Level 5)
5		Occupational Certificate (Level 5)
4	National Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 4)
3	Intermediate Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 3)
2	Elementary Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 2)
1	General Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 1)

Three sub-frameworks of the NQF

NQF Sub-frameworks	NQF Levels
Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF)	5-10
Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF)	1-6
General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETSF)	1-4

Table 2: National Qualifications Framework (NQF) 2013 - 2023

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK		
LEVEL	SUB-FRAMEWORK AND QUALIFICATION TYPES	
10	Doctoral Degree (360 credits)	
	Professional Doctoral Degree (360 credits)	
9	Master's Degree (180 credits)	
	Master's Degrees in Health Sciences**	
	Professional Master's Degree (180 credits)	
8	Bachelor Honours Degree (120 credits)	Occupational Certificate (Level 8)
	Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits)	
	Professional Bachelor's Degree (480 credits)	
	Advanced Bachelor's Degrees**	
7	Bachelor's Degree (360)	Occupational Certificate (Level 7)
	Advanced Diploma (120 credits)	
	Bachelor of Education (480 credits)**	
	Professional Bachelor's Degrees in the Health Sciences**	
	Postgraduate Certificate (120 credits)**	
6	Diploma (240 credits)	Occupational Certificate (Level 6)
	Advanced Certificate (120 credits)	
5	Higher Certificate (120 credits)	Occupational Certificate (Level 5)
4	National Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 4)
3	Intermediate Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 3)
2	Elementary Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 2)
1	General Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 1)

Three sub-frameworks of the NQF

NQF Sub-frameworks	NQF Levels
Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF)	5-10
Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF)	1-8
General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETSF)	1-4

LEGEND

**	Permitted Exceptions
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Table 3: National Qualifications Framework (NQF) 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) is one of the three regulatory policy sub-frameworks of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that are stipulated in Section 7 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act (Act No. 67 of 2008, as amended), hereinafter referred to as the NQF Act. It was published in the Government Gazette Number 36721 of 02 August 2013 as Notice Number 549, subsequently amended by Government Notice Number 819 that was published in the Government Gazette Number 381163 of 17 October 2014.

The HEQSF replaced the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) which was enacted through the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997, as amended), hereinafter referred to as the HE Act. It was envisaged that the HEQSF would provide one single integrated framework through which qualifications from all higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa, irrespective of their different historical backgrounds, would relate to one another and facilitate access, articulation, credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) to redress the past unfair discrimination practices in higher education; while at the same time enhancing the quality and international comparability of the South African higher education qualifications.

It is common practice that policies are reviewed at regular intervals, normally every three to five years. The review of the HEQSF as a policy framework is, therefore, long overdue since it was published in 2013. Furthermore, in 2016 and 2019, respectively, the HE and NQF Acts, as legislation that govern the HEQSF, were amended significantly. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) released several policies after the publication of the HEQSF in 2013. The amendments to the legislation and policies have had a bearing, in different ways and to varying extents, on the HEQSF.

There have also been developments within the region and continent, and internationally, that have a bearing on South Africa, such as the development of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Qualifications Framework and the associated implementation policies. South Africa has also ratified the Addis Convention as a member of the African Union (AU). It is, therefore, important for South Africa to ensure that its higher education system and qualifications bear some characteristics that relate closely to those promoted by the regional and continent-wide frameworks and conventions. Furthermore, it is in the interest of South Africa, as a member of the global community, to facilitate international comparability of its qualifications (CHE, 2020).

In September of 2020, the CHE appointed a panel to review the HEQSF.

The Terms of Reference of the HEQSF review are to:

- align the HEQSF to the governing legislation, including the latest amendments to the HE and NQF Acts, as well as to the various policies and regulations that are based on the governing legislation;
- identify and address possible conceptual and design flaws, as well as the implementation challenges encountered; and
- align, where practical, the HEQSF to the relevant regional, continent-wide and global frameworks and/or conventions, balancing the need for alignment with the need to protect the rights and interests of South Africa as a sovereign nation.

The Panel adopted a mixed-method approach for addressing the Terms of Reference:

- i. Panellists examined national policies, legislation or and regulations that had been developed or amended since 2013, when the HEQSF was gazetted, to identify misalignments with the HEQSF.
- ii. The Panel organised a webinar with researchers to reflect on, and discuss, conceptual and design issues addressed in the literature which had a bearing on the review. Identified researchers were requested to provide input on:
 - a critical assessment of the implementation and impact of the NQFs with particular reference to higher education in South Africa;
 - lifelong learning, learning pathways and the changing nature of work; and
 - frameworks for conceptualising different forms of knowledge underpinning the different qualification types in the HEQSF.
 (See Annexure A for the Webinar Programme).
- iii. A review of selected literature was undertaken to probe the conceptual issues further and inform the Panel's deliberations about possible conceptual and design flaws in the HEQSF (See Annexure I).
- iv. The Panel also undertook a literature review of evaluations of, and recent international developments in, National Qualifications Frameworks and related matters, including RPL, CAT, recognition of non-formal learning, badging, digital credentialing, work-integrated learning, articulation, cross-border offerings, level descriptors and learning outcomes (LOs) (See Annexure I).
- v. Panel members examined policy documents, international agreements and/or conventions, which had been developed or negotiated since 2013 to identify misalignments or omissions in the HEQSF.

- vi. Feedback was solicited from HEIs and stakeholders at three different points in the course of the review.

Process of soliciting feedback (sub-heading)

- On 23 November 2020, the CHE sent a communiqué to the sector informing institutions about the review of the HEQSF and inviting them to make submissions on challenges encountered in the implementation of the HEQSF, and any conceptual and design flaws in the HEQSF that may have a bearing on the responsiveness of the higher education system. A form was designed to assist institutions to structure their submissions. (See Annexure B for the Form and Annexure F for the full report). The communiqué was sent to:

- 102 Private HEIs
- 26 Public Universities
- 18 Statutory Professional Bodies
- SAQA and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)
- The Department of Higher Education and Training (Planning and University Branches)
- 8 Stakeholder Groupings/Organisations: Business Unity South Africa, Business Leadership South Africa, Black Business Council, South African Union of Students (SAUS), South African Graduate Recruiters Association, the Unemployed Graduates' Association, the Technological Higher Education Network of South Africa and the International Education Association of South Africa.

8 Research Entities: Heads of Research at the Centre for Research into Employment and Labour at the University of the Witwatersrand, the Post-School Institute at the University of the Western Cape, the Unit for Post-Schooling and Work at the Human Sciences Research Council, the Post-School Section in the South African Labour Development and Research Unit at the University of Cape Town, the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Human Development at the University of the Free State, the Joint Education Trust, the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies at the University of Johannesburg, and the Research Chair for Youth Unemployment, Employability and Empowerment at the Nelson Mandela University. The Panel received 49 submissions. Seventeen (17) of these were from universities [five (5) were from Universities of Technology, four (4) from Comprehensive Universities and eight (8) from Traditional Universities]; thirty (30) were from private higher education institutions, one from a quality council and one from a professional body. Unfortunately, no submissions were received from the SAUS or from research entities. Sending the communiqué in late November 2020 to and setting a submission deadline of January

2021 is likely to have impacted the response rate as institutions may have been busy with examinations or end-of-year planning for the next academic year. Notwithstanding the low response rate, the responses received were generally detailed and provided useful insights.

- Four consultative workshops took place early in November 2021 with staff from private higher education institutions, public universities, professional bodies and the Council on Higher Education to obtain feedback on the Panel's Draft Review Report (of 30 September 2021). Workshops were also arranged for students, working through SAUS and the regulatory bodies, but these did not materialise due to non- or minimal participation.
- Letters were sent by the CHE to all private higher education institutions, professional bodies, public universities, the regulatory bodies, and SAUS in the middle of November 2021 to invite written comments on the Panel's Draft Review Report (of 30 September 2021) discussed in the consultative workshops. The letters stated that the responses would not be treated as official submissions, as it was recognised that institutions would not be able to consult adequately at that time of the year due to other demands.

Written comments were received from six private higher education institutions, six public universities, three professional bodies and SAQA. The analysis of the submissions and reports of the consultative workshops informed the subsequent Panel's Draft Review Report (of 17 March 2022). The absence of any feedback from students is something that will need to be addressed during the official consultation phase.

The report commences with an analysis of the national, continental and global context within which the review was undertaken. In Section Two the Panel outlines the elements of the Conceptual Framework which was used to engage with the current HEQSF and generate recommendations for changes to the HEQSF. Section Three summarises the main motivations for, and details of, the Panel's recommendations. Section Four provides the proposed/revised Qualification Descriptors and Section Five summarises all the recommendations.

SECTION ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE CONTEXT

1.1 Research findings related to the implementation of the HEQSF

1.1.1 Feedback from South African HE institutions regarding the HEQSF (See Annexure F for the full Report).

The institutional feedback highlighted the following major issues:

- general agreement that, whilst the HEQSF has contributed to increasing consistency in nomenclature and an understanding of the different types of qualifications offered by HEIs, the quality of actual programmes leading to the qualifications is dependent on the quality of staff and the experiences provided by institutions to their students;
- confusion around the purpose of general and professional degrees. This is reflected in ambiguity in terms of purpose/nature/characteristics of qualification types at the same NQF level.
- frustration at the slow progress in the development of qualification standards and, generally, with the slow turnaround times for accreditation and registration;
- frustration with the lack of progress in resolving the debates concerning the roles and responsibilities of professional bodies and accreditation/regulatory agencies;
- continued confusion between 'Qualifications' and 'Programmes';
- the need for greater visibility of the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF);
- the requirement to apply for separate accreditation for different modes of delivery (contact, distance, and blended);
- support for the qualification types provided in the HEQSF at the time of the survey. However, there are serious reservations and questions about progression and articulation within and between the qualification types. Despite the claims made regarding the role of the NQF in enabling the transfer of credits at the same NQF levels, articulation remains very challenging.
- particular challenges related to the removal of the Bachelor of Technology (BTech), causing extended study time for Diploma graduates wishing to progress educationally. The Advanced Diploma (AdvDip) was designed to replace the BTech. However, the AdvDip is too diffuse/has too many purposes (for example, professional preparation for Bachelor's Degree graduates, enabling articulation between vocational and general/professional postgraduate studies) and is not well understood in the relevant sectors or industry. It was suggested that a Professional Diploma at Level 7 might be more

appropriate, would better replace the BTech and be more attractive to applicants.

- a growing need for hybrid and fully online programmes. Guidelines and standards for such are urgently needed.
- The anomaly of two Bachelor's Degrees at different NQF levels, namely a general Bachelor's Degree at Level 7 of the NQF and a professionally-oriented Bachelor's Degree at Level 8 of the NQF, was frequently raised.
- Currently the HEQSF makes provision for a Master's Degree, which can be obtained by dissertation only or by a combination of coursework and a mini-dissertation of at least 60 credits, and a Master's Degree (Professional) requiring the successful completion of a coursework programme and independent study of at least 45 credits. Several submissions suggested removing or re-thinking the Master's (Professional) and Doctorate (Professional) and only retaining a single Master's Degree which can be obtained by a dissertation or a combination of course work and a dissertation/independent study of at least 45 credits.

1.1.2 Summary of take-up Rates of Qualification Types and Student Attainment (See Annexure G for the Analysis and Annexure I for summaries of the data).

In the context of the NQF, articulation is a key concept. The minimum admissions requirements for the qualification types in the HEQSF indicate systemic possibilities for vertical progression within vocational/professional and general learning pathways, and/or horizontal or vertical articulation across or between pathways.

The Panel commissioned an analysis of data on the impact of the architecture of the HEQSF - particularly in respect of the new qualification types that were introduced by the HEQSF, namely the Professional Master's and Doctoral qualifications.

The Panel wished to explore the use of qualification types which were aimed at enabling vertical progression and/or diagonal articulation, such as the Advanced Diploma, which was introduced to enable diagonal articulation from a general degree to an applied specialisation; or from a vocational pathway into a cognate general degree; or progression for diplomates into postgraduate studies; and the Postgraduate Diploma intended to enable articulation from the world of work to formal learning. The Task Team was also interested in exploring trajectories of students who had completed the Higher Certificate which was intended as an entry-level higher education qualification and/or an opportunity for students to acquire introductory knowledge and skills for higher education.

A report was compiled based on the enrolment data extracted from the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), 2015 – 2018 and, the Higher Education Quality Committee Information System (HEQCIS), 2013-2018, as well as learner pathways data drawn from the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) for the period from 2014 to 2019. The use of longer periods in relation to the latter two data sources was due to the focus on outputs. It was felt that a longer period was necessary to allow for extended periods for completion of qualifications.

1.1.2.1 Take-up rates of qualification types in public universities

The vocational learning pathway starts with a Higher Certificate (HCert), HEQSF Level 5. Enrolments in the HCert in the universities were spread across institutional types during the 2015 to 2018 period, with UNISA as the main provider of H Certs by far with 63 043 enrolments in 2018, and a total of 74 111 enrolments in H Certs across all universities

Diploma enrolments are an important component of the higher education system, comprising approximately 20% of total enrolments (Table 2.1). There is not a high uptake of 240-credit Diplomas.

The almost 2% decline in Diploma enrolments between 2015 and 2018, despite the increase in overall student enrolments, is a concern. The majority of enrolments were in the 20-24 year-old age group, which suggests that entry into a Diploma qualification may not have followed directly after the completion of school.

The BTech enrolments were stable over the same period (despite the phasing-out period initiated by the DHET) representing on average 40 000 enrolments per year (43 395 in 2018). There were considerably fewer enrolments in AdvDips (9 458 in 2018). However, this was expected to change from 2021 onwards due to the final phasing out of the BTech Degree.

The AdvDip is a key progression route in the vocational pathway – and it would be expected that significant numbers of Diploma graduates would enrol for AdvDip studies to progress educationally. The cohort analyses show that a small proportion of Diploma graduates proceeded to an AdvDip, and the numbers declined in the years following graduation (Table 3.3). Over the period 2014 to 2018, 7 799 Diploma graduates out of 179 081 graduates enrolled for the AdvDip.

The HEMIS data show that traditional universities offered AdvDips predominantly in Business and Commerce, Education and Humanities, and not in Science, Engineering or Technology. The AdvDip is thus not occupationally linked in the same way that the BTech was – it provides both 'entry-level vocational or professional preparation' and an 'intensive, focused and applied specialisation'. While institutions are able to make entry requirements into AdvDips more specific, the qualification itself may not yet be

fully accepted by both the universities and students. National Senior Certificate (NSC) students only qualify for Diploma-level courses as they do not have sufficient points to gain entry into a degree course. This may explain why some institutions have rather chosen to offer 360-credit vocational Bachelor's Degrees.

In contrast to AdvDip enrolments, Table 2.1 shows that there is a considerably higher uptake of the Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) across the system (43 756 in 2018).

During the period from 2014 to 2018 a total of 311 Diploma graduates articulated into a Bachelor's Degree. There are also low numbers of AdvDip graduates who progressed to an Honours Degree (Table 5.2). During the same period a total of 568 AdvDip graduates articulated into an Honours Degree. For instance, the articulation from the vocational 360-credit Engineering Diploma to a Professional Engineering Bachelor's Degree showed particularly low numbers of enrolments. From 2014 to 2018 only 89 students who graduated with an Engineering Diploma chose to enrol for a Professional Engineering Bachelor's Degree. This is despite all the work that has gone into mapping learning progression pathways in Engineering.

Enrolments for the 360-credit Bachelor's Degree comprise the largest headcount of enrolments in the higher education system and account for approximately 23% of the total headcount enrolments (257 296 in 2018). Furthermore, over the same period (2014 to 2018), 4 409 graduates articulated from the 360-credit Bachelor's Degrees into AdvDip programmes, representing 23.7% of all enrolments in AdvDips (Table 6.2). This is a considerably larger number than the 311 Diploma graduates who enrolled for Bachelor's Degrees (Table 9), and the 568 Diploma graduates who enrolled for Honours Degrees (Table 10), suggesting that enabling articulation into focused and applied areas of specialisation is a key purpose of the AdvDip.

Regarding the new qualifications introduced by the HEQSF, the uptake of the Master's (Professional) Degree is very low, when compared to the uptake of general Master's Degrees, which is around 50 000 per year. Enrolments increased from 500 to 4 457 over the 2015 to 2018 period. The uptake of the Doctorate (Professional) category is particularly low. The reasons for these patterns in the professional degrees at Levels 9 and 10 need to be investigated.

1.1.2.2- Uptake rates in Private Higher Education

HCert enrolments in private higher education have almost trebled during the period 2015 to 2018. H Certs comprised 13% of all private higher education enrolments in 2015 and represented 20% of all enrolments in 2018. In 2018 there was an increase in the under-20 age enrolments, which might indicate that H Certs have increasingly become a way for school leavers to access higher education.

As in the public higher education sector, there was not much uptake of the 240-credit diplomas, although enrolments had increased since 2017 when the 240-credit variant was introduced (Table 12.3.1). There were 1 284 enrolments in 2018.

Diploma enrolments represent the second highest qualification type intake in private higher education (Table 7.1). Diploma enrolments are growing year on year – showing a substantial increase from 6 524 enrolments in 2015 to 19 434 enrolments in 2018.

Relative to the Diploma enrolments, there are considerably fewer enrolments in the AdvDip, (957 in 2018).

Enrolments in Advanced Certificates increased from 274 in 2015 to 833 in 2018.

1.1.2.3 Learning Pathways of Higher Certificate Students in public and private Institutions

The Panel did not request the commissioned expert to assist with articulation studies on learning pathways or articulation from the HCert. SAQA agreed to assist the Panel by providing data extracted from the National Learner Records Database (NLRD) - on learner achievements for the period from 2014 to 2019. (See Annexure H for the full Report).

The total number of HCCerts obtained was 111 450, rising from 9 979 in 2014 to 23 606 in 2019, of whom 75,8% were black Africans. The actual number of students who may have studied in public or private HEIs, and who achieved the certificates, was 110 936. This indicates that there were 514 students who had attained more than one HCert. Between 2014 and 2019, UNISA had the highest number of HCert achievements (61301), private higher institutions had the next highest number (41 644) and public universities came last (8 505). This suggests that private institutions are providing opportunities for expanding access to higher education although only a small percentage of HC graduates (4%) have gone on to higher qualifications.

The SAQA data indicate that about 10% of students were able to access Higher Education either through having completed a National Certificate (Vocational), RPL or a mature-age exemption.

1.1.2.4 Concluding Remarks regarding the quantitative Data

What emerges from the data is the need to strengthen the vocational learning pathway, including ways to create some parity of esteem between the vocational, professional and general pathways (as is the case with UoTs and Institutes of Technology globally).

Whilst it was not possible within the time constraints to map students who were able to articulate diagonally across the entire system, or to map the articulation of students between public and private institutions, the study of the selected articulation routes indicates that the overall number of students using particular qualification types that enable diagonal articulation is very low.

The data suggest that dropping the 240-credit Diploma would not have a significant impact on access into higher education.

Part of strengthening the vocational route would involve encouraging students, who start out on the vocational pathway, to continue on the vocational pathway and develop high-level technical competencies. If the majority of the vocational candidates leave the system after the diploma qualification, it implies a shortage of skilled technical expertise – which is precisely what the critical-skills list shows (Department of Home Affairs, 2021).

The Panel has made recommendations regarding the qualification types. These are contained in Section Three: Detailed Recommendations. The recommendations were informed by consultations with representatives from professional bodies and higher education institutions.

1.1.3 Report on applications for new qualifications (See Annexure E for the Research Brief).

As part of the HEQSF alignment exercise, 401 applications for new programmes were submitted for accreditation by private HEIs. Agricultural colleges submitted 8 applications. Universities submitted 5995 applications. Traditional universities submitted 4 134 applications, comprehensive universities 1 176, UoTs 404 applications, and UNISA 281. Since the completion of the alignment exercise, 747 applications for new qualifications have been submitted by the private HEIs and 1 904 applications were received from the public universities. The data indicate a substantial decline in applications from public universities, but a significant increase in applications from private HEIs, with the bulk being for HCerts (208), followed by 360-credit Bachelor's Degrees (164) and 360-credit Diplomas (98). See Table 1 below for details of applications as part of the HEQSF alignment exercise.

Table 4: Applications for accreditation of new qualifications as part of the HEQSF alignment exercise.

Number of applications	Institution Type								
	Private	Private Total	Public					Public Total	Grand Total
Qualification Type	Private		Agriculture College	Comprehensive	Research	UNISA	UoT		
Advanced certificate	17	17		8	4			12	29
Advanced diploma	12	12		16	14			30	42
Bachelor Honours degree	25	25		222	712	66	3	1003	1028
Bachelors degree 360-credit	90	90		160	383	37		580	670
Bachelors degree 480-credit	9	9		48	223	2	5	278	287
Diploma 240-credit (Professional)				11	2			13	13
Diploma 360-credit	91	91	8	112	15	5	166	306	397
Doctoral degree	4	4		151	702	41	81	975	979
Higher certificate	116	116		14	15		4	33	149
Masters degree	18	18		397	1659	130	140	2326	2344
Masters degree (Professional)	2	2		15	124		5	144	146
Postgraduate diploma	17	17		22	281			303	320
Grand Total	401	401	8	1176	4134	281	404	6003	6404

See Table 5 below for details of applications since the completion of the HEQSF alignment exercise.

Table 5: Details of applications since the completion of the HEQSF alignment exercise.

	Private	Private Total	Public							Public Total	Grand Total
Qualification type	Private		Agriculture College	Comprehensive	Nursing College	Research	UNISA	UoT			
Advanced certificate	42	42		4		27	2	3		36	78
Advanced diploma	45	45	1	74		70	20	221		386	431
Bachelor Honours degree	48	48		76		91	16	21		204	252
Bachelors degree 240-credit (Advanced)	4	4									4
Bachelors degree 360-credit	164	164		43		46	11	47		147	311
Bachelors degree 480-credit	30	30		45		72	5	50		172	202
Diploma 240-credit (Professional)	8	8		1		3		13		17	25
Diploma 360-credit	98	98	8	24	1	11	12	69		125	223
Doctoral degree	11	11		23		30	5	16		74	85
Doctoral degree (Professional)				1		2				3	3
Higher certificate	208	208		19		11	12	32		74	282
Masters degree	23	23		80		133	13	11		237	260
Masters degree (Professional)	11	11		11		61	3	7		82	93
Postgraduate diploma	55	55		41		155	29	122		347	402
Grand Total	747	747	9	442	1	712	128	612		1904	2651

As part of the HEQSF alignment exercise, 158 applications for new designators were received from private HEIs and 4 319 from public universities. Since the completion of the alignment exercise there have been 291 applications for new designators from private HEIs and 918 from public HEIs.

Furthermore, as part of the same HEQSF alignment exercise, 356 applications for new first qualifiers were submitted by private HEIs and 3 958 by public universities. The numbers that follow reflect subject areas with 15 or more applications:

Acc. - 18; Agric. - 15; Chem. Eng. - 15; Ed. - 42; Elec. Eng. - 16; Found. - 19; Ind. Eng. - 18; Int. phase - 21; Mech. Eng. - 30.

The highest number of applications since the alignment exercise has been for new AdvDips (431), followed by PGDips (402), 360-credit Bachelor's Degrees (311), of which 147 were from public universities, and HCerts (282), of which 74 were from public universities.

The data indicate that the bulk of applications can be attributed to changes in the HEQSF, new Teacher Education Policy requirements or funding considerations - for example, deciding to offer research-based Master's Degrees rather than course work due to the higher output subsidy. Of significance is that no applications were received for Professional Doctorates from UoTs which submitted 16 applications for new general doctorates. The bulk of applications for the Professional Master's emanated from Traditional Universities (67) in contrast with seven (7) from the UoTs, and 11 from the Comprehensives, whereas 140 applications for general Master's Degrees were submitted by UoTs. More applications were submitted by the public universities for new qualifications with first qualifiers (1681) as opposed to designators (918). In the private HEIs, 291 applications for new designators and 627 applications for new first qualifiers were received. The number of applications for new second qualifiers was much lower – 30 from private HEIs and 104 from public universities, suggesting that devolving responsibility to institutions for the accreditation of qualifications with second qualifiers would not have a major impact on the overall quality of offerings in the sector. The reasons for the extremely low uptake of professional qualifications by the UoTs need to be investigated.

The data indicate that the number of applications for new qualifications has declined considerably in the public universities but not in the private institutions. It is interesting that the second area of continued growth in applications for new qualifications is in the area of 360-Bachelor's Professional Degrees suggesting a simultaneous need in the labour market for graduates with a wider theoretical base.

The next section of the Report situates the review within a national legislative policy and planning context and highlights key developments in relation to qualification frameworks and recognition of learning within the continent and the wider global context.

1.2 National Policy Goals

The National Plan for Post-School Education and Training (NPPSET) 2019 – 2030 represents an ambitious roadmap to create and build a PSET system from a disparate range of poorly coordinated and articulated institutions. The aim is to build a highly coherent, integrated, well-coordinated and articulated PSET system.

The NPPSET envisages a diversity of quality learning opportunities available to students which will be provided by diverse colleges and universities, both public and private.

The Plan indicates strategies that will be pursued for achieving the overarching goal of the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (2013) for an improved, transformed, expanded and reinvigorated PSET system.

The system goals are listed below.

- an integrated and coordinated post-school education and training system
- expanded access to post-school education and training opportunities
- a responsive PSET system
- improved interface between education and training institutions and the world of work
- improved quality of post-school education and training provision
- improved efficiency and success of the PSET system.

The Panel identified objectives from the NPPSET which had a particular bearing on the Terms of Reference for the HEQSF review, and that could be advanced through possible changes to the HEQSF.

These objectives are:

- Simplification of the architecture and prescripts of the HEQSF to facilitate ease of implementation and improve the efficiency of processes needed to implement the HEQSF;
- Formulation of strategies to address barriers to acceptance and credit transfer between levels both vertically and horizontally on the NQF, between occupational, professional and academic programmes and even within the same institution;
- Enhanced recognition for different forms of learning to expand equitable access by all sections of the population to quality education;
- Recognition for a diverse range of programmes and mechanisms relevant to locality and responsive to community needs, changes in the nature of work and continental and wider international developments;

- Greater mobility of students within and beyond South Africa, and collaboration between institutions and providers in South Africa and beyond.

As can be deduced from the above goals, expanding access and diversifying education and training provision, as well as improving its quality and responsiveness to the world of work are the main policy objectives of the Post-School Education and Training system (White Paper for PSET, 2013). Attainment of these objectives remains challenging as South Africa continues to face an ever-increasing number of people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), as well as funding constraints that have had an impact on the number of students enrolled in parts of the system.

According to a Fact Sheet, produced by Khuluvhe and Negogogo (2021) and based on data drawn from Quarterly Labour Force Surveys (QLFS) conducted by Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), the data indicate an ever-increasing number of people who fall into the NEET category:

- Close to 17 million people aged 15 - 60 were NEET in the latter part of 2020. This figure comprises 44% of the total 15 – 60 aged population.
- In 2020, the majority of NEETs in the 15 - 60 age group were females (55.8%) and African (85.2%).
- More than half of the approximately 17 million NEET persons referred to above were younger than 35 years.

The Panel believes that this review cannot ignore the scale of poverty, unemployment and inequality in our society, particularly in relation to young people. As Badat, previous Vice Chancellor of Rhodes University, notes in an article in the Daily Maverick: “We need radically new economic and social policies! Otherwise, we will remain a shamefully unequal, unjust and highly unstable society” (Badat, 2021, p.11). Badat (2021, p.11) also refers to the editorial in New Frame of 13 July 2021 which stated: “We cannot build a viable society in which everyone has a stake and everyone is safe if we do not take everyone’s lives and wellbeing seriously. Democracy has no future if it is not for everyone” .

The objectives of the Post-School Education and Training System (White Paper for PSET, 2013), and the analysis of the current national context, informed the Panel’s thinking with regard to recommendations for changes in the HEQSF and associated legislation and policies.

1.3 Legal Considerations

The NQF Act (Act No. 67 of 2008) provides for a form of nested policy development and implementation involving the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation (the Minister), SAQA and the three Quality Councils (QCs). In terms of this piece of legislation, the Minister's responsibility for policy is specified in Section 8(2)(b), that of SAQA in Section 13 and that of the QCs in Section 27. Inherent to the Act is a hierarchy between the different NQF-related policy owners, as SAQA is required to "comply with policy determined by the Minister in terms of Section 8(2)(b)" [Section 13(1)(c)], and the QCs, in turn, are required to comply with policy determined by both Ministerial, in terms of Section (8)(2)(b), and SAQA policies concerning qualifications [13(1)(h)(i) and 13(1)(h)(iii)] as per Section 27(h).

In 2016 and 2019, respectively, the HE and NQF Acts, as legislation that governs the HEQSF, were amended significantly. The amendments have had a bearing, in different ways and to varying extents, on the HEQSF. The DHET, SAQA and the CHE, released several policies after the publication of the HEQSF in 2013. These include the DHET's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Coordination Policy (2016), the Articulation Policy for the Post-School Education and Training System (2017), the Language Policy for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020), the Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa (2020) and four Teacher Education Policies, SAQA's National Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) (2014, as amended, 2021), the National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications (2014) and the National Policy and Criteria for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2019), as well as the CHE's RPL, CAT and Assessment Policies (2016). The DHET also published the Revised Regulations for the Registration of Private Higher Education Institutions, which are based on the HE Amendment Act of 2016. The Panel considered these legislative and policy developments and interrogated their implications for the HEQSF review.

1.4 Relationship with the other Sub-Frameworks

Table 6:

NQF Sub-framework/Quality Council	NQF Level	Qualification Type		NQF Sub-framework/Quality Council
Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF)/ Council on Higher Education (CHE)	10	Doctoral Degree Doctoral Degree (Professional)		Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) / Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)
	9	Master's Degree Master's Degree (Professional)		
	8	Bachelor Honours Degree Postgraduate Diploma Bachelor's Degree	Specialised Occupational Diploma	
	7	Bachelor's Degree Advanced Diploma	Advanced Occupational Diploma	
	6	Diploma Advanced Certificate	Occupational Diploma Advanced Occupational Certificate	
	5	Higher Certificate	Higher Occupational Certificate	
General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) / Umalusi	4	National Certificate	National Occupational Certificate	
	3	Intermediate Certificate	Intermediate Occupational Certificate	
	2	Elementary Certificate	Elementary Occupational Certificate	
	1	General Certificate	General Occupational Certificate	

Determined by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Government Gazette No 44031, 24 December 2020.

The Minister published Government Gazette No 44031 on the relationships between the three Qualification Sub-Frameworks, namely, the HEQSF, the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) and the OQSF on 24 December 2020.

This Government Gazette introduced a common approach to nomenclature for qualifications registered on the three Sub-Frameworks at the same levels of the NQF. The GFETQSF provides for qualification types from NQF Levels 1 - 4, the HEQSF from NQF Levels 5 – 10 and the OQSF from NQF Levels 1 – 8. Hence there are overlaps in the provision of qualification types at NQF levels 1 - 8. Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges offer qualifications from two Sub-Frameworks, quality-assured by Umalusi and the QCTO respectively, as well as qualifications that are seen to fall into the band of higher education qualifications, namely, N4 - N6 at Level 5. TVET colleges also offer HCerts on the HEQSF, but presently these can be offered only in partnership with universities. Over the next few years, TVET colleges will shift towards offering the Diploma at HEQSF Level 6, the National and Higher Certificates at NQF Level 4, quality-assured by Umalusi and at NQF Level 5, quality-assured by the Council on Higher Education, and occupational qualifications at NQF Levels 2-5, quality-assured by the QCTO, with the nomenclature specified in the Gazette.

Although the OQSF contains qualification types at NQF Levels 5–8, these are not classified as part of higher education because the Higher Education Amendment Act, (Act No. 9 of 2016) defines 'higher education' as covering "all learning programmes which must be registered in accordance with the provisions of the National Qualifications Framework Act (Act 67 of 2008) as a qualification [or part-qualification] on the HEQSF. Occupational qualifications are registered on a different Sub-Framework and are, therefore, not regarded as part of 'higher education'. This creates considerable confusion in the wider society. In addition, when the qualification types are placed in a diagram alongside each other they are generally viewed as equivalent because they are located at the same NQF level.

Whilst the notion of a single, integrated qualifications framework, comprising three sub-frameworks and organised around common level descriptors, is intended to enable mobility within and across sub-frameworks, in practice this has been difficult to achieve.

Drawing on a report on articulation prepared for the CHE by Papier and Needham (CHE, 2021) and the Conceptual Framework developed for the review, the Panel notes the following major factors impacting on the limited scale of articulation:

- Different qualification types are underpinned by different knowledge configurations/epistemologies. "These epistemological boundaries need to be explicitly navigated rather than ignored" (Bathmaker, cited in CHE 2021, p.21).

- Different nomenclature used for the qualifications across the sub-frameworks make comparison difficult.
- A lack of awareness regarding systemic and specific articulation arrangements exists in the higher education and TVET sectors.
- Challenges are experienced by TVET students who do succeed in articulating into university due to the different knowledge bases and structures of the curricula.
- An absence exists of any reference to OQSF qualifications in relation to meeting minimum admissions requirements for qualification types in the HEQSF.
- Limited university places cannot accommodate a larger number of applicants who meet the entrance requirements for admission into higher education qualifications.

Deeply rooted divisions among constituent institutions of the Post-School System hamper mostly vulnerable South African learners in their efforts to find ways into and across formative, vocational and professional learning pathways.

1.5 Global trends related to Qualification Frameworks and Recognition of Learning

1.5.1 Qualification Frameworks in Africa

Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) have institutionalised their appreciation of the role of higher education in achieving the vision of the African Union, by expressing an intention to work towards the Harmonisation of African Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) and establishing a continental Accreditation and Quality Agency. The focus of HAQAA is on improving the quality standards of higher education systems and programmes, the transparency and recognition of qualifications in Africa through enhancing a QA culture and building capacities of institutions and QA agencies to implement the Pan African tools that have been developed.

African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education have been developed along with an African Quality Rating Mechanism for HEIs (<https://enqa.eu/index.php/harmonisation-of-african-higher-education-quality-assurance-and-accreditation-haqaa2-initiative/>).

Building on a wide range of ongoing continental processes - for example, Agenda 2063, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) - a vision for an African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) has been established. The ACQF's vision is 1) to enhance comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications from all sub-sectors and levels of education and training; 2) to facilitate recognition of diplomas and certificates, and mobility of learners and workers; 3) to work in complementarity with national and regional qualifications frameworks; 4) to support developments at national and regional levels; and 5) to promote cooperation and alignment between qualifications frameworks (national and regional) in Africa and worldwide (Mavimbela, 2020).

Work towards the establishment of an ACQF commenced in 2019 with a Mapping Study of Qualifications Frameworks in Africa. This study was further developed in 2020 through the project AU EU Skills for Youth Employability: Skills Initiative For Africa (SIFA) Technical Cooperation – Developing the African Continental Qualifications Framework.

According to the Report of the Mapping Study (Mavimbela, 2020), qualifications frameworks are at different stages of development and implementation across the continent, moving from early thinking to qualification frameworks that have been in implementation for some time; some have even been reviewed and improvements adopted. For instance, national qualifications frameworks from most of the Southern African member states have been implemented for a longer period and, as a result, have more mature legal and policy bases in place, operational instruments and governance structures maintaining and assuring integrity of the NQFs (Keevy, 2019). The SADC took the initiative of developing a regional qualifications framework. In this regard, a ten-level reference SADC Regional Qualifications Framework, referred to as the SADCQF, was established in 2011 and launched in 2017 using principles of acting together as a community (Mavimbela, 2020).

The initiative by SADC countries to develop a regional mechanism for harmonisation of NQFs through the SADCQF is also intended to facilitate the implementation of the 2019 Addis Convention on the recognition of studies, certificates, diplomas, degrees, and other academic qualifications in higher education in African States. As a reference framework, the SADCQF seeks to achieve comparability and recognition of full qualifications, CAT, creation of regional standards and promotion of quality assurance within and outside the region based on mutual trust. The main purpose is to facilitate movement of learners and workers, and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities within the region and internationally. The ultimate aim is to ensure availability of relevant educated and skilled human resources for socio-economic sustainable development (Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2030).

SA plays leading roles in the Southern African Development Countries Qualifications Framework (SADCQF), the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) and the Groningen Declaration Network (GDN), a global network of like-minded organisations that aims to establish digital student mobility. All these initiatives above seek to promote and facilitate synergy with regional, continental, and global initiatives towards enhancing articulation and mobility in learning and work within and beyond the country.

South Africa, through SAQA, has played a leading role in the GDN activities since the network's inception. South Africa is also a member of the Technical (TCCA) Committee of the SADC Regional Qualifications Framework. The TCCA is driving SADCQF developments through themes, such as quality, recognition, RPL, CAT and advocacy.

The SADC Protocol on Education and Training (1997), to which South Africa is a signatory, makes specific provision for facilitating the mobility of students and academics in the region for the purpose of study, research, teaching, and any other pursuits relating to education and training.

According to Mavimbela (2020), South Africa was the second SADC country to complete the alignment of its NQF to the SADCQF, thereby placing the South African NQF in a unique position to pilot the proposed ACQF when it is scheduled to become available in 2022. Both the SADCQF and the proposed ACQF share the collective objective of enhancing mobility on the African continent. The 2019 amendment of the NQF Act of 2008, seeks "to provide for the formulation of criteria for evaluating foreign qualifications" (RSA, 2008, p. 6), an important step in establishing tools for verification of regional and continental qualifications amongst other international qualifications. In accordance with the NQF Act, SAQA performs a qualification evaluation function for the purposes of recognition of foreign qualifications.

1.5.2 BRICS HE Initiatives

The National Development Plan 2030 (NDP), launched in 2013, underscores the importance of developing and strengthening collaborations (NDP, 2013, p. 305) between South Africa and the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China) as one of the enablers of high-quality education. The Policy Framework for Internationalization of Higher Education in South Africa (DHET, 2020) states that HEIs, in delivering their mandates (teaching, learning, research, and community engagement), must prioritise South Africa's interests, the SADC states, the rest of the African continent,

BRICS, the global South and emerging economies, and the world beyond (DHET, 2020, p. 22).

There is currently no policy framework that guides the BRICS partnership with respect to CAT, joint or co-badged qualifications, and the harmonisation of qualification frameworks across BRICS countries. There have been, though, declarations agreed upon over the past six years that commit the countries to:

- a) Work towards developing common principles of accreditation, quality assurance and recognition of qualifications which will enable improved learning and student mobility across BRICS Member States;
- b) Support joint research projects and more collaborative programmes in postgraduate, doctoral and post-doctoral programmes;
- c) Promote lifelong learning through formal and informal modes of learning;
- d) Jointly explore the possibility of granting BRICS scholarships to students from BRICS member states to pursue higher studies in each other's countries;
- e) Leverage digital and technological solutions for inclusive and equitable quality education; and
- f) Enhance research and academic collaboration among BRICS countries by encouraging 'twinning arrangements' whereby students enrolled in HE or TVET in one of the BRICS countries can complete their programmes in another HE or TVET institution and receive a diploma/degree from both organisations on successful completion of the programme.

The Panel was not able to locate documents on the details of the qualification frameworks in the BRICS countries or developments with regard to more flexible forms of recognition of learning. The Panel established that different parameters were used for the credit systems in place across the BRICS countries.

1.5.3 Evaluations of regional Qualifications Frameworks

Evaluations of the use of regional qualifications frameworks, such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), highlight multiple obstacles (Donleavy *et al.*, 2016). Effective implementation seems to depend upon the strength of political will within individual member states and also on the extent to which all relevant stakeholders are actively engaged in and continuously committed to reform/development processes over the long term. Implementation also depends upon willingness and ability at the level of HEIs. The European Community VET evaluation found that a general obstacle to recognition is the emergence of significant variations between member states in how they interpret the tools. For example, it has been observed that the way in which learning outcomes are written and structured varies between countries, education and training sectors and institutions. It has been noted that "[w]hile learning outcomes

have to be fit for purpose and differ from each other, extensive diversity can undermine transparency and comparability" (EC, 2016, p. 50).

1.5.4 Conventions and Agreements related to assessing and comparing Qualifications

Concurrent with the development of qualifications frameworks, many complementary mechanisms to recognise learning, some even preceding qualifications frameworks, have developed. These include regional conventions, such as the Lisbon Convention that has been in place since 1997, the Addis Convention that came into force in December 2019 and, importantly, also the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education. By May of 2022, 30 out of 54 countries had ratified the Addis Convention.

In November 2019, UNESCO adopted the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, making it the first United Nations Convention on higher education with a global scope. Zapp and Ramirez (2019, p.14) summarise the main objectives of this initiative as: "to facilitate inter-regional recognition, to strengthen the link between Quality Assurance Agencies and QFs, to establish an international organisational infrastructure for recognition and to catalyse cross-border higher education policies, all adding a genuinely 'global layer' to the higher education regime." The Convention comes into force once it has been ratified by 20 countries. In 2020 it received the first ratification from Norway (UNESCO.org).

1.6 Recognition of informal and non-formal Learning

The digital age has led to a dramatic increase in the online availability of high-quality Open Education Resources (OERs) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) worldwide with almost 11 million students being taught this way (Zapp & Ramirez, 2019). The Covid pandemic has seen the number of learners doing MOOCs more than double (Williamson & Hogan, 2020). In 2021, 750 universities were offering MOOCs, and 67 MOOC degrees were being offered and around 2 800 courses were added to the MOOC offerings (Shah 2021).

Internationally, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning has moved up high on the political agenda with international organisations, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNESCO, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), conducting research and providing guidelines to promote this practice (Witthaus *et al.*, 2016; Keavy, 2019).

In addition, new digital ways of credentialing what students know and can do raise pressing questions about the recognition of flexible non-formal types of education in higher education. Digital credentials are also gaining traction and acceptance with students and employers (O'Sullivan, 2019). In 2020, 360 new micro-credentials were launched — 200 of them by Coursera. This represents a significant increase from 2019, when 170 micro-credentials were launched. In total, there are now 1180 micro-credentials of 13 different types. These include 73 nanodegrees (defined as a six to twelve month study programme focused on computer-related skills, such as web development and data analysis).

(<https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/nanodegree>).

The Panel tasked one of the Panellists to provide a synopsis of the trends impacting the recognition of different forms of formal (learning that forms part of a qualification), non-formal (learning that may be structured but which is not part of a qualification) and informal (learning through life, work, and civic engagement) learning.

For the purposes of the literature review the explanation of the concept of 'recognition' in the OpenCred report (Witthaus *et al.*, 2016, p. 66) was adopted, which states that 'recognition' involves two different processes: Firstly, there is *credentialing* of learning outcomes where an educational institution issues a credential to the student, usually on the basis of a completed assessment. Secondly, there is *recognition* where another educational institution or employer formally grants the learner the right to access or progress through learning/employment based on the credential earned.

A brief synopsis of the pertinent aspects of the current South African policy environment with regard to recognition is provided as context before engaging with highlights from the literature review.

The main recognition mechanisms in the current South African policy environment are RPL and CAT. RPL refers to the principles and processes through which prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated, and assessed for purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development (SAQA, 2019a). CAT refers to the practice of accumulating credits from one or more cognate learning programmes in an institution and transferring those credits to be recognised towards a qualification in the same or different institution (SAQA, 2020). The difference between these two mechanisms can best be explained by stating that RPL involves an active process of mediating or assessing an applicant's prior learning, while CAT involves a matching exercise, based on curricular properties, of learning already formally assessed previously.

RPL and CAT also differ based on the type of learning recognised. In terms of the current policies in force in South Africa (SAQA, 2019a; CHE 2016, SAQA's revised Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer within the NQF (as amended 2021, p. 5-6) contains the following definitions:

Formal learning	Learning that occurs in an organised and structured education and training environment, and that is explicitly designated as such ¹ .
Informal learning	Learning that results from daily activities related to paid or unpaid work, family or community life, or leisure; it can include deliberate self-teaching.
Non-formal learning	Planned learning activities not explicitly designated as learning towards the achievement of a qualification or part-qualification; it is often associated with learning that results in improved workplace practice and can include deliberate self-teaching or with educational offerings provided by non-governmental organisations.
RPL	The principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person, learned informally and non-formally, are made visible, mediated and assessed for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development.
CAT	The practice of accumulating credits from one or more cognate learning programmes in an institution and transferring those credits to be recognised towards a qualification/part-qualification in the same or a different institution. Short courses and other studies for non-qualification purposes may not be used in CAT processes in South Africa but may form part of an RPL process (SAQA, 2021, p.13).

The Panel notes that the CHE, as the QC for higher education, has the responsibility to interpret national NQF-related policies and criteria within the context of the higher education sector, and, where necessary, to customise such policies to relate directly

¹ SAQA's 2014b Policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer within the National Qualifications Framework: the definition of formal learning had an explicit reference to the link with qualification, viz: "leads to the awarding of a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF". This connection between formal learning and qualifications was removed in the 2021 version.

to the specific conditions of the sector. After consultation with the sector in 2016, the CHE developed a policy on RPL which took account of the specificities in the higher education environment. The key differences in definitions are discussed below.

The following definition, adopted by the CHE, differs from the SAQA one. In terms of the CHE policy, RPL may be used to grant access to, or exemption from, modules and/or courses that contribute towards a particular qualification. Institutions may recognise forms of prior learning as equivalent to the prescribed formal minimum admission requirements and may recognise other forms of prior learning for granting advanced standing in particular programmes through exemption from modules or courses at lower levels of the qualification programme. In higher education, exemption from modules or courses does not translate into credits being awarded for those modules (CHE, 2016, p.8). The CHE defines credit accumulation as the totalling of credits towards the completion of a qualification. Credit transfer is the vertical, horizontal or diagonal relocation of credits towards a qualification (CHE, 2016, p.10).

As can be seen from the above in terms of the CHE's *Policies on the Recognition of Prior Learning, Credit Accumulation and Transfer, and Assessment in Higher Education* (2016), RPL may be used only to grant access or module exemption, and not credit.

As a result of the CHE RPL policy (2016) students who are granted advanced standing or exemption through RPL, graduate with fewer than minimum credits. This practice creates confusion in the sector, as the HEQSF (2013) is silent on the matter of graduating with fewer than the minimum number of credits required.

A summary of emerging practices from various parts of the world for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning follows.

A report on the scoping of practices used for the recognition of non-formal learning outside of North America, largely in Europe, found that non-formal learning is increasingly being recognised through a variety of mechanisms across the world (Harris & Wihak, 2018). According to this study 'non-formal education' was historically defined as a flexible type of formal education, usually referring to programmes offered to adults by employers, community organisations and other providers of education (Harris & Wihak, 2018, p.2), but that the term is currently also used to describe OERs and MOOCs. Micro-credentials have also been placed in the realm of non-formal learning even though they include forms of certification of assessed learning, which non-formal education and training offerings do not necessarily do, because they are seen as "additional, alternate, complementary to or component of, a formal qualification (Oliver, 2019, p. 56). The term 'micro-credentials' is used for

various forms of credentialing, including nano-degrees, micro-master's credentials, badges and endorsements (Milligan & Kennedy, 2017).

Examples of mechanisms being put in place to provide a credible basis for determining whether to allocate credits for non-formal learning or not include:

- The use of a quality matrix for interrogating the robustness of QA mechanisms in place to determine whether the mechanisms are sufficiently robust to award credits (Witthaus *et al.*, 2016);
- The use of criteria for assessing the quality of the non-formal offering. The New Paradigms in Recognition (PARADIGMS) Project identifies seven assessment criteria for online courses and in-company training programmes, namely 1) quality of the study programme, 2) verification of the certificate, 3) level of the study programme, 4) learning outcomes, 5) workload, 6) the way study results are tested, and 7) verified identification of the participant (Nuffic, 2018, p.58)

cited on OECD website,

[https://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=EDU/WKP\(2020\)4&docLanguage=En](https://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=EDU/WKP(2020)4&docLanguage=En)) More detailed examples can be found in Annexure K.

- Endorsement of standardised challenge tests through which learners can earn credit for learning gained outside formal education (American Council of Higher Education/the Technical University of Munich);
- The use of agencies such as ACE CREDIT® which arrange for peers to review non-formal learning programmes in order to make recommendations for credit equivalency in relation to formal post-secondary education. Courses deemed credit-worthy are recorded in an accessible database. Institutions pay for the evaluation service. This service is similar to the service provided by the Scottish Credit and Qualification Agency and the European Credit Transfer Service (ECTS).
- Granting authority to independent agencies or universities to accredit non-formal courses using transparent criteria.
- Obtaining Faculty and Senate approval for integrating a MOOC into a formal qualification (refer to University of Salzburg example, Witthaus *et al.*, 2016, p. 39).

- Placing micro-credits on a Qualifications Framework, for example, the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQA) which issues equivalence statements showing credit value and level for recognition onto the NZQA. Micro-credentials are published in a [Register of NZQA-approved micro-credentials](#). Approximately 60 micro-credentials are registered currently.
- The use of reference tools or standards against which international qualifications can be compared, such as those envisaged in the Groningen Declaration Network and the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications, as described above.

(Zhang, 2013; Witthaus *et al.*, 2016; Harris & Wihak, 2018; Keevy, 2021) (See Annexure J for a selected number of examples from North America, Europe and Asia which illustrate different approaches)

1.7 Digital Credentials and digital Repositories

Advancements in the digital arena have made it possible to store students' achievements in the form of digital badges.

These badges are often collected and distributed through social media or other platforms. Crafford (2014) explains that a student can select and achieve credentials, considered to be important by the student for reaching his/her learning or career goals, from a range of sources without restrictions or prescriptions on the combination of skills and knowledges. An important feature of digital badges is that they often also cater for soft skills, dispositions and values and so-called twenty-first-century skills (Chakroun & Keevy, 2018).

As more digital micro-credentials become available, the need to make achievement information available on a global scale has led to the establishment of digital repositories.

While repositories containing students' achievements have been in place for decades, new technologies have sparked an increase in the digitisation of these repositories. It has been argued by some researchers in this field that digital solutions facilitate progress in two ways: firstly, through simplifying the exchange of quality-assured information of what was learnt by a student between different providers, and secondly, through documenting learning achievements digitally and in standardised form, available to all stakeholders in an efficient way while maintaining data privacy (Rampelt, Orr & Knoth, 2019). Digital repositories provide comprehensive datasets for a country or sector (Chakroun & Keevy, 2018).

Keevy and Chakroun (2019) discuss a number of international examples of developments in this field. In the USA the Lumina Foundation launched a centralised credential data platform named Registry. This credential engine uses new metadata called the Credential Transparency Description Language. It provides an application-programming interface (API) for organisations to upload data from all types of sources from open badges to PhDs. In China the China Higher Education Student Information and Career Centre introduced a digital database for students' data. The database currently holds 864 million pieces of data and each year 100 million pieces are added.

One of the main initiatives in the global digital credential ecosystem, is the [Groningen Declaration Network](#) (GDN). The GDN is an international, non-profit and voluntary network that has been working since 2012 to make digital student data portability a reality. The Groningen Declaration has more than 90 signatories from across the world. The Network aims to agree on common standards, interfaces, and procedures to achieve international connectivity and interoperability (Rampelt *et al.*, 2019).

The past five years have also seen an increasing interest by the business sector, as well as rapid growth in the acquisitions and the emergence of new and differentiated players (Hill, 2018), in the higher education space contributing services, offerings, technologies expertise (Czerniewicz & Walji, 2019). utilising different financial models. This is occurring in the context of digitisation, marketisation, unbundling and austerity markets (Czerniewicz & Walji, 2019). Czerniewicz and Walji highlight opportunities for students and universities in this emerging environment, such as flexibility, potential to expand access, potential to generate third-stream income, and potential to enhance the responsiveness of institutions to rapidly changing educational needs. They also highlight dangers, such as commercialisation and outsourcing of teaching and learning, reduced control and oversight by academics of the quality of teaching and learning, and potential threats to retaining intellectual integrity and cohesion of qualifications.

Williamson and Hogan (2021, p. 12) argue that "online teaching and learning is neither inevitably transformative nor necessarily deleterious to the purpose of universities, the working conditions of staff, or the experience of students. it is essential that policy decisions should be made based on critical and research-informed alternative imaginaries centred on recognising the purpose of higher education as a social and public good [and not only a private good]". They point to some factors that need to be considered:

- impacts on academic freedom, as academic work is increasingly performed through digitalised infrastructures and 'datafied' institutions

- the diversity of HEIs whose 'histories and practices of technology use are contextually situated'
- the extent of surveillance of personal information
- the nature of the logic driving the use of technology
- locus of decision-making regarding the curriculum
- not increasing the socio-structural divides by leaving marginalised groups behind even further.

Other analysts emphasise that the rapid introduction of technology affecting all aspects of everyday life presents new opportunities and that global trends, such as migration, increasing globalisation of the labour market, internationalisation and massification of education and training, as well as changes in modalities, are creating an urgency to re-imagine higher education.

As Keevy suggests: "In this new normal, we have to consider how learning, delivered through multiple platforms and modes, can be credible, authentic and transferable." (see Annexure I - Modiba & Venter, 2021, p. 39). Keevy and Chakroun (2019) assert that the move towards digital credentialing is attributed to the length, cost and perceived low return on investment of traditional degrees, also referred to as macro-degrees. Rampelt *et al.* (2019, p. 32) summarise the quality-assurance challenge: "The challenge, therefore, is to modify the existing quality-assurance procedures (standards and guidelines) for more flexible learning programmes, which may only partly take place on-campus, may integrate both teaching and peer learning, and may be aligned to multiple study programmes. Furthermore, the challenge is to review how existing external quality assurance can also be applied to providers of digital learning, such as MOOCs, for higher education studies, which are outside of the normal higher education system" (cited in Modiba & Venter, 2021, p. 45).

SECTION TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Panel developed a conceptual framework comprised of two pillars – knowledge configuration and border/boundary-crossing pedagogy.

2.1 Knowledge Configurations²

Debates about the nature and purpose of knowledge have generated lively exchanges. In general, there is no agreement concerning criteria that can be used to define these aspects. For those who locate themselves in the analytical philosophy

² This section of the report is based on a discussion document prepared by Maropeng Modiba with inputs from Chris Winberg.

tradition associated with Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and who subscribe to the 'liberal enlightenment project' of 'objective truths', the scientific or formal character of knowledge is fundamental to its nature. They describe knowledge as logically distinct, conceptual and foundational to the development of rational and unbiased judgements and interpretations that are based on rigorous interrogation and, therefore, evidence. Such knowledge is generally referred to as *propositional* knowledge or 'knowledge that'. In explaining conditions of this knowledge, Siegel (in Carr, 1998, p. 20) argues that its standard explanation is that it is 'justified true belief'. Tennant, McMullen and Kacynski (2010) have also argued that in this tradition, rather than view belief as the basis for truth or objectivity, it (belief) has to be justified to be true and independent of the attributes of individual or subjective knowledge. This is what makes propositional knowledge rational, value-neutral, and therefore universal. Becher and Parry (2005), quoted in Muller (2009, p. 214), call it the "'know-why', that is, the knowledge condition for exploring alternatives systematically and for generating innovation."

Another conception of knowledge is associated with, amongst others, Dewey's (1935, 1958) critique of the theory-practice dichotomy, in favour of a conception that prioritises the 'explanatory utility' (Carr, 1998) of knowledge. In promoting the interpretative, subjective, naturalistic, evolutionary and pragmatic character of knowledge, Dewey's critique of the traditional realist conception of knowledge led to a shift away from a model of scientific enquiry that is concerned with constructions that "do not aspire to any true representation of how the universe actually is ..." (Carr, 1998, p. 9). For Dewey, "... there can be no ...ultimately true picture, only explanatory utility' (Ibid.). The techniques and skills that prioritise the discovery of basic principles, categories and terms through which human agents organise individual and social experience/manage experience are important for him as knowledge. Carr (1998, p. 8) describes this knowledge as *procedural* knowledge – 'knowledge how' or "knowledge through which human experience is rendered meaningful."

Muller (2009) has argued that these two types of knowledge, which he terms 'conceptual' and 'contextual' knowledge, are central to HE. Specifically, with reference to the HEQSF, Muller argues that the question, "What kind of qualified person do we want to produce?" (Muller, 2009, p. 217) is important to ask when making decisions about the mix of types of knowledge that HE should provide. Furthermore, he asserts that we cannot respond to this question without taking into account the purpose of the education that is to be provided; that is, whether it is meant for disciplinary/knowledge expertise or what he describes as the old/traditional professions (for example, law, medicine, engineering, accounting and architecture) – or the new professions (for example, tourism, business studies and information

science) in which the knowledge base is generally unstable and the professions are still developing a body of knowledge. Muller (2009, p. 214) argues further that, since “we live now in a time of unprecedented flux and fluidity, with fields of specialisation periodically opening up new regions of interdisciplinary enquiry, these fault lines [sic] continue to exert their influence on the pattern of the disciplines”.

Shay (2013) supports the arguments that have been made by, for example, Muller (2000), Maton (2000), Moore (2007), Young (2008) and Wheelahan (2010), regarding knowledge in the curriculum. The authors have robustly critiqued curriculum policies that have “gutted out” knowledge or “subordinated” knowledge to “outcomes” and, in this way, created a notion of differentiated education that misleadingly purports to have equal pathways so that any individual can progress “from sweeper to engineer” (Shay, 2013, p. 565).

Drawing on Muller (2008, 2009), Shay, Oosthuizen, Paxton and van der Merwe (2011) raise questions with respect to the validity of the assumption that an integrated qualifications framework, organised around level descriptors against which different qualifications can be evaluated, can be used to justify claims of equivalence in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes between qualification types. Using a study conducted at South African comprehensive universities that had resulted from the merger of traditional and technological universities, Shay et al. (2011) concluded that greater attention should be given to the relationship between theoretical and practical knowledge in a differentiated curriculum in comprehensive universities, in particular, the distinctiveness and interrelatedness of the two knowledges, namely the theoretical/conceptual and the procedural/practical.

Young (2008) argues for a more nuanced understanding of the distinctiveness and interrelationship, or embeddedness, of the two types of knowledge. He asserts that if “they were not to some extent embedded, we would never be able to escape from the everyday and think conceptually. Likewise, we might acquire ‘theoretical’ concepts but never be able to use them. ..., the combination of embeddedness and separateness poses extremely difficult questions ...” (Young, 2008, p. 193). In Shay’s (2013) view as well, to understand curriculum differentiation and challenges related to access, progression and articulation across different qualifications, knowledge configurations rather than structures should be clarified based on the distinctive purpose of a qualification. She argues that “across all the curriculum pathways, theoretical knowledge is recontextualised” and “concepts and theories ... are selected and sequenced in particular ways” (Shay, 2013, p. 566). For the vocationally oriented qualifications, practice is theoretically informed; for the professionally oriented, professional practice is theoretically informed; and for a general-formative orientation, Muller’s (2009, p. 217) concept of “disciplinary adept[ness]” - and what

Shay (2013) refers to as “increasing theoretical specialization” (Shay, 2013, p. 578) - is crucial.

In Shay's view, it is the selection, sequencing, pacing and evaluation of knowledge informed by the broader recontextualising principle/purpose that gives coherence to a curriculum. However, she warns that practical knowledge does not necessarily translate into theoretical knowledge because of the “irreducible differentiatedness of knowledge” (Young & Muller, 2007, p. 15 quoted in Shay, 2013, p. 571) which highlights the important distinctions between practical and theoretical knowledge. In principled practical knowledge the principles emerge from practice, while in proceduralised theoretical knowledge the principles emerge from the theory.

According to Shay, in analysing the recontextualising process, the challenge is to understand the processes “when practical knowledge is recontextualised into curriculum and theoretical knowledge is pedagogized into curriculum” (Shay, 2013, p. 571). It is important to understand the process involved in recontextualising practical knowledge and pedagogising theoretical knowledge into a curriculum/theory underpinning knowledge recontextualisation.

Shay suggests extending Bernstein's work on languages of description by adopting Maton's (2000) Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) in which the semantic codes of gravity and density are used to describe, respectively, the external and internal relations of knowledge practice. She sees the theory as allowing greater possibilities for code combinations that make it possible to move analytically from “typologies of knowledge to typologies of knowledge practice” (Shay, 2013, p. 570) and include principled practical knowledge that has both semantic gravity and density.

In Shay's view, Maton's (2000) LCT illuminates principles underlying curriculum differentiation and is more enlightening with regard to epistemological access and progression. The notions of semantic gravity and density in curriculum analysis provide greater clarity and precision with regard to context and concepts in the curriculum. In particular, semantic gravity (ideas, concepts, principles underpinning practice) enables a more precise description of the curriculum context while semantic density is useful in describing more precisely the concepts/theory underpinning knowledge recontextualisation (Shay, 2013, p. 572).

Semantic Gravity (SG) is relatively strong (+) when concepts or abstract ideas are explained by referring to relevant concrete aspects. The explanation is based on empirical details and results in meaning that is closely related to its context. In Hugo's words (2014, p. 2-3), “meanings are embedded in their context and are heavy with particularity and detail. The more meaning relies on its local reference for meaning,

the heavier it is; the more decontextualised and universal the meaning, the lighter it is. Teachers work with the processes ... all the time. Every time a general concept is illuminated by a specific case; every time a local instance is generalised into a universal rule, we have Semantic Gravity at work."

With weaker (-) SG, principles are abstracted or inferred from the concrete particulars of a specific context or case. The context may be social or symbolic. In Hugo's terms, "... meanings become decontextualised and are able to rise above specific, located senses. ... become more general and abstract, getting to the essence of the concept beyond its concrete flavours and instantiations" (Hugo, 2014, p. 2).

Furthermore, Hugo explains that when *Semantic Density (SD)* is strong - a lengthy description is expressed through a term/concept and the "formalisation allows for new relations to build that are not based on located concreteness but on logical connection and specific features, a very different type of connection that is not based on located meaning in context, but of formal distinctions and specifications. Some ... denser than others, some concepts contain more distinctions and relations within themselves than others - some concepts condense more within themselves than others. ... Teachers are continuously building up Semantic Density when working conceptually with their students. Complex concepts need to be unpacked into their specific elements and relations and once the concept has been properly understood, it needs to be used with other concepts to grasp a larger or higher process. When a teacher 'packs' the concept up and uses it as a whole to understand even more complex or broader issues, then there is a strengthening of Semantic Density" (Hugo, 2014, p. 3-4). SD is weak when an abstract idea is fleshed out with empirical detail; that is: "When a teacher unpacks a concept into its specific components then there is a lessening of Semantic Density (SD-), she often also gives a concrete or local example (SG+)" (Hugo, 2014, p. 4).

Shay adapts Maton's (2011) four quadrants that explain the relationship between semantic gravity and semantic density to illustrate possibilities and constraints for a differentiated curriculum and draws on this semantic plane to represent the knowledge underpinning different kinds of educational qualifications (general, professional, and vocational). She adapts the four quadrants created by the intersections of the axes of semantic gravity and semantic density as follows: Q1 for pseudo-practical knowledge or generic curricula; Q2 for practical curricula; Q3 for vocational/professional curricula; and Q4 for theoretical curricula. In this manner she distinguishes and explains the nature and purpose of knowledge for the three learning pathways or routes - vocational (or occupationally oriented), general and professional. (See Figure below.)

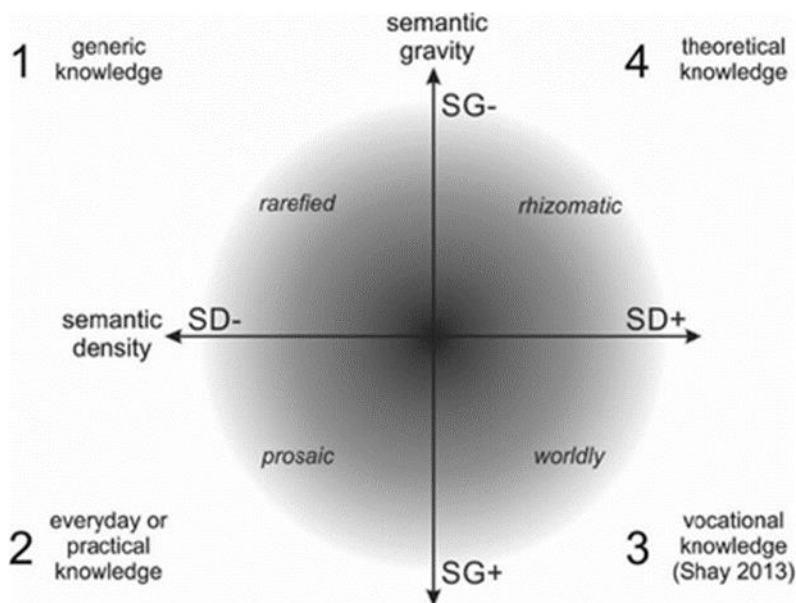


Figure 1: LCT's Semantic Plane (Shay, 2013).

Shay refers to knowledge in Q1 as pseudo-practical knowledge because this is knowledge that does not focus on any specific practice but merely identifies a set of core skills that are transferable across a wide range of contexts, thus, constituting a very general curriculum, "... weak in semantic gravity ...weak in semantic density because it attempts to be content or concept less. ...manifestations of this quadrant [are] ... the specification of learning outcomes, graduate attributes, critical-cross field outcomes (as they are called in South Africa)" (Shay, 2013, p. 576). Vocational or occupationally oriented qualifications would be in Q2 and Q3. Knowledge in Q2 is practical knowledge that focuses on a context-embedded practice. Its principles and concepts are derived from practice not theory. Shay describes this as the "packaging up" of practice into a phenomenon to be studied. She warns that curricula that are only located in Q2 tend to lack the powerful knowledge needed by students. As she puts it: "When ...knowledge is extracted from its work context and translated into curriculum, this is a re-contextualization of context-embedded practices into a set of principles or procedures, even concepts, for these practices. ... there is a weakening of semantic gravity – context is reduced and a strengthening of semantic density – there is a condensation of concepts as practices are translated into principles. For example, in lectures students are introduced to different kinds of interviewing; ... given examples of different kinds of events ... they are taken through a series of 'how-tos' for interviewing (for example, 'be careful not to stereotype'). The assessment is simulated practice (such as, 'Write a feature article on ...). The crucial point about curricula in this quadrant is that the principles and concepts are derived from practice not theory" (Shay, 2013, p. 578).

Knowledge in Q3 is theoretical and practical knowledge for vocational and professional curricula. Here the logic of the curriculum is derived from practice and the principles informing practice are derived from theory. Theory is used to make sense of practice and practice would be theoretically informed. There is a mix; theoretical knowledge is integrated into practice and practice is used to theorise: "the logic of the curriculum is the demands of the practice. ... principles informing the practice are derived from theory. Thus... relatively strong semantic gravity and strong semantic density. This is what Clarke and Winch (2004, p. 511) refer to as 'the confident embedding of theoretically informed action in practice'. ... depending on the type of theory and the type of problem, there are interesting variations in the way in which theoretical knowledge is recontextualized" (Shay, 2013, p. 578).

The focus of Q4 is theoretical knowledge. The curriculum logic in this quadrant is that of the discipline. Shay argues that in Bernstein's (2000, p. 33) view, this is a process in which "'unmediated discourses' are transformed into 'imaginary discourses' ... when translated into educational knowledge. ... semantic gravity remains relatively weak and the density relatively strong depending on whether these are social or physical science curricula – the latter, according to Bernstein, more strongly integrated than the former. ...the ... purpose is to reproduce disciplinary adepts." Shay refers to such curricula as "increasing theoretical specialization" (Shay, 2013, p. 578). Curricula in Q4 thus tend towards what Muller calls "disciplinary adept[ness]" (Muller, 2009, p. 217).

These divisions are intended to show the different kinds of knowledge that underpin curricula in the vocational, professional, and general pathways, and while Shay's study and adaptation of the semantic plane is useful, a slightly different translation device will be needed for thinking about the design of qualifications and curricula. In this regard Quadrant 2's term 'everyday' is particularly problematic as 'everyday' knowledge would not be appropriate; instead 'basic practical knowledge' might be more appropriate. This is because 'everyday' knowledge (using Bernstein's example of tying shoelaces) would not be reflected in a qualification. Quadrant 3 might be reinterpreted as complex or advanced practical knowledge. Quadrant 3 should include both vocational and professional knowledge as both are applied knowledge areas in which both theoretical and practical knowledge are included. Quadrants 1 and 4 are useful. Generic knowledge (sometimes known as graduate attributes or professional skills) is commonly included in qualifications (rather than constituting a curriculum or qualification). Theoretical knowledge is central to all higher education qualifications.

Le Grange and other decolonial scholars have challenged this paradigm and highlighted the need for access to epistemologically, expanded knowledge that includes other forms of knowing. For example, Le Grange (2016) has argued that the

ideas in many of the curricula taught in our universities are still based on dominant views on knowledge and pedagogy which reflect specific theoretical orientations in which curriculum content, largely disconnected from the everyday realities of the majority of students, continue to be used. He thus suggests that balancing codified (theoretical knowledge) and everyday knowledge (knowledge linked to practice) in providing education and displaying an interest in what students do as everyday living - how they do so and why - should be viewed as an integral part of curriculum, design and practice.

In Le Grange's view, the decolonisation debate provides new possibilities as it involves rethinking the curriculum and critically examining the model on which many curricula are based. Therefore, for the curriculum in HE to change, the decolonisation of the curriculum debate needs to be addressed and not be viewed as "a single-issue protest" (Dismelo, 2015, cited in Le Grange, 2016, p. 2) but rather as pointing to a complex issue to do with educational access, complex class relations, and sense of exclusion and racism that are inherent in the structural disenfranchisement experienced by students and workers at South African universities. The greatest challenge for him is "how to develop and design curricula that are locally and regionally relevant when western epistemologies continue to dominate and power relations are unequal" (Le Grange, 2016, p. 84). He views the "internationalisation of indigenous knowledges" as a step towards "deconstructing, deterritorialising and decolonising Western knowledge in traditional Western academic spaces" (Le Grange, 2016, p. 85).

For Le Grange, possibilities within such a process include 1) a radical rethinking of Western disciplines that have been criticised for being removed from people's lived experiences, 2) the inclusion of other knowledge systems, 3) different ways of designing curricula that are not only based on Western epistemologies to balance unequal power relations, and 4) focusing more on African epistemologies referred to by Nabudere (2011) as Afrikology, and 5) an Ecuadorian model of curriculum in which three cycles of ancestral sciences, Western sciences and inter-culturality are used.

The heuristic of the four quadrants suggested by Shay (2013) is very useful to understand the distinctiveness and interrelationships between knowledge types. However, the model does not explicitly embrace the need for changes within the disciplines and for fluidity within and between knowledge configurations to address the challenges associated with calls for the decolonisation of curricula. It also does not acknowledge that knowledges are interpretively situated in a context and thus never disinterested or independent from it and can only be adequately understood or made intelligible based on the historical background against which they were produced and evolved. Understanding the knowledge is contingent on the norms,

values and beliefs, rules, and conventions under which it was produced; nor can contextual knowledge be explained or theorised without using evidence and concepts that are not impartial or disinterested. For this reason, its meaning is always contestable. Notwithstanding these limitations, the Panel has drawn on the heuristic of Shay's 4 quadrants, as recast by Winberg, to generate definitions of vocational, professional, and general qualifications.

General qualifications

The qualifications provide a well-rounded, broad education that equips graduates with the knowledge base, theory and methodology of disciplines and fields of study appropriate to particular levels on the NQF. The qualifications prepare people for multiple work trajectories and/or advanced study. Examples include the Bachelor of Commerce or the Bachelor of Arts.

Higher Vocational qualifications

The qualifications provide a sound understanding of practical knowledge using a mix of social science, as well as scientific and technological theory, to make sense of practice. The logic of the curriculum is derived from practice. The qualifications involve application of knowledge in authentic work contexts or Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). They prepare students for entry-level positions in specific fields and intermediate positions in other fields and/or advanced study. Examples include the Diploma in Dental Technology and a Higher Certificate in Tourism Management.

Professional qualifications

These qualifications provide a thorough grounding in complex or advanced practical knowledge. Theoretical knowledge is integrated into practice and practice is used to theorise. Professional qualifications prepare students for work or advanced study in a cognate field; they include a component of WIL, or workplace-based learning to gain a licence to practice. They usually enable professional registration by professional bodies. Professional qualifications at Levels 8 – 10 of the NQF prepare graduates for leadership in fields of practice and enable working professionals to undertake advanced reflection on professional practices by means of a survey of current thinking, practice and applied research methods in an area of specialisation. Examples include B. Eng. and BSc. Physiotherapy.

Professionally oriented qualifications

In the professionally oriented degree graduates will develop knowledge, skills, and abilities for application in particular fields and their communities. The professionally oriented Bachelor's Degree may enable graduates to meet the requirements for registration as professional designations with professional bodies, for example, as technologists.

The Panel concluded that the revision of the qualification types in the HEQSF should take account of Shay's heuristic of four quadrants and decolonial theory. To enable reflection on how boundaries between different knowledge types can be transcended, the Panel recommends the utilisation of boundary-crossing practices and border pedagogy as useful constructs for navigating changing spaces within and between different knowledge types.

2.2 Border Pedagogy and Boundary Crossing

To assist with thinking through how boundaries between qualification types and knowledge paradigms can be navigated, the Panel found Cooper and Harris (2013) very useful. The authors acknowledge that experiential knowledge is not the same as codified, formal knowledge, which is more abstract and less contextually situated. Based on this difference, some role players in universities discount the value of different forms of knowledge and others do not. For example, academics and managers who oppose RPL on epistemological or pedagogical grounds act as powerful gatekeepers when assessing those with experiential or work-based knowledge bases. As a result, RPL for access has been more prevalent than RPL for credit and, despite good RPL systems, the achievement of transformational goals has been hampered.

Cooper, Ralphs and Harris (2017) explore how RPL could become a more optimally inclusive and effective practice in the workplace, in higher and further education provision and in mediating access and credit transfer across different contexts - and thus learning pathways - in a differentiated but interdependent NQF. Using cultural-historic activity theory (CHAT) as a conceptual framework they describe RPL as a specialised form of "boundary pedagogy" (Cooper, Ralphs & Harris, 2017, p. 17) and propose three generic configurations or applications of RPL as a specialised pedagogy. First, a **translational model** in which the immediate objective is to build a portfolio of evidence for assessment and certification (credit exchange). They argue that the model provides participants with the tools they need to translate their practitioner knowledge and skills (specialised discourses of experiential learning) [or different knowledge/practice configuration] into the standards and naming

conventions of the target qualification. Second, a **navigational** model less concerned with establishing equivalence between different forms of knowledge but rather focusing on the different rules and literacies associated with the production and acquisition of knowledge in different contexts. The goal of the RPL pedagogy here would be to provide participants with the necessary understandings (cognitive, narrative and text-based literacies) to navigate their way between the different cultures (forms and practices) of knowledge and learning associated with work- or community-based experiential learning, including work-integrated learning (WIL) on the one hand, and formal education and training on the other. Finally, a **dialogical model** that emphasises a critical dialogue between academic and non-academic cultures of knowledge within a negotiated curriculum framework designed for this purpose. The model is based on the assumption that knowledge production is not only the product and preserve of scholarly or scientific research, but also occurs in and through specialised practices of other institutions, such as organs of government, industry, communities and social movements.

To relate or link experiential/socially useful knowledge (as prior or current knowledge) to specialised/formal academic knowledge types requires a form of pedagogy through which cultural and political boundaries can be navigated and transcended to enable articulation between these different types of knowledges.

Reyes (in Garza, 2007, p. 2) describes these configurations as involving a "set of multifaceted, complex, and interactive factors; educational policies; curriculum; instructional practices; and a knowledge base that educators need to consider to increase the academic achievement of diverse students in the border region". Giroux (2004) argues that to address cultural and political barriers and achieve a greater use of human experience, it is important to reflect on the historical and ideological underpinnings of dominant knowledge, acknowledge its boundaries, identities, or cultures with which it is associated, the privilege from which it speaks and the motivation of constructing such boundaries. In his view, doing so will clarify how such knowledge excludes and/or benefits some people and not others. Based on this view, he encourages both teachers and learners to deconstruct critically the different knowledges and the language that has shaped their histories and experiences to realise that the 'knowledges' are not equally implicated in relation to power.

As heuristics for critical pedagogic practice the notions of border crossing and boundary pedagogy can be used to encourage students to look at knowledge based on their shared and diverse lived realities or narratives, problematise it and expose the power that underpins it, how it has been constructed as a representation that is authored and authorised by those who have power. Affirming students' lived

realities in this way will enable them become border crossers who can deconstruct knowledge and develop a language that can help them clarify how the knowledge taught is not ideologically or socio-culturally neutral or disinterested, but its nature is contingent, value-laden and reducible to particular historical, social and spatial contexts. The understanding will, in turn, also help students re-imagine and articulate ways in which they can understand how the knowledge is relevant or not to their lived realities, thus making learning meaningful. In short, border pedagogy is “about blasting history open, rupturing its silences, highlighting its detours, and organising its limits” (Giroux, 2004, p.68) when problematising knowledge and its taken-for-granted assumptions.

As learners critically read and engage texts appositionally while simultaneously learning to write their own narratives, a context is created for critical analysis and “as a potential source for experimentation, creativity, and possibility” (Giroux, 1992, p. 34 & p. 175) because once an individual acknowledges the constructed boundaries, s/he is able to step outside them, critically use them, and creatively and appositionally reconstruct the self, knowledge, and culture.

This view is supported by, for example, Tummons (2018) when he argues that learning happens because of participation in social practice. People come together so that they can talk about, share and learn more about each other's practices, thus constituting communities of practice (COP). In their different forms - formal and institutionalised, as well as informal and vernacular - COPs share one characteristic: “they are all socially configured spaces that necessarily involve learning as an aspect of membership” (Tummons, 2018, p. 4). Therefore, COPs have attributes of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, reflecting that learning involves the whole person rather than individualised internalisation of bodies of knowledge. Tummons (2018) argues that, as social beings, people have the ability to move within and across different social spaces, thus creating border crossing amongst COPs. The transfer or translation of bodies of knowledge, aptitude or competences between COPs underpins and enables relationships that facilitate specific interactions and learning as a social process. Subjectivities are also shared as people interact in the various forms of COPs. Continued mutual engagement or social activities between the teacher and learners will plant the seed for a joint enterprise as they work together and draw on the habits, discourses, routines, ways of talking, tools, structures and other artefacts they have experienced. As the codes of experiential knowledge are probed, there is a crossing over of borders of meaning as the different knowledge types are remapped and coordinated. This makes RPL as a form of pedagogy contextual and conditional.

The Panel recommends that integrating the heuristic of the four quadrants into a conceptual framework which accommodates fluidity within and between knowledge and practice types to address decolonisation imperatives, alongside the provision of a specialised border pedagogy and border crossing practices intended to enable people to navigate and transcend boundaries, can best enable the goals of curriculum transformation, access and articulation. The conceptual framework also accommodates WIL defined as “an umbrella term to describe curricular, pedagogic and assessment practices, across a range of academic disciplines that integrate formal learning and workplace concerns” (CHE, 2011).

WIL is a curricular practice that integrates academic learning (including theoretical, problem-based and project-based learning) with industry-based and/or community-based experiential learning that is structured, monitored and assessed to meet the outcomes of a learning programme. WIL provides the conceptual and curricular framework for the practice of *cooperative education* and *service learning*. *Experiential learning* is a term that refers to any form of learning that has meaningful learner involvement. It is learning through reflection in and on doing and is related to co-operative education, service learning and dual higher education. The different WIL modalities offer broad descriptors and could be more clearly described at the different HEQSF levels as increasing in semantic gravity and semantic density (see Conceptual Framework). This could offer a way of justifying why vocational qualifications have particular requirements and have been placed at different levels, as well as providing some guidance for applications for new qualifications.

It is recognised, though, as Cooper, Ralphs and Harris (2017) assert, that the shifts in the knowledge/power relationship depend on the type of academic specialised knowledge for which recognition is sought - difficult if strongly classified knowledge (sciences) is involved and relatively easy with weakly classified knowledge (the arts and social science).

Finally, the theoretical framework also usefully focuses attention on the need to think about how a revised HEQSF could assist with encouraging agency to advance access, mobility, and occupation and learning progression.

SECTION THREE: MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Purpose of the HEQSF

Regarding the purpose of the HEQSF, the Panel affirmed support for the aims of the HEQSF as outlined in 2013. However, drawing on the literature which analyses different

types of qualification frameworks, the Panel feels that it is important to be clearer about what qualification frameworks can and cannot achieve.

Research on the effectiveness of NQFs (Raffe, 2013) suggests that they are most effective in promoting transparency, understanding, coherence and coordination within education and training systems and their component parts, access, transfer and progression into, within and between programmes of learning. They have been less successful in realising aims related to students and employers, such as improving the quality of learning and compensating for weak learning institutions or poor teaching. Furthermore, it is still too soon to judge the impact of NQFs on internationalisation and labour mobility (Raffe, 2013). Advancing the goals for transformation of higher education and the labour market necessitates attention to structural economic constraints and power relations in all institutions in the system, which impact on the attainment of some of the objectives, such as access, and educational and occupational career progression.

At this juncture in the history of the HEQSF in South Africa, drawing on Allais (2017b) and Raffe (2009), it is recommended that the revised HEQSF should be viewed as a 'reforming framework' that takes the existing system as its starting point but aims to improve it in specific ways, for example, by enhancing the quality or clarity of key concepts, such as the qualification descriptors, simplifying requirements, and enhancing flexibility.

3.2 Alignment with regional, continental and BRICS Qualification Frameworks

The Panel debated the tensions between accelerating harmonisation of the structures of qualification frameworks within and between regions and continents, on the one hand, and allowing for contextual variations and political sovereignty, on the other hand. On the basis of the available evidence the Panel concluded that the focus of the AU on increasing transparency regarding, and awareness of, existing national QA frameworks and seeking to Keevy et al, develop reference tools for verifying and comparing learning achievements (2021) is in line with likely future trajectories for qualification frameworks. In this regard the SADC region is ahead of other regions. National qualifications frameworks from most of the Southern African member states have been implemented for a longer period and, as a result, have more mature legal and policy bases in place, operational instruments and governance structures maintaining and assuring integrity of the NQFs (Keevy, 2021).

Revising the Preamble of the HEQSF

To strengthen awareness of, and commitment to, regional and continental developments, the Preamble to the revised HEQSF should state that the HEQSF is designed to:

- a) facilitate and enhance broader comparability of continental and regional qualifications,
- b) facilitate recognition and verification of foreign qualifications,
- c) promote access, mobility and progression of international students by means of clearly defined learning domains, assessment contexts, and graduate qualities that are required for the award of the qualification. This will make it possible to draw broad comparisons in terms of the level of complexity and graduate qualities between HEQSF qualifications and foreign qualifications.

Facilitating comparability

The proposed HEQSF approach should allow for greater flexibility for comparison between it and other African and global QFs while it retains unique features of a South African HEQSF. Clear and specific learning domains and graduate qualities would be able to show which qualifications in other countries are broadly comparable, in terms of the level of complexity, to HEQSF qualifications. This would be a significant step in promoting access, mobility and progression of international students and of South African students planning to study abroad.

Recognition of foreign qualifications

A general obstacle to the recognition of foreign qualifications is the emergence of significant variations among member states of the European Union in how they interpret the tools for recognition of qualifications. For example, it has been observed that the way in which learning outcomes are written and structured varies among countries, education and training sectors and institutions and this undermines efforts made towards transparency and comparability" (EC, 2016,).

To ensure that credible, trustworthy information is being shared across the SADC, a regional Qualifications Verification Network (SADCQVN) was established and has applied for membership of the African Qualifications Verification Network to ensure that African qualifications can be trusted.

In accordance with the NQF Act (Act No. 67 of 2008), SAQA performs a qualification evaluation function for the purposes of recognising foreign qualifications. It focuses on the appropriate location of the foreign qualifications within the NQF and conducts the evaluation in a two-phased process by 1) verifying foreign qualifications in terms of their legitimacy and 2) comparing foreign qualifications with South African qualifications, considering the structure and outcomes of the former to locate them within the South African NQF.

Student and staff mobility

One of the objectives of the proposed ACQF is to increase parity of qualifications among countries and increase the mobility of learners and workers. Therefore, it would be vital for the revised HEQSF to factor in the recognition of international and African qualifications. In line with the SADCQF, the HEQSF should be designed to allow learners and workers greater flexibility and mobility within the region, continent, and the globe. In addition, more transparent accreditation systems should allow for transfer of credits across the SADC countries and the continent. This will help citizens navigate within and between complex national systems of education and training and, therefore, support their lifelong learning. Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) is dealt with in detail in the Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer within the National Qualifications Framework (as amended, 2021).

International comparability

The world seems to be moving into a new period of qualifications framework development, and, according to Keevy, “a key feature of this current and future-looking period is a questioning of the predominance of formal education systems, while the marketplace seems to want more just-in-time and agile learning to take place.” The next generation of qualifications frameworks is pointing towards more global reference points (e.g. World Reference Levels and the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications), greater orientation towards technology which eases access to more flexible learning modalities and pathways (e.g. micro-credentials, MOOCs) and removal of the traditional boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning (e.g. Credentials Framework in the United States and many private sector initiatives). These next-generation instruments are dealt with elsewhere in the HEQSF Report [Section 3.10, Page 88].

It is recommended that the HEQSF becomes inclusive and comprehensive, open to innovation and new technologies, and based on learnings from similar processes in Africa and globally.

Alignment with Policy on Internationalisation for South Africa

In 2020, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation in South Africa approved a Policy on Internationalisation for South Africa gazetted on 6 November 2020 (Gazette No 43872 No 1176). This policy allows for co-badging, joint degrees between South African and international institutions, consecutive degrees, and cross-border offerings provided that the programmes comply with the legislation and policies of the relevant agencies of the host country, and that the qualifications

offered in South Africa are approved by the DHET, accredited by the CHE/HEQC for delivery in South Africa and are registered on the NQF.

Higher education institutions wishing to offer cross-border, collaborative qualifications must have accreditation and approval of their qualifications by the Council on Higher Education (CHE). However, these arrangements are not catered for in the current HEQSF. It is, therefore, recommended that the following steps are taken to facilitate cross-border offerings:

The definition of qualification

As recommended in Section 3.14.3, the change in definition of the qualification will accommodate cross-border qualifications. Because of their joint nature such qualifications are not only recognised as national qualifications but cross-border qualifications. A more generic and accommodative definition will, therefore, facilitate internationalisation.

Inclusion of the types of cross-border qualifications on the HEQSF

The Policy Framework on Internationalization identifies four principal types of cross-border collaborative qualifications, namely: 1) co-badged qualifications, 2) joint qualifications, 3) consecutive qualifications, and 4) double or dual qualifications. However, double or dual degrees are not permitted; therefore, the HEQSF should be explicit regarding the permissibility (or not) of the types of cross-border qualifications.

Amendment of the HE Act and NQF Act

The Panel recommends that the HE Act and NQF Act should be amended to accommodate these prescripts and stipulate the conditions under which collaboration between South African institutions within and beyond South Africa will be possible (See Section 3.11).

Development of Policy Framework for BRICS

There is a compelling need to develop a policy framework that guides the BRICS partnerships in relation to the issues of CAT, joint or co-badged degrees, harmonisation. The partners are encouraged to share best practices in these areas. The Panel recommends that the HEQSF should include a summary of the credit allocation systems in operation in the BRICS countries to promote transparency.

3.3 NQF Architecture

The architecture of the NQF is organised around level descriptors intended to enable articulation between the general, occupational, vocational and professional learning pathways across the sub-frameworks of the NQF.

The approach to the accreditation of higher education qualifications by the HEQC has largely been based on evaluating the alignment between specific LOs set for individual courses and the exit level outcomes of the qualification; the coherence between the specific LOs, the course outlines, methods of assessment, and pedagogy; and finally, the alignment between the exit level outcomes of the qualification and the level descriptors. This approach is premised on the assumption that academics work off the level descriptors and exit level outcomes when setting specific LOs to guide the design of their curricula. This approach to quality assurance has been challenged by Allais (2012, 2014), Winch (2021) and Young & Muller (2010) amongst others, on the grounds that the NQF level descriptors make no specific reference to the essential knowledge domains, skills and applied competence that ought to characterise each qualification type. Yet the question of knowledge lies at the heart of qualifications. Notwithstanding international critiques of learning outcomes and level descriptors in the higher education sphere, internationally, qualification frameworks continue to be organised around an approach to qualification design, based on task analysis and assessment criteria associated with learning outcomes. However, researchers have suggested that this approach is not suitable for all fields and disciplines in higher education, particularly for the development of advanced qualifications (Winch, 2021). Indeed, as Winch argues, the recognition of the limitations of learning outcomes linked to a restricted conception of competence, in which knowledge was not salient, has led to the “decline and fall of the National Vocational Qualification Framework and its replacement by a standards-based qualification in England” (Winch, 2021, p. 1).

The Panel suggests that the revised HEQSF should acknowledge the debates around the limited value of level descriptors and learning outcomes for designing all learning programmes in higher education. The HEQSF should also explicitly recognise that not all academics work with LOs to design their curricula. Many, if not most, design their curricula around content.

To strengthen the focus on the knowledge base(s) of learning programmes, the Panel recommends the use of ‘graduate attributes’ in the qualification descriptors which refer to conceptual knowledge (procedural, declarative) and the contextual and societal application of knowledge and skills. The notion of ‘graduate attributes’ should

frame the thinking about qualifications and curriculum design. (See Section 3.6.1 for the rationale for this recommendation).

Concerns were raised in several written submissions that the recommendation for the utilisation of graduate qualities³, instead of exit level outcomes and specific learning outcomes, would undermine comparability of South African qualifications with those in other parts of the world. Contrary to this view, the Panel believes that the detail in the qualification descriptors and the focus on 'knowers' can enable comparability more easily. The qualification descriptors can serve the same purpose as the exit level outcomes and can be benchmarked against the NQF level descriptors. Furthermore, the Panel concurs with the outcomes of the evaluation of the European Qualifications Framework which indicated that the adoption of the same terms does not mean that the terms are interpreted in the same way across countries. The key to comparability, it is suggested, is the degree of transparency with regard to the architecture of the qualifications frameworks, particularly the details about the actual qualifications being compared.

The Panel hopes that, by offering greater detail regarding the qualification types, readers will be able to understand why articulation from one qualification type to another may not be automatic, and why additional pedagogic intervention may be necessary to enable articulation.

The Panel recommends that a few examples of different forms of boundary-crossing articulation arrangements should be provided in an Annexure to the HEQSF to promote awareness of possible boundary-crossing mechanisms. The HEQSF should also provide examples of instances where articulation between qualifications might not necessarily be 'smooth' or regular, and where there might be a need for a 'specialised' pedagogic space or specialised support to enable the crossing of borders between different epistemes. (For example, one such instance might be the point of articulation between an Advanced Diploma and an Honours Degree, where the learning path into the Advanced Diploma has relied on an Advanced Certificate or a Diploma.

To accommodate differences in approach to qualification design across disciplinary communities, the Panel recommends that academics should be allowed to structure the design of their qualification and curricula around learning objectives, content, or learning outcomes depending on what is generally deemed appropriate for communities of practice in the particular discipline or field, provided that applications for accreditation indicate how engagement with the qualification descriptors in the HEQSF has informed their thinking about the design of their curriculum and the choice

³ This term was proposed by the Panel in its Draft Report. However, after analysing the feedback from institutions the Panel decided to rather use the term 'graduate attributes'.

of assessment and pedagogical methods. Senates of institutions will need to exercise oversight in this respect.

In determining approaches to curriculum design academics will be guided by qualification standards developed by communities of practice, against which HEQSF qualifications must be designed. There are already several qualification standards in place, and the development of qualification standards will be significantly upscaled in preparation for the implementation of the QAF.

The Panel recommends that the Framework for Standard Setting should be framed around graduate attributes and should cover the same domains as those used in the qualification types, namely self, learning (knowledge and skills), contexts of application and societal .

(See Section 3.6 for recommendations regarding the implementation of this approach.)

3.4 Relationship with the Sub-Frameworks

The Panel believes that it is important to counter perceptions of a knowledge hierarchy of qualification types by foregrounding the epistemological bases of the qualification types which inform the distinctive forms and combinations of knowledge and practice that characterise each qualification type.

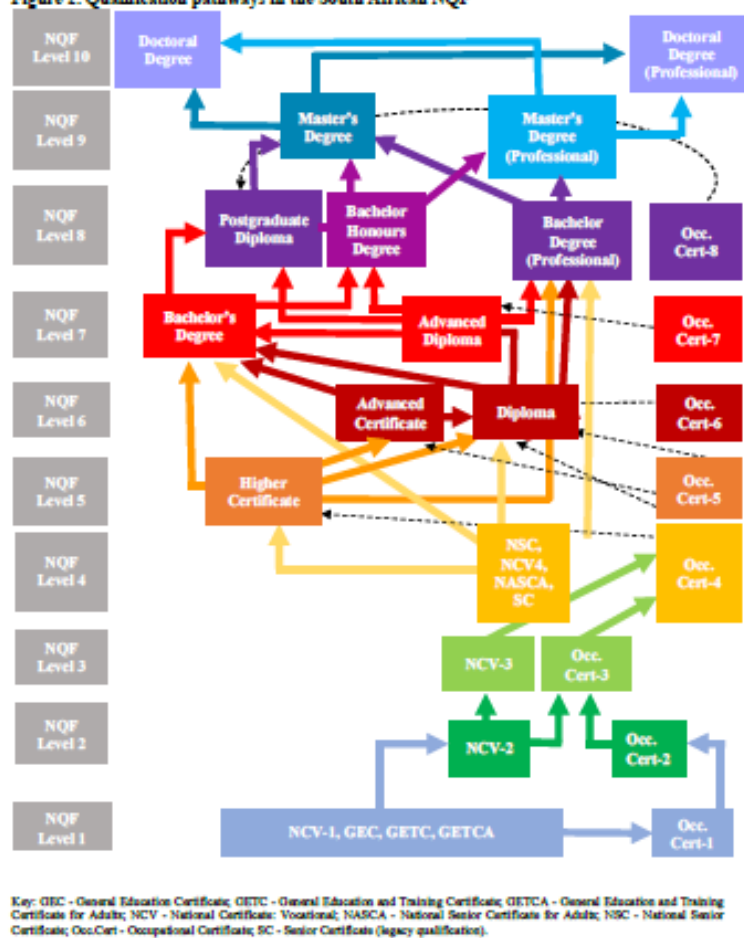
The Panel recommends that the diagrammatic representation of the relationships between the Sub-Frameworks of the NQF should clearly indicate which qualification types form part of the Post-School Education and Training System within the education and training system.

Articulation can be understood in at least three ways, as being 'systemic', 'specific' and 'individual' (Lotz-Sisitka, 2017; DHET, 2017a; SAQA, 2017a). Systemic articulation comprises 'joined-up' qualifications, based on the structural linkages of the qualification types within the HEQSF. Specific articulation comprises inter-institutional arrangements, such as CAT, Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and/or Memoranda of Agreement (MoA) that enable specific articulation between qualification types across the 3 sub-frameworks and between qualifications and programmes offered by post-school education providers. Individual articulation is enabled through agents facilitating boundary-crossing across the system, specific agreements of providers, as well as responsive institutional support systems. These may include policies, structures and practices aimed at broadening access, redress and progression (Bolton, Matsau & Blom, 2020) which can be introduced at various levels, including national, institutional and departmental.

The Panel notes that much work has already been done in developing systemic articulation pathways for particular sectors, such as Engineering and Early Childhood Development (Bolton et al, 2020). The SAQA's articulation research (SAQA, 2017b) led to the publication of *SAQA Bulletin 2017(1): Articulation Initiatives*. This bulletin contains examples of specific articulation agreements (SAQA, 2019a; SAQA- 2017b) as does the bulletin on the SAQA/Rhodes Study on Learning Pathways in Sustainable Development (SAQA, 2017a).

The Panel recommends that the revised HEQSF should include some examples of systemic, specific and individual articulation in Annexures to the HEQSF, or incorporate hyperlinks to these examples, to help build agency for navigating boundaries between qualification types and different forms of learning. In Figure 2 below (Qualification Pathways in the South African NQF), the solid lines between qualifications indicate 'systemic' articulation, and the dotted lines indicate 'specific' articulation. The different colours are used to reflect the different NQF levels.

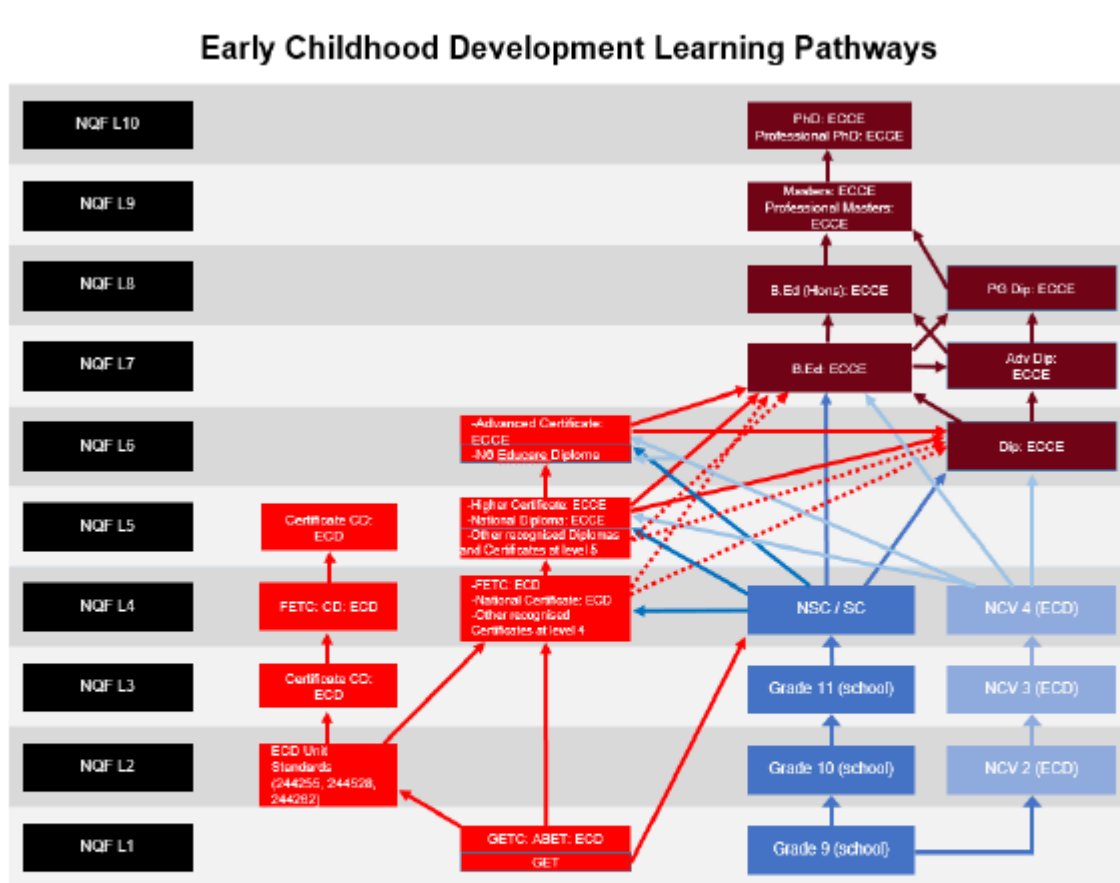
Figure 2. Qualification pathways in the South African NQF



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Figure 2: Qualification pathways in the South African NQF (Bolton *et al.*, 2020, p. 23)

The figure below shows an example of articulation in one sector, namely Early Childhood Development (ECD). The black squares represent the South African NQF levels; the bright red squares, qualifications and articulation in the OQSF context; the blue squares, those in the GFETQSF context; and the dark red squares, those in the HEQSF context. The solid lines indicate systemic articulation; the dotted lines show the need for specific articulation.



Source: SAQA (2020d).

Key: ABET - Adult Basic Education and Training (legacy); Adv.Dip - Advanced Diploma; BEd - Bachelor of Education; Hons - Honours Degree; CD -Community Development; ECD- Early Childhood Development; Dip - Diploma; ECCE - Early Childhood Care and Education; GET - General Education and Training (Basic Education/ School Grades 1-9); GETC - General Education and Training Certificate; NCV - National Certificate: Vocational; ND - National Diploma (legacy); NSC - National Senior Certificate; PG Dip - Postgraduate Diploma; PhD - doctoral degree; SC - Senior Certificate (legacy); Unit Standard (legacy).

Figure 3: Early Childhood Development Learning Pathways (Bolton *et al.*, 2020, p. 24)

The report on an articulation study conducted by SAQA contains information on emerging articulation scenarios in Engineering, Management Sciences (Hospitality and Tourism), Community Development, and Art and Design sectors (SAQA, 2017b). It is suggested that illustrative examples be included as Annexures in the revised HEQSF.

This broader understanding of articulation embraces RPL as an individualised boundary-crossing pedagogy, as well as other mechanisms which empower and enable individuals to transcend boundaries. Systemic and institutional capacity will be needed to undertake comparisons of curricula related to different types of qualifications and to assist students and staff to navigate and transcend boundaries. In this regard the Panel supports the objectives of the Unfurling Post School Education and Training Project which include establishing Articulation Hubs in all nine provinces in South Africa. The plan is for the first three Hubs to be launched between May and September in 2022 in Kwa-Zulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Western Cape.

The Panel recommends that regulations are needed to afford recognition to occupational qualifications and the National Adult Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA), which has four 30-credit subjects at Grade 12 level that require a 50% pass rate in each module, in order to meet admission requirements of appropriate levels of qualifications on the HEQSF. As with the NC(V) Level 4, there will be a need to clarify that admission into HEQSF programmes is not automatic given that higher education institutions are entitled to set admission requirements which are above the minimum requirements for entry into higher education. Due consideration will need to be given to the underpinning knowledge configurations of the completed qualification and those to which applicants seek admission.

In addition, the sections on progression for each qualification type from Levels 5 – 8 should refer to the appropriate occupational qualification at the level below as meeting the minimum requirements into a cognate qualification on the HEQSF.

Finally, the Panel applied its mind to whether explicit provision should be made in the HEQSF for specially designed pedagogic spaces that enable students to navigate and cross boundaries between and even within learning pathways.

Given the inequalities in backgrounds and resources experienced by learners in South Africa, it is inevitable that students at university level will need to take different routes and times to arrive at the same end. Furthermore, given the different relations between and weightings accorded to theory and practice across the pathways, it is inevitable that graduates will encounter challenges when attempting to move from one pathway or programme to another; for example, to move from an occupational qualification at Level 5 to a qualification on the HEQSF at Level 6. The Panel, therefore, recommends that ideally all programmes at all levels on the HEQSF should consist of a mix of developmental and regular curriculum offerings, designed and offered by collaborative teams of staff working in close partnership. Specialised pedagogic skills are needed to equip students/applicants with the tools necessary to navigate such boundaries (just as expertise is needed in academic development components of teaching).

All students should be advised to choose flexible combinations of both developmental and regular activities, depending on their educational needs at the time. The HEQSF, though, should not prescribe how this can be done as flexible approaches will be needed. In order to be taken seriously and work effectively, these developmental activities will require funding and accountability for that funding.

In addition to the currently recognised and funded variants of Extended Curriculum Programmes, students may need subject-specific transition or access modules at all levels of the HEQSF to address particular educational needs at various points in the course of their studies; for example, students may need support before taking a statistical methods module in the final year of a Psychology Major, or they may need to take developmental modules before attempting challenging modules identified as impeding progression to graduation. The Panel recognises that the provision of such 'enrichment opportunities' would require funding. Recommendations related to this were deemed beyond the scope of the present review. The Panel has recommended that HCerts intended to enable access into higher education should be permitted, and should serve as an example of a 'developmental pedagogical space' designed to enable boundary-crossing into and within the HEQSF. (See Section Four for the Descriptors of the Qualification Types).

3.5 Unit of Focus for external Accreditation

The Panel supports the proposal in the CHE's Quality Assurance Framework (QAF, 2020) that the unit of accreditation should shift to qualifications rather than programmes. Responsibility for quality assuring programmes should be delegated to institutions with oversight retained by the CHE. The shift to accrediting and registering qualifications rather than the programmes leading to qualifications will have a significant effect on improving the efficiency of the external QA agency and on time frames for accrediting offerings. It will also help with the prioritisation of the standard setting processes as these should also prioritise qualifications rather than programmes. Legal advice is needed to confirm whether it will be possible to implement this change without changes to the HE and NQF Acts and CHE policies on accreditation (See Section 3.11 for greater details on this).

In terms of the 2013 HEQSF there are two types of qualifiers: 1) a second qualifier and 2) double qualifiers. Some qualifications may include a further area of specialisation, a second qualifier, which is a further area of specialisation within the first qualifier's area of specialisation (e.g. PGDip in *Drama in Performance*); and some qualifications may use double qualifiers, for example, a PGDip in *Science, Technology and Society* or Bachelor of Science in *Technology and Society*. This combination may be used to

promote multidisciplinary or interdisciplinarity and advanced studies in two different but complementary fields of study. HEIs should be able to approve qualifications with second qualifiers from the date of the gazetted or revised HEQSF. Research conducted for the review indicates that the number of applications for new second qualifiers is low, suggesting that devolving responsibility to institutions for the accreditation of qualifications with second qualifiers would not have a major impact on the overall quality of offerings in the sector.

Some qualifications may use double designators, where 50% of the minimum credits for the qualification are in one field of specialisation and the other 50% are in a complementary field of specialisation. For example, theories, methodologies and perspectives from two disciplines are combined in one qualification, such as a Bachelor of Accounting and Law (BACcLLB), or Bachelor of Arts and Science offered in some universities in the USA, Canada & the UK. In such cases the Panel suggests that these should be treated as qualifications which need to be subjected to the CHE's accreditation process.

The QAF recognises the essential roles played by the professional bodies in quality assurance. The Panel noted that the CHE is considering the adoption of an approach whereby statutory professional bodies will sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the CHE to outline roles and responsibilities and to promote simplification and collaboration in relation to accreditation. The Panel suggests that the MoUs should include a mechanism for stipulating areas where named qualifications accredited by the CHE will be required and/or requesting the CHE to initiate standard setting processes for professional practice areas. The authority for re-accreditation and de-accreditation, as per the HE Act, should rest with the CHE.

3.6 Removal of current binary View of Mode of Delivery

Motivated by the quest for increased flexibility across the different dimensions, the Panel recommends that the current binary view of mode of delivery (contact and distance) be abolished. Instead, institutions should, at the time of applying for accreditation, be required to provide information on the unique combination of teaching methods being considered by the institution, as informed by the specific pedagogical design of the programme. The limits of flexibility in different contexts need to be recognised and monitored (Jones & Walters, 2015) and, therefore, institutional capacity to make use of the online modality should be assessed by the CHE in institutional reviews, as is the case in the current practice of verifying physical infrastructure. The Panel recognises that this fundamental shift in thinking about teaching and learning will require changes to the funding framework and formula.

This is discussed in a later section of the report.

3.7 Naming of Qualifications

The large number of qualifications registered on the NQF is not aligned to the global trend with regard to qualifications registered on qualification frameworks. Literature on qualifications in higher education and the organisation of occupations indicates the importance of generic integrated qualifications rather than qualifications focused on narrow specialisations at levels 5 - 7 which can narrow employment opportunities and learning progression. Earlier years of study in HE usually focus on developing students' foundational capabilities in particular higher education qualification types by exposing them to historical traditions and contemporary developments to help them develop skills to question, analyse and interpret in the broad knowledge area and transfer what they've learnt within and across related knowledge areas. Such capability is often developed through exposure to broad-based academic knowledge, skills and tools. The exposure also helps to prevent narrow employment opportunities and facilitates progression (see, for example, a BA. hons in Criminology/ Education/ Sociology; BSc hons in Computing and Mathematics etc. at Keele University- <https://www.keele.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/undergraduatecourses/>)

In South Africa, the proliferation of qualifications may have been affected by the interpretation of the 50%-rule which requires institutions to apply for the accreditation of new qualifications if the changes in the qualifications amount to more than 50%. Institutions have interpreted this rule as referring to changes in curriculum content rather than to changes in the purpose and outcomes. As a result, institutions have applied for accreditation for streams, combinations of majors, or specialisations within qualifications. There have been more than 50% changes. This, in turn, has meant that many HEIs are increasingly offering qualifications based on narrow specialisations, particularly at undergraduate level - which has constrained articulation possibilities.

SAQA, the CHE, the DHET, HEIs and other stakeholders have expressed concern about the proliferation of specialisations at the qualification level, especially for undergraduate academic offerings.

The current accreditation criteria have also made the administrative work of managing accreditation and registration very challenging, with adverse consequences for all parties involved. Academics experience the bureaucratic rules that guide compliance with all the specifications of the HEQSF as a burden.

In 2018/19, the Minister in his Guidelines and Strategy for the NQF directed that the proliferation should be taken as a serious challenge that needs to be addressed. The National Plan for PSET also identified the proliferation of qualifications as a matter of concern that should be addressed. In the view of the Panel, the requirement to apply for accreditation for new qualifications where academics wish to make changes of more than 50% to existing programmes, irrespective of whether the broad purpose of the qualification and the learning outcomes have changed substantially or not, has been a major contributing factor to proliferation.

The Panel accordingly interrogated the rules governing the naming of qualifications, particularly in relation to the use of designators and qualifiers.

The Panel drew on the Curriculum Framework, outlined in Section Two of the Panel's Report, and discussion documents prepared as part of the QAF project in formulating recommendations on naming conventions.

Pertinent points are the need to:

- recognise different forms and types of knowledge underpinning qualifications,
- accommodate the constant evolution of disciplines and boundaries between disciplines,
- consider contestations about what constitutes the nature and boundaries of disciplinary bodies of knowledge,
- recognise the movement away from narrow occupationally linked competences towards the inclusion of broad-based academic knowledge, skills and tools related to the occupation, internationally, and within the OQSF.

For the first cycle of the implementation of the QAF, the Panel recommends the retention of the nested approach, but with significant changes related to the naming of qualifications to reduce proliferation.

The Panel recommends a gradual shift after the first round of reviews, implemented in terms of the QAF, towards granting self-accreditation status to institutions that are deemed to have adequate quality management systems in place. This would allow such institutions to offer any qualification that is registered on a national qualifications framework as is the case with many other qualifications frameworks across the world.

Other providers would need to comply with the streamlined approach outlined below until a date deemed appropriate by the CHE, after the next review of the HEQSF.

3.7.1 Use of Designators and Qualifiers

- The Panel recommends the retention of designators in the naming of general degrees. The designators indicate broad learning fields or fields of study, within which smaller foci of study may be identified. General qualifications take the form of a general formative degree wherein the curriculum can be designed with multiple combinations of courses and majors to obtain the degree. Where a general degree - for example, a Bachelor of Arts - comprises a structured programme with formative and specialised components, the area of specialisation can be signalled through the reference to the specialisation on the certificate. This would not require external accreditation. In this way early specialisations and elaborate PQMs would be avoided.
- Qualifiers should not be permitted as part of the title of general undergraduate degrees. Only designators should be used.
- Qualifiers in the name of qualifications should be used for higher certificates, diplomas and postgraduate diplomas. As vocational or professionally oriented qualifications, diplomas are context-dependent and are often linked to occupational categorisations. The principles and concepts covered in the qualifications are derived from practice and not theory. Therefore, the area of practice should be specified in the qualification title. Peer review mechanisms can be used to prevent proliferation and/or very narrowly defined specialisations.
- Qualifiers should be used in professional qualifications that are linked to professional registration. This is because professional bodies and employers require clear signals regarding the link between fields of study and professional registration. Here the logic of the curriculum is derived from practice and the principles informing practice are derived from theory and the broader field of study - for example, psychology within the social sciences. Theory is used to make sense of practice and practice would be theoretically informed. There is a mix; theoretical knowledge is integrated into practice and practice is used to theorise.
- Qualifiers should be permitted where they provide eligibility for professional practice or where the qualification has a professional orientation - for example, Agriculture (CESM 01), Music (0306), Business Administration (0401), Business and Economics, Communication Studies (0501), Computer and Information Sciences (0601), Education (07), Consumer Sciences (10), Law (12), Military Sciences (16),

Psychology (18), Public Management (19) and Theology (1703). Naming conventions in these learning fields vary considerably, with the choice of naming convention seemingly not directly linked to the nature or purpose of the qualifications. The Panel suggests that these offerings should be described as 'professionally oriented qualifications' when distinct designators can be used, and as 'general qualifications' where specialisations are indicated on the transcripts and not in the titles of the qualifications. For example, a Bachelor of Psychology can denote the professionally oriented nature of the qualification as opposed to a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Psychology which would form part of a general qualification. (See p. 72 for the proposed definition of a professionally oriented qualification.)

- Second qualifiers should fall away. This would allow institutions to introduce interdisciplinary qualifiers in their programmes without having to adhere to restrictive rules about the percentage of the curriculum linked to disciplinary fields that may be drawn on at various points in the programme. Public institutions should not be constrained by CESH classifications used for funding in determining their curricula. This will require some modifications in the PQM approval processes.

3.7.2 Naming Conventions for Doctoral Degrees

The difference between the designations 'Doctor of ...' and PhD/DPhil has generated debates that highlight the need to understand what distinguishes these qualifications. Often the question asked is: Does a 'PhD/DPhil in ...' have a higher status than a 'Doctor of ...'? The answer is an unambiguous "No!" However, while the qualifications represent the culmination or apex of academic experience and achievement, are in the same category, and graduates of both are referred to as doctors, there are subtle differences between them.

A 'PhD or DPhil in ...' is "intended for students interested in generating new knowledge ... the emphasis is on scientific research ..." (American Psychological Association, <https://www.allpsychologyschools.com/blog/psyd-vs-phd-programs>) that investigates some aspect of practice/reality or theory in detail and depth in order to introduce into a field of expertise a new concept/theory that should be acceptable to a particular community of practice or researchers.

In contrast, 'Doctor of ...' is generally linked to specific areas of practice in a discipline or subject, and research in this case is meant to generate knowledge that is applicable and implementable. In general, the qualification focuses on the ability to use theory to explain or clarify practice by examining the theoretical knowledge base upon which it (practice) draws and, if necessary, identify what is essential to improve practice. Some of these degrees may include a substantial taught theoretical and research component (professional doctorates) and, when awarded, they include the

name of a discipline in the title, for example, DEd for Doctor of Education or DCLinPsy for Doctor of Clinical Psychology (CHE, , 2018a).

Doctoral qualification type	Doctorate (General)	Doctorate (Professional)
Naming convention	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD/DPhil)	Doctor of (title)
Designator	Philosophy	Name of discipline
Qualifier	Name of discipline or area of specialisation	Further area of specialisation
Number of qualifiers	Maximum one	Maximum one if required
Example of doctoral qualification name	<p>Doctor of Philosophy in Education (PhD in Education)</p> <p>PhD in Business Administration</p> <p>PhD in Fine Arts</p>	<p>Doctor of Education in Teacher Education (DEd in Teacher Education) or Doctor of Education (DEd)</p> <p>Doctor of Business Administration in Business Analytics (DBA in Business Analytics) or Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)</p> <p>Doctor of Fine Arts or Doctor of Art in Music</p>
Purpose	Allows graduates to develop the highest level of holistic and systematic understanding of scholarship in, and stewardship of, a field of study through an original contribution that deepens the frontiers of knowledge in a field or creative domain.	Allows graduates to develop the highest level of performance and innovation in a professional, industry/work or creative context. It provides an opportunity to entrench professional knowledge in a given field of study into a theoretical framework through an

	<p>This doctorate is based on empirical or theoretical /conceptual research.</p>	<p>original contribution to knowledge or original application of existing knowledge to advance the frontiers of professional practice, industry or creative domain. It also provides crucial skills to professionals who have to navigate complexities of a chosen profession.</p> <p>The qualification requires the ability to integrate theory with practice through the application of theoretical knowledge to highly complex problems in a wide range of professional and industry/work contexts or creative domain.</p>
Design	<p>The qualification is offered by research only in an area of specialisation.</p>	<p>The qualification is offered by research only in a further area of specialisation within a given discipline.</p>
Research	<p>Research intends to generate new knowledge, the emphasis is on scientific research that investigates some aspect of practice /reality or theory in detail and depth in order to introduce into a field of expertise a new concept /theory that should be acceptable to a</p>	<p>Research is generally linked to specific areas of practice in a discipline or subject and research in this case is meant to generate knowledge that is applicable and implementable. In general, research focuses on the ability to use theory to explain or clarify practice by examining the</p>

	particular community of practice or researchers.	theoretical knowledge base upon which it (practice) draws and, if necessary, identify what is essential to improve practice.
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Principles guiding the naming of doctoral qualifications and programmes.

- The name of a doctoral qualification should ideally conform to the commonly accepted national and/or international nomenclature.
- When naming a doctoral qualification, the possibility of misunderstanding and/or misinterpretation by students, employers, the public and other stakeholders should be as far as possible eliminated and unambiguous in terms of level and disciplinary orientation.
- Qualifiers should be used to indicate an area of specialisation. For example, PhD in Mathematics, DCom in Internal Auditing.
- The naming of a doctoral qualification may also consider professional or employment cognitive and other expectations for the specific title and/or descriptors.
- Qualifiers should not be used for doctoral qualifications by research and coursework or WIL. A maximum of one qualifier may be used for a professional doctoral qualification by research and coursework or WIL, for example Doctor of Business Administration in Business Analytics (DBA in Business Analytics). Where a qualifier is not required, a designator should be used to indicate a broad area of study or discipline; for example, Doctor of Laws, Doctor of Nursing, etc.]
- Commonly accepted post-nominal abbreviations may be retained. However, an institution, professional body or community of practice may use any abbreviation if it is easily recognisable, unambiguous and retains the D appellation.
- Post-nominal abbreviations should not use full stops, commas, or other punctuation marks (acronyms should be written without periods) e.g., LLD, DNurs.

Recommendations for naming conventions

- The linking word 'of' should be used between the qualification type and the designator, e.g., Doctor of Education, etc. The *Doctor of (field)* name is used to denote the contribution of applied research that is designed to clarify conceptually the nature of a specific problem(s) and identify solutions or find answers to specific questions, in an area of expertise (profession) or

discipline/subject. The doctorates should be named *Doctor of (field)* to denote contribution to knowledge or application of existing knowledge and innovation in a professional, industry or creative context. When the name is abbreviated, the 'of' is dropped and the qualifier is placed in brackets, e.g., Doctor of Commerce in Business Administration: DCom (Business Administration), etc.

- In the case of *professional doctorates*, because they have significant affiliations with professional bodies or a significant degree of recognition by industry or the community of practice, a commonly accepted designator should be used to indicate a specific area of professional practice. For example, Doctor of Internal Auditing, etc.
- The *Doctor of Philosophy* name is used to refer to the achievement of the highest level of holistic and systematic understanding of scholarship and advancement of knowledge in a field of study through research contribution. The degree is awarded for a study that is based on empirical or theoretical/conceptual research. The PhD or DPhil *in (field) name* is used between the designator and the qualifier to indicate a field of specialisation. *Doctor of Philosophy* is traditionally used and should be retained with the abbreviation of PhD or DPhil to ensure national and international recognition. For example, when the name is abbreviated, the 'in' is dropped and the qualifier is placed in brackets Doctor of Philosophy in Chemistry: PhD (Chemistry), etc.
- Once registered and awarded either of the degrees, their names cannot be used interchangeably.
- All doctoral qualifications are awarded at NQF level 10, whether awarded on the basis of a single thesis, or a publication-based thesis, or a thesis accompanied by coursework or/and work-integrated learning, or of a combination of publications, creative work or other scholarly contributions. Where a submission comprises more than one form or unit of work, there should be appropriate evidence of coherence (CHE, 2018a).

Higher doctorate

An additional type of doctorate, the Higher Doctorate, may be awarded on the basis of a distinguished record of research in the form of published works, creative works and/or other scholarly contributions that are judged by leading international experts to make an exceptional and independent contribution to one or more disciplines or fields of study (*Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework*, CHE, 2013).

3.7.3 Implications for Standard Development of the above Approach

The CHE will need to engage in a consultative process with the sector in order to arrive at an appropriate set of fields of study for designators.

Some parameters for this process follow:

- For qualifications linked to professional registration: The CHE's systems for qualification accreditation and qualification standards setting will converge. There will be clearly defined qualification standards, developed jointly by the CHE and statutory and professional bodies, which will be used for qualification accreditation. The CHE and statutory and professional bodies will agree on whether qualification accreditation should include a first qualifier or not. In this regard international conventions should also be considered.
- For qualifications linked to fields of practice: The CHE's systems for qualification accreditation and qualification standards setting will converge. The CHE will develop qualification standards for qualifications in specific fields of study, in consultation with the relevant disciplinary communities, and, where appropriate, professional societies and associations. The CHE will use the agreed qualification standards as the basis for qualification accreditation.
- For qualifications linked to general degrees: The CHE's systems for qualification accreditation and qualification standards setting could diverge. Standards setting for general qualifications should generally be linked to the broad learning areas/designators. However, the CHE may decide, in consultation with disciplinary communities, to develop qualification standards for majors.

3.8 Qualification Types

Regarding the qualification types, most institutional submissions indicated satisfaction with the current range on the HEQSF. However, the empirical research highlighted a major gap with respect to progression in the vocational track and/or articulation from the vocational track to other tracks due to the removal of the BTech.

A number of specific suggestions were put forward to address this gap including the addition of a 360-credit Professional Bachelor's Degree and a 120-credit Professional Diploma to provide "intensive, focused and applied specialisation" at Level 7 which would enable a sharper focus on the AdvDip as a qualification providing 'entry-level vocational education or professional preparation'.

The Panel convened a roundtable discussion with representatives from a wide range of professional bodies, private HEIs and public universities to provide feedback to the

Panel on suggestions that had been made in the institutional responses to the survey which had been sent to institutions in November 2020.

After this engagement the Panel decided to recommend that all the qualification types listed in the 2013 HEQSF should be retained. The Panel did not engage with professional designations as these are linked to underpinning qualifications but are not qualifications in their own right.

The Panel has recommended that HCerts intended to enable access into higher education should be permitted, subject to certain conditionalities around the design and structuring of such certificates. These could serve as an example of a 'developmental pedagogical space' designed to enable boundary-crossing into and within the HEQSF. The Panel's proposed Higher Certificate (Vocational) is distinguished from the Higher Occupational Certificate because it is explicitly geared to enable progressions into higher qualifications on the HEQSF whilst also enabling successful graduates to meet requirements for professional registration in specified instances.

Generally, learning happens through a process known as educational scaffolding, designed to provide temporary, adjustable support as students develop understanding and independently construct knowledge. The Higher Certificate, intended to enable access, will not replace existing foundation/extended programmes and bridging programmes that are linked to registered qualifications. They will constitute one of the options in the suite of options permissible in terms of the HEQSF and national post-school education and training policies that can be used to advance access. The choice of option should be determined by an assessment of the educational needs of the target group.

In the context of the NQF, in qualification design where a qualification spans multiple NQF levels - for example, in a 360-credit Bachelor's Degree - students need to acquire successfully substantive content in a knowledge area or field at NQF Level 5 to enable them to engage successfully with content in the same knowledge area/field at NQF 6. The same principle holds for the progression from NQF 6 to NQF 7.

In the case of the 240-credit Diploma the Panel was informed that several professional designations and/or occupational roles are linked to the completion of 240-credit Diplomas - for example, in the banking and counselling sectors. The Panel believes that it would not be appropriate to remove a qualification which retains currency from the HEQSF. However, the Panel recommends that the 240-credit Diploma should not be offered in more knowledge-intensive or technical sectors (e.g., health sciences and engineering) due to concerns regarding whether it is possible for graduates to gain sufficient practical exposure and acquire the requisite knowledge to equip them appropriately *within* two years in these fields. The Panel also recommends that conditions should be attached to the approval and accreditation of 240-credit

Diplomas related to evidence of embedded opportunities for practical exposure in the curriculum.

The Panel recommends that the 360-credit Diploma should be retained and endorses the current provision in the HEQSF that it is the responsibility of institutions that offer qualifications requiring credits for WIL to provide opportunities for this. These opportunities may take different forms informed by consultations and agreements with professional bodies.

The Panel recommends the retention of the Advanced Certificate as enrolments in this qualification appear to be growing, especially in private institutions, and the Panel was informed that the qualification was linked to occupational designations in several sectors, such as the banking sector.

The participants in the roundtable engaged seriously with the suggestion made by several institutions for the introduction of a Level 7 professional diploma geared towards producing technicians. The Panel was persuaded that it would be premature and confusing to do this given the number of AdvDips that have been curriculated, and the extent of discussions that have taken place about these with industry. The Panel recommends that a proper evaluation of the AdvDip should be undertaken after five years of the complete phasing out of the BTechs. This would allow time to determine whether an additional qualification type is needed or not.

In order to deal with the concerns expressed by many in the sector regarding the two Bachelor's Degrees at different levels in the HEQSF, the Panel recommends that the Bachelor's Degree at Level 8 should be a separate qualification type on the HEQSF and should be called a Professional Bachelor's Degree.

The Panel believes that the PGDip is meeting a need for training high level professionals and enabling existing professionals to improve existing practices in a field of practice. The PGDip is also used to enable access into Master's Degrees. The Panel debated whether conducting research should be made a requirement or not, as suggested by several participants in the roundtable. However, the Panel was persuaded to retain the focus on practice and rather strengthen the emphasis on the development of reflective capacities related to improving professional practice, given the primary purpose of this qualification.

Several institutions recommended streamlining the general course-work Master's and the Master's (Professional) Degrees. This view is not supported by the Panel as it is not in line with the country's desire to promote the acquisition of high-level knowledge and expertise related to professional practice.

The roundtable participants debated whether it is appropriate at Level 10 to distinguish between different kinds of PhDs as PhD graduates no longer only work at universities as academics. However, it was recognised that professional doctorates may be appropriate for particular disciplines because the nature of the qualification,

as regards the research conducted and the method of knowledge dissemination, may differ.

The Panel was persuaded that the Doctorate (Professional) Degree should be retained - notwithstanding the present low take-up rate - as the need for this qualification may grow, which has been the trend internationally. However, it is recommended that there should be a single standard for Level 10 regardless of the route taken to meet the standard.

The Panel recommends that an additional provision be included in the HEQSF that would enable the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation to approve a new qualification type with unique descriptors when a proven need arises as a result of developments in knowledge, production, skills development, or acknowledged international good practice without requiring a review of the HEQSF, but after appropriate consultation in the sector and the receipt of formal advice from the CHE. This provision can also be used to remove a qualification from the HEQSF.

3.9 Approach to the Review of the Qualification Type Descriptors

The Review Panel convened a roundtable on 17 August 2021 with academics with expertise in the following theories [Shay's 2013 heuristic of the four quadrants adapted from Maton's (2011) Legitimation Code Theory (Semantics); a social realist approach to curriculum knowledge (Bernstein, 2000); decolonial theory (Le Grange, 2016) and boundary-crossing pedagogy (Cooper, Ralphs and Harris, 2017) to assist the panel with formulating an approach to the review. These theories were ultimately employed to develop a Conceptual Framework to guide the Panel in formulating its recommendations.

The Panel used the Conceptual Framework to identify the following questions to steer the deliberations in the roundtable:

- What do we want to foreground in the qualification type outlines?
- How should the descriptors be framed?
- How can the outlines be written in a manner that will enable boundary-crossing between qualification type pathways?
- How can the outlines be written in a manner that promotes agency to advance the goals of access, mobility and learning progression?
- How can the outlines be written to encourage a critical approach to epistemology?
- What domains should be used in the outlines?

There was consensus in the roundtable that the normative values enshrined in the Constitution, the values of Ubuntu, and the purposes of higher education outlined in the Education White Paper 3, should guide the review of the qualification type descriptors as these embody the values that should inform reflection on the underlying

purpose and design of qualifications offered in higher education in South Africa. There was also a view that the purposes and descriptors of the qualification types should take account of private and public dimensions of the role of higher education in advancing the public good.

Barnet (2014) has referred to a struggle over a period of 65 years to broaden the thinking with regard to benefits of higher education beyond private benefits that may accrue to individuals (in the form of employment or income or internal qualities of students) to an outward focus on the societal advantages of higher education. Marginson (2014) has similarly argued that benefits of higher education are consumed jointly, for example, in government and in industry.

“These benefits are collective in nature. HEIs contribute to government, innovation capacity, and the formation and reproduction of both knowledge and relational human society. The public outcomes of higher education include these collective outcomes. The public outcomes also include certain individual goods associated with public collective benefits, such as the formation, in individual students, of social and intellectual capabilities basic to social literacy, scientific literacy, effective citizenship and economic competence” (Marginson, 2014, p. 60).

Deem & McGowan (2018) conducted a review of conceptions of higher education and the public good with a view to interrogating whether different approaches have been adopted in the South. They suggest that the main elements of a southern approach to defining the notion of the public good, as developed in the context of South Africa, appear to include emphasising the pursuit of social justice and reduction of economic and cultural inequality, especially among young black people; encouraging wider participation of disadvantaged and under-represented groups in higher education; developing decolonialised and inclusive curricula; encouraging those entering their professions after university to be alert to their roles as professionals in dealing with poverty reduction and inequality; and remaining critically reflective; stressing agency and participation and enabling an emphasis on critical citizenship (Deem & McGowan, 2018).

The Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) states that the Constitution aims to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. Ubuntu can best be described as an African philosophy that places emphasis on 'being self through others'. It is a form of humanism which can be expressed in the phrases 'I am because of who we all are' and *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, in the Zulu language. The Education White Paper 3: The Transformation of Higher Education (1997), articulates purposes for higher education in South Africa which enjoin HEIs to advance the goal of building a better quality of life for all through, inter alia, the provision of graduates

who will “enter the learned professions, or pursue vocations in administration, trade, industry, science and technology and the arts; ... and the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens [with] a reflective capacity and a willingness to review prevailing ideas, policies and practices based on a commitment to the common good” (Department of Education, 1997, p. 4).

The current descriptors were criticised for their notable silence on societal relevance and social relations in the qualification types. This critique was predicated on the desire to ensure that the reviewed HEQSF serves the objectives of redressing historical injustices while educating graduates who are adaptable to the democratic society that South Africa has become. The descriptors were also criticised as predominantly oriented towards the potential career trajectories of graduates (private benefits) with no reference to the qualities of critical citizenship and cultural competence, and for failing to position students as resilient learners with critical agency for advancing change in society (public benefits). It was argued that, due to the shrinking and precarious nature of the national and global economies, the current context of extremely high levels of unemployment amongst young South Africans requires a more nuanced approach that considers the reality that many graduates may never find work placement/permanent work in the formal labour market, and many will need to create their own forms of employment.

The Panel was persuaded by arguments made by Walker, Shay, Deem and McLean in Ashwin and Case (2018), and by the experts in the workshop, that a review of the HEQSF, which is intended to guide the design of qualifications offered in South Africa, should consciously advance higher education as a public good.

In framing the descriptors, the Panel has chosen to foreground the agency and social and cultural resources of students (i) to acknowledge both the social and epistemic relations used to validate knowledge, (ii) to counteract a tendency in qualification frameworks to objectify and decontextualise students and knowledge, (iii) to recognise the specialised dispositions and qualities of knowers, and (iv) to underscore the need to strengthen the links between qualification design, knowledge, pedagogy and the subjectivities of students (Maton, 2014).

The Panel first decided to use the notion of ‘graduate qualities’ to frame the descriptors in order to foreground the agency and specialised dispositions of students as knowers and the role of higher education as a public good.

After having engaged with the feedback from the sector in the written submissions to the Panel's Draft Report of 15 October and the comments made during the consultative workshops held in November, the Panel decided not to introduce an additional concept to the plethora of concepts already in use in relation to curriculum design, such as; learning outcomes, level descriptors, exit level outcomes and graduate attributes. As a result, the Panel has chosen to recommend using the notion of ‘graduate attributes’ to frame the qualification descriptors.

In taking this decision, the Panel took note of the extensive use of this notion across the world to inform curriculum design and the provision of learning experiences at universities (Barrie et al, 2009). The Panel reflected on the summary of definitions of graduate attributes provided in the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Report of 2009. The summary highlights that, for many researchers, graduate attributes are used to describe the core abilities and values which a university community agrees all its graduates should develop as a result of successfully completing their education at the university, often viewed therefore as attributes developed through the co-curriculum. Shay, for example, refers to graduate attributes as core skills that are transferable across a wide range of contexts and, as such, as pseudo-practical knowledge which does not focus on any specific practice (Shay, 2013). Others argued that graduate attributes are developed in and through disciplines and, therefore, in all subjects in a degree, with different subjects developing different attributes. Informed by its conceptual framework, the Panel has chosen to define graduate attributes in relation to specialised dispositions of knowers developed through knowledge, skills, application, and societal responsibilities.

The Panel had intended to use Shay's heuristic of the four Quadrants, summarised in Section 1.3 of the Integrated Report, to illuminate distinctive characteristics of the knowledge base of different qualification types. However, whilst there was agreement that this heuristic was of significant value for explaining the challenges of articulation between vocational, professional and general qualification pathways, concern was expressed about adopting it as a model for conceptualising qualification types because of the danger of interpreting its boundaries between knowledge types as fixed and static. Notwithstanding this limitation, the Panel used the device to reflect more deeply on the different forms and configurations of knowledge associated with each qualification type.

In a nested approach to qualification frameworks, which characterises the South African and most other qualification frameworks, the level descriptors constitute the first/outer layer, the qualification types constitute the second layer, qualifications with designators constitute the third layer, and specialised programmes are located in the inner/fourth layer. Detailed specifications of knowledge, knowledge types and knowledge configurations are possible only when contextualised within the curricula for particular qualifications and programmes, notably, within the third or fourth layers of the nested approach. Allais *et al.* (2009) argue that this tension, described above, is compounded by the inadequacy of learning outcomes-based terminology that is characteristic of most qualification frameworks (including the South African NQF), wherein qualifications are described in a decontextualised manner, independently of their embeddedness in specific knowledge inputs, institutional contexts, and pedagogies of a particular programme's curriculum.

The Panel acknowledges this constraint on specifying knowledge in qualification type descriptors and addressed it by providing substantially more detail regarding the characteristics of the knowledge and skills underpinning the qualification types than did the 2013 descriptors.

The Panel recommends the use of the following domains for describing graduate attributes for each qualification type:

- dispositions of knowers
- learning (knowledge and skills)
- contexts of application including WIL
- societal

In addition, the following sub-categories were used to inform thinking about the details for each domain:

- Dispositions of knowers: Linked to a field/fields of study, community of practice, sense of belonging, intellectual development and cognition, self-reliance and independence
- Learning: Knowledge (knowledge acquisition and application, scholarly engagement)
- Learning: Skills (judgement and decision-making skills, application of tools and techniques, analytical skills, research skills, communication skills)
- Contexts of application: Diverse contexts, ability to make professional judgements, practical application of theoretical knowledge, collaboration, work-integrated learning
- Societal: Social role and self-consciousness as it facilitates an ability to co-exist with others, which denotes an ethical application of knowledge in the social and professional environments (AQF Council, 2013; Namibian Qualifications Authority, 2014; University of Sydney, 2021; Mavimbela, 2020).

The Language Policy Framework for Public HEIs (July 2020) comes into effect on 1 July 2022. In terms of the policy, public HEIs will be required to formulate a language policy and plan indicating, amongst other things, how they plan to accord greater importance to indigenous African languages in higher education institutions. (DHET, 2020, p. 15). Mindful of the financial and human resource constraints impacting on the capacity of institutions to strengthen indigenous African languages, the Panel recommends the inclusion of references to multilingualism in the qualification descriptors. The Panel proposes that the approach adopted in advancing multilingualism in teacher education should be considered for adoption by other major professional communities, such as lawyers, social workers, medical and allied health professionals, engineers, psychologists, human resource practitioners and managers. Target dates can be set for stipulating credits for developing appropriate levels of communicative competence.

The revised qualification descriptors require graduates to demonstrate basic communicative functionality to operate in multilingual South African contexts as determined and in conjunction with input from, for example, professional bodies and/or academics/experts involved in the various specialisation areas or disciplines and due cognisance of resource availability.

Note: The final qualification descriptors for each qualification type will include the following sub-headings: type specifications, designators, qualifiers, abbreviations, purpose, attributes (disposition, learning, contexts of application, society), admission requirements, and progression.

3.9.1 Learning through reflection in and on doing⁴ and the HEQSF⁵

In conceptualising an approach to expanding and strengthening WIL across the entire HEQSF, the Panel drew on LCT and principles of practical knowledge outlined in a paper prepared by Winberg for the Panel. (See Section 2 for a more detailed explication of LCT).

Before going on to outline the Panel's recommendations regarding WIL in relation to the HEQSF, it is necessary to be clear about the definition of WIL. The CHE's *Work-integrated Learning: Good Practice Guide* (CHE, 2011b[?]) defines WIL as a general approach to professional, professionally oriented and vocational higher education (including appropriate Workplace Practical Learning). According to this definition, WIL can occur through a range of WIL approaches, apart from formal or informal work placements. WIL is primarily intended to enhance student learning, and to this end the Panel notes that several innovative curricular, pedagogical and assessment forms have developed in response to concerns about graduateness, employability and civic responsibility. Examples include: action-learning, apprenticeships, cooperative education, experiential learning, inquiry learning, inter-professional learning, practicum placements, problem-based learning, project-based learning, scenario learning, service-learning, team-based learning, virtual or simulated WIL learning, work-based learning, work experience, workplace learning, and so on. A broader, flexible approach is essential in the digital era and the post-pandemic context. When WIL includes workplace learning, the intention is to encourage students to reflect on their experiences and develop and refine their own conceptual understanding of the practices in use. These capabilities are just as necessary for general education as they are for career-focused education (CHE, 2011b, p. 4). The following section offers detailed examples of four common WIL modalities, bearing in mind that there are many more WIL modalities that could be used.

⁴ We are using WIL as a short-hand for the concept of learning through and in doing, but we believe a new terms is needed to emphasise that this occurs in a number of different ways - not only in workplaces.

⁵ This section of the Report is based on a work-in-progress concept paper prepared by Prof. C. Winberg for the HEQSF Review. It draws on Code Legitimation Theory (Maton, 2014).

Work-Directed Theoretical Learning (WDTL)

In WDTL, theoretical forms of knowledge are introduced and sequenced in ways which both meet academic criteria and are applicable and relevant to the career-specific components (Barnett, 2006). WDTL is underpinned by the practical knowledge principles of relevance and the logic of practice.

Problem-based Learning (PBL)

PBL describes a range of curricular and pedagogic approaches that encourage students to learn through the structured exploration of a research or practice-based problem (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004). In PBL, students work in small self-directed groups to define, carry out and reflect upon a task, which is usually a 'real-life' problem (Breslow, Garraway, Winberg, Wright & Wyrley-Birch, 2005). PBL is underpinned by the practical knowledge principles of accumulation and transferability.

Project-Based Learning (PJBL)

Project-based Learning combines PBL and experiential learning in that it brings together intellectual inquiry, real-world problems and student engagement in relevant and meaningful work. Project work is generally understood to facilitate students' understanding of essential concepts and practical skills. Well-crafted projects should engage students, provide a meaningful and authentic context for learning and immerse students in complex, real-world problems that do not have a predetermined solution (de Los Rios, Cazorla, Díaz-Puente & Yagüe, 2010; Guo, Saab, Post & Admiraal, 2020). PJBL needs to build in opportunities for reflection and self-assessment and can result in useful products or services that also demonstrate what students have learned. Service-Learning (SL) is a form of PJBL that connects students with communities, service partners and academic experts. SL is a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs and reflects on the service activity in such a way as to develop further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Bingle & Hatcher, 2009).

Workplace Learning (WPL)

Many career-focused higher education programmes include some form of WPL in the form of industrial placements, job-shadowing, professional practice to support a professional qualification, and employment-based schemes, such as learnerships. This model can be strongly or weakly integrated into the formal learning programme, depending on how it is supported, supervised and assessed. In such programmes, the workplace is present, both as a learning resource and as a benchmark of practice. Due to challenges of providing sufficient, quality opportunities for workplace learning, simulations and very focused forms of PJBL are increasingly replacing WBL in many programmes. In such cases, it would be important to include employers and/or







professional councils or other groups in the simulation or project. In some qualifications an internship, as a more formal modality of WPL, is required.

Modalities and Qualification Types

Practice contexts can be located on a continuum from basic to highly complex. They can be artificially controlled (as in a laboratory) or they can be allowed to intrude in all their messy complexity. Thus, material contexts can be minimal or dense with what Cetina (1999) calls 'epistemic objects' that require high levels of intellectual engagement with practice. The socio-cultural context is always present in the communities of scientists, professionals and practitioners who have set particular rules of engagement. There are historical contexts – traditions and historical practices that exist in layers – in the form of existing codes for computer engineers or long-established protocols for the treatment of particular diseases. There are ethical considerations and choices to be made. And there is the problem-context from which innovative practice, that breaks the traditional rules and sets new benchmarks for practice, can emerge.

The Panel recommends that Table 4 below provides a framework for conceptualising appropriate forms of learning through reflection in and on doing for each of the qualification types at the different HEQSF levels. It indicates that thinking about different options in the professional and general pathways are likely to converge at higher levels of the HEQSF. For example, the vocational HCert is described as 'normally' including at least two WIL modalities, WDTL in which the curriculum is sequenced to align with relevant work activities, while supervised WBL can be offered, where possible, and integrated into the academic programme. At a higher level, the 480-credit Professional Bachelor's Degree is described as 'normally' including a range of WIL modalities as appropriate to the discipline; for example, a problem-based curriculum can be implemented that is guided by practice in the field, and that increases in complexity and level of challenge over the course of the programme. WBL should be aligned with the academic programme, professional requirements (where relevant) and graduate attributes. In cases where physical WBL is replaced by simulated WBL, this should be approved by the relevant professional body.

Table 7: Qualification Types, Semantics and WIL Modalities

HEQSF Level	Qualification Type	Credits	Semantic Gravity	Semantic Density	Options for strengthening learning in and on doing (WIL Modality)				
10	Doctorate (Professional)	360			Advanced WDTL and/or applied research				
	Doctorate				Theoretical, quantitative or qualitative research				
9	Master's (Professional)	180					Coursework and mini dissertation/project with applied projects		
	Master's (Research)						Master's by dissertation; OR Master's by coursework and mini dissertation may include empirical/engaged research		
8	Postgraduate Diploma	120							Advanced WDTL and PJBL/ research study
8	Advanced Professional Bachelor's	480							WDTL, PBL, PJBL, WBL
7	Professionally oriented Bachelor's	360							WDTL, PBL, PJBL, WBL
7	Advanced Diploma	120							WDTL, PBL, PJBL, WBL.
6	Diploma	360							WDTL, PBL, PJBL, WBL
6	Diploma	240							WDTL, PBL, WBL
6	Advanced Certificate	120							WDTL, WBL
5	Vocational Higher Certificate	120							WDTL, WBL

In this conceptualisation of WIL, theory is not separate from practice but inextricably linked to it. The double-headed arrow in the table indicates the link or interrelationship between theory and practice as a forward and backwards movement that is iterative to highlight the importance of learning that occurs by practising or being 'at work'. Theory and practice (WIL) become crucial aspects that co-act to shape access to the requirements of a qualification. When this is the case, an important consideration will be enabling individuals to learn at work. However, this relationship varies depending on the type and level of qualification. As students' progress through the qualification levels, learning occurs 'through work' (for example, using PBL, PJBL, WPL) and requires different levels of complexity with regard to theory application and,

therefore, an increase in semantic density. As students engage critically and practically with both the conceptual knowledge at hand and the emergent realities of the work context, the material aspects at the centre (conceptual and contextual) provide a multi-faceted framework on the basis of which the link between theory and practice can be explored, understood, refined and accounted for in ways that help avoid category mistakes (or conflation of ways of being) in research. In contrast to learning 'at work', learning 'through work' will not prioritise performance of particular tasks nor emphasise particular aspects of an occupation, linking strictly formal education and experiential learning (contextual knowledge or semantic gravity). As demonstrated by the single-headed arrow in the table, with progress regarding qualification and level, semantic density or theory articulation becomes important. For example, where WIL is meant to develop capacity for a broad occupational field, such capacity will be dynamic and require a strong academic model of WIL to promote adaptation in response to, for example, the changing nature and organisation of work and thereby facilitate occupational and social mobility.

3.10 Maximum Credits

While the current HEQSF prescribes minimum credits per qualification type, no maximum number of credits is specified. With due consideration for fair workloads for students, as well as different disciplinary imperatives in relation to curricula, the Panel recommends that the minimum number of credits for qualification types should, as a guideline, not be exceeded by more than 15%. In cases where the minimum number of credits is exceeded by more than 15%, institutions must, at accreditation stage, expressly outline the curriculum requirements that necessitate the extra credits. Institutions must also detail how students will be supported in dealing with the demands brought about by the additional notional hours within the minimum programme duration. The Panel hopes that the flexible approach will encourage institutions to introduce courses that will enable successful transitions into modules which have been identified as ~~modules~~ impeding graduation based on historical data.

3.11 Exceptions to the HEQSF

The Panel recommends that permitted exceptions to qualification type descriptors should be incorporated into the outlines of the relevant qualification types rather than in an Annexure.

- i. The Bachelor of Education (BEd) is a 480-credit qualification at NQF Level 7 and thus differs from other 480-credit Bachelor's Degrees that are pegged at NQF Level 8. The lower NQF exit level of the BEd accommodates the fact that the qualification requires a substantial component of workplace-based learning from students. Students who graduate with a BEd normally have to complete a BEd (Hons) or a Postgraduate Diploma in Education before they may enrol for a Master's Degree. This (and the Postgraduate Certificate in Education) must be read in the context of the Revised Policy for Teacher Education Qualifications as published in Government Gazette No 38487, 19 February 2015.

The Panel recommends that a note is appended to the descriptor of the 480-credit Professional Bachelor's Degree stating that the BEd, will have 480 credits, but, because of the substantial workplace-based learning component, students who complete the 480-credit qualification at NQF Level 7 will be required to complete an NQF Level 8 qualification to gain access into a Master's Degree.

- ii. The Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) conforms to the descriptors for an AdvDip at NQF Level 7, and the admission requirements, purpose, and characteristics and progression opportunities for the PGCE are the same as those of the AdvDip.

The Panel recommends that the permitted exception to the nomenclature for an AdvDip should be moved to the AdvDip descriptor section in the HEQSF document.

- iii. Master's Degrees in Health Sciences: In certain professions in the Health Sciences (Medicine, Chiropractic, Homeopathy) a specific type of Master's degree is required for registration as a professional (namely, the MMed, MMedVet and MDent). This type of Master's Degree carries a credit load far in excess of the indicative 180-credits that the HEQSF requires for a Master's degree, with credits spread across various NQF levels.

Drawing on comparative research on the duration of Master's Degrees in Health Sciences, the Panel recommends that the descriptors for the Master's (Professional) should provide for an extended Master's Degree linked to professions in the Health Sciences and Allied Health Sciences.

- iv. Professional Bachelor's Degrees in the Health Sciences: Qualifications, such as the MBChB, BChD and BVSc, require a formal learning programme that considerably exceeds the specifications for a professional Bachelor's Degree on the HEQSF in terms of their credit load.

The Panel recommends that the descriptors for the 480-credit Professional Bachelor's Degree should state that some Bachelor's Degrees, notably in professional fields such as the health sciences, may require an extended study period.

Bachelor's Degrees that build on undergraduate degrees: In certain disciplines and fields a Professional Bachelor's Degree, such as an LLB, may follow on a first undergraduate degree. In such cases, the subsequent Bachelor's Degree may be curriculaled so that it consists of a minimum of 240 credits and provides the necessary preparation for Master's level study, as well as development of research capacity in the methodology and techniques of the discipline. (HEQSF, Appendix 1 – Permitted Exceptions, CHE, 2013, p. 42). The exit level of the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) qualification is NQF Level 8. The minimum number of credits allocated to the qualification is 480 credits if awarded as a self-standing qualification, or 240 credits if awarded as a follow-up to a first general Bachelor's Degree (Council on Higher Education, 2018b). The Panel recommends that the LLB qualification should be described only as an integrated professional Bachelor's Degree that is offered over a minimum of four years to accommodate the different forms of delivery of the LLB. Provision for this should be made in the qualification descriptors for the Advanced Bachelor's Degree.

The Panel recommends that the CHE should not embark on a systemic exercise to align qualifications to the new descriptors. The Panel rather recommends that a phased approach be adopted involving the use of the new qualification descriptors for applications for new qualifications. This could perhaps be two years from the date of the gazetted revised HEQSF, and that alignment of existing qualifications should be managed through the reaccreditation processes outlined in the QAF, institutional language plans and the standard-setting processes. Guidelines should be prepared by the CHE to support implementation.

3.12 Enhancing Flexibility and Agility of the HEQSF through Recognition of non-formal Learning

On the one hand, it can be argued that the current CHE policies make provision for recognising three forms of learning, namely formal, non-formal and informal learning,

through processes of RPL and CAT and that no changes are needed to cater for the recognition of non-formal learning.

On the other hand, comparative evidence summarised in Section 1 suggests that South Africa's higher education system is not enabling HEIs to be more flexible as it is not keeping pace with global developments in higher education – nor preparing itself for likely developments on the continent. Although there seems to be no commonly accepted meaning globally of “flexibility” in Higher Education, general consensus of educationalists is that “flexible learning is about when, where, how and at what pace learning occurs and providing choices for an increasingly diverse student body” (Outram, 2011, cited in Jones & Walters, 2015, p.65).

Jones and Walters (2015) highlight a number of key dimensions of flexibility that signal a broader higher education responsibility aimed at sustaining the lived realities of students:

- flexible curriculum design, including flexible assessment design that takes different learning styles into account,
- flexible admissions criteria, including RPL and CAT,
- flexible delivery, including distance, online, on campus, and a mix of these types,
- flexible support systems and services, e.g. catering for working and non-working students, staff and students with disabilities.

The flexibility argued for in this document spans a number of these dimensions and relates to the capacity of institutions to draw on different types of educational offerings that increase choices available to students, and for people to gain recognition for smaller pieces of learning that may help improve their capabilities and opportunities. However, given the focus of this review, the emphasis in this document is on flexibility with regard to recognition of learning.

A clear conceptualisation of a credit is critical to the debate about recognition. According to Harvey's Analytic Quality Glossary (2004), a credit represents a way of measuring learning achieved at a particular level by an average learner. The full definitions in the glossary contain common and distinctive parameters for measuring learning achievement. Common parameters are student workload, learning outcomes, learning time required to complete course units/modules, notional hours covering time spent in structured tuition and self-paced learning and practice, time taken to gather and provide evidence for assessment purposes, and time taken to be assessed in the outcomes and contexts. (<http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/>).

Whilst several definitions in the glossary refer to a link with a formalised mechanism against which to evaluate learning, such as a threshold standard, significantly none

of the definitions in the glossary link the notion of credit to units of learning that are part of a formal qualification. This suggests that there is nothing in the commonly accepted definition of a credit that precludes allocating credits to informal and formal learning, provided that there is an accepted way of assessing the level and extent of the learning.

Indeed, the literature review indicates an increasing acceptance of the credit worthiness of non-formal learning courses from across the globe, provided that adequate quality assurance processes are in place.

However, the literature also covers debates about the implications of public higher education entering into public-private partnerships, which have been associated with a large measure of 'unbundling' of curricula and services, as these may affect the public-good mission of public universities. Concerns are expressed about loss of academic control over the content and integrity of qualifications, particularly if a large number of discrete offerings are simply packaged together to make up a single qualification. Chakroun and Keevy (2018). have also recognised that stacking a combination of micro-credentials towards a macro-credential (qualification) may not be conceptually sound nor "lead to coherent qualifications." The extensive use of technology can result in further marginalising the most marginalised sections of society (Czerniewicz & Walji, 2019; Chakroun & Keevy, 2018).

The Panel used the Conceptual Framework, national policy imperatives and the analysis of the current national context as lenses for determining whether the HEQSF should make provision for the allocation of credits for non-formal learning courses and informal learning. A roundtable was convened with a previous Vice Chancellor, researchers, teaching and learning experts and online practitioners drawn from private and public HEIs, as well as private online intermediary organisations, to provide feedback on the Panel's preliminary recommendations. The final recommendations were informed by the feedback provided in the roundtable.

Recognition of different forms of knowledge, and configurations of knowledge and practice, is integral to the Conceptual Framework, in which the Panel has foregrounded knowledge and the differences in knowledge types, using Shay's heuristic of four quadrants. The Conceptual Framework, though, goes further and draws on literature on decolonisation which has emphasised the recognition of indigenous/experiential knowledge as being key to addressing the dominance of Western epistemologies, as Le Grange states: "internationalisation of indigenous knowledges" is a step towards "deconstructing, deterritorialising and decolonising Western knowledge in traditional Western academic spaces" (Le Grange, 2016, p.

85). Finally, the Framework embraces notions of border-crossing practices and border pedagogy to encourage agency to recognise, navigate and transcend boundaries.

The Conceptual Framework thus provides a conceptual basis for reviewing the current CHE policy on RPL and CAT, and the HEQSF. Although not much research has been done in South Africa on the value of certified 'short' forms of learning to enhance the capabilities of unemployed young people to generate livelihoods or equip them for participation in the solidarity economy, much research has been done on the lower levels of education of NEETs as opposed to people of similar age in employment ((de lannoy & Mudiriza, 2019).

The Panel recognises that there are varied reasons for unemployment, many of which are unrelated to the skills of work seekers (Allais, 2017a). In particular, race, gender, geography and poverty continue to be key factors in determining who enters higher education, as well as who enters the world of work and how (Allais, 2018).

The Panel does not, therefore, wish to make extravagant claims regarding the potential contribution of certification of the successful completion of non-formal learning programmes to improving labour market absorption rates, or the capacity of people to generate livelihoods. However, the Panel believes that a more enabling environment is needed to recognise the multiple ways in which young people, falling in the category of NEET, may be enhancing their skills base.

Despite concerns that the stacking of micro-credentials may not always lead to coherent qualifications (Chakroun & Keevy, 2018), it has been suggested that micro-credentials can potentially provide alternative solutions to preparing for the world of work (Chakroun & Keevy, 2018; Keevy & Chakroun, 2019; Keevy *et al.*, 2020, cited in Jones, 2021) and are important components of transparent, agile credentialing systems that can be a "key lever" for reducing unemployment (Keevy *et al.*, 2020, p. 3, cited in Jones, 2021).

Jones (2021) concurs that micro-credentials can be used as a useful instrument for promoting social justice if they are designed, shaped and used by communities of practice with a social justice agenda in mind. Jones (2021) describes a case study of a regional digital badging initiative for enhancing the employability of migrants and young people for the local job market which involved bringing a range of stakeholders together to design digital badges which recognise the "soft skills" - the cultural capital that these marginalised groupings already possess.

The Panel believes that the revision of the HEQSF, intended as an instrument to enable access and mobility, cannot ignore the scale of unemployment in our society, particularly in relation to young people.

The ability or opportunity to learn gradually while growing the prospect for credits when the time comes, is identified as potentially very important for young people who are NEETs, and many of whom would not be eligible for NSFAS funding due to previous failure or dropping out of their studies. Accessing short courses offered by a range of providers or OERs may be suitable for learners who do not qualify for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) due to their family income being just above the maximum limit and who, therefore, may not be able to commit upfront to a lengthy, formal educational journey when uncertain about their finances. The OpenCred report (Witthaus *et al.*, 2016) argues that the recognition of open learning offerings will add to the richness, diversity, flexibility and choice for students. Students may accumulate and transfer credits from institutions which are experts in particular fields, to enrich their studies at another institution. This practice is common in Europe where ECT credits are often incorporated into the formal curriculum to broaden students' horizons with learning from other contexts.

After having considered the various viewpoints, the Panel recommends the adoption of an enabling approach to address the calls for flexibility regarding recognition of different forms of learning. An enabling approach will allow for credits to be allocated for informal and non-formal learning on the basis of evidence of quality assurance measures. Institutions that wish to allocate credits for non-formal learning through RPL, or who wish to utilise OERs, micro-credentials and/or MOOCs as credit bearing components in a full qualification, or who wish to allow students to do a proportion of credits towards their qualification using approved non-formal offerings, should be able to do so if they meet interim guidelines provided by the CHE.

These interim guidelines can enable HEIs to experiment with different models and share what they have learned with the CHE towards the development of permanent quality assurance measures along the lines of any or several of the examples listed in this report, which would have credibility in the South African context. The interim guidelines proposed by the Panel should be approved by the CHE concurrently with the release of the HEQSF.

To safeguard the integrity and quality of credits awarded, the Panel suggests that the following elements could be considered for inclusion in the CHE interim guidelines.

- The credits allocated for non-formal learning or RPL should be clearly indicated on student transcripts and can only be used once as credits towards a qualification.

- Senates need to approve a proposal to award credits for any offerings not designed by the institutions' own academics. Information on how the non-formal learning courses were assessed in relation to the number of credits allocated would need to be provided to Senate. Where academics intend to use OERs, etc. in a planned new qualification, information about this offering should be included in the application to the CHE for accreditation of the qualification. Local scaffolding involving supplementary tutorials or learning materials can be used to ensure adherence to intellectual property issues and address decolonisation imperatives.

Mechanisms have been developed internationally to assist institutions assess the credit-worthiness of non-formal learning courses; for example, the 'OpenCredit report'. The OpenCredit report (Witthaus *et al.*, 2016, p.61) and a recent Kato *et al* (2020) list areas that can be examined to determine whether to regard a course as credit-worthy or not. The list includes: quality assurance undergone, intended learning outcomes, any link with a qualification, supervised verification/assessment, workload, verification of the identity of the student, employers' demand, claimed level in relation to a qualifications framework, provider's capability, absence of significant weaknesses, labour market outcomes and transparency.

In the medium to longer term, the Panel proposes that at a systemic level provision be made for peer review to provide credibility to the judgements made by institutions regarding the credit-worthiness of non-formal learning courses. Based on the mechanisms described in the literature, three options for facilitating peer review are available:

- i. The CHE, as quality assuring body, can coordinate the peer-review function through the identification of suitable reviewers for different subject areas, and the courses deemed credit-worthy can be placed in a database.
- ii. The CHE can allow for the establishment of independent agencies/an independent agency which would have the responsibility of arranging for peers to review non-formal learning programmes and make recommendations for credit-worthiness in relation to formal higher education. Courses/offerings deemed credit-worthy can be recorded in an accessible database. Institutions could pay for the evaluation service. This service is similar to the service provided by the Scottish Credit and Qualification Agency, the European Credit Transfer Service and ACE CREDIT® in the US.

- iii. The CHE can grant authority to accredited HEIs to accredit non-formal learning offerings, using transparent criteria.

The Panel suggests that the sector should discuss these and other options that would be suitable for the South African context - being mindful of the need not to exacerbate inequalities in the system, whilst safeguarding quality standards and enabling flexibility of recognition.

A distinction should be made between the scenario in which an individual student applies for recognition of more than 50% of the credits on a receiving programme, and a systemic curriculum design approach in which learning pathways are intentionally designed to draw on offerings from a range of different kinds of providers.

In the former scenario (individual), a more flexible approach is proposed, thereby allowing the receiving institution to assess the learning outcomes achieved, the volume of learning completed, as well as the assessment methods and any other relevant information related to the individual's circumstances, to decide whether to allow a credit transfer of more than 50% of the receiving programme's credits. Such cases should be subject to the approval by institutional governance structures, namely Faculty Boards and, ultimately, the Senate. The national imperatives in South Africa necessitate an approach aimed at assisting students who are forced to change their higher education institution before completion of their studies due to unforeseen circumstances which are often financial in nature. HEIs should be entrusted with the responsibility to find ways to recognise credible learning successfully completed.

In the latter scenario (systemic), it is proposed that the current rule - that at least 50% of the credits of a qualification are to be based on courses designed, taught and assessed by academics at the awarding institution - is retained to ensure an adequate basis for providing an award from a particular institution and to protect the institution's identity.

These measures will help to ensure that the institution awarding the qualification curates the entire qualification.

The Panel notes that this enabling approach, and the recommendation to move away from a model that recognises only contact and distance modes of delivery, will necessitate a review of the funding framework in public higher education. The Panel suggests that the review should take account of lessons learned by institutions which elect to take advantage of the enabling approach. A possible model to explore would be one that takes account of the proportion of time that students spend

physically on campus in order to allocate costs towards maintaining activities and services that contribute to the value of a campus experience. A minimum threshold could be set for this; for example, 50% of a student's time should be spent on campus. Each course could be weighted by the complexity of the cost of delivery, such as laboratory costs, NQF level and the proportion of time which a student is expected to spend on campus.

The Panel further recommends that the CHE launch an investigation to explore options for establishing a permanent infrastructure for evaluating potentially credit-worthy non-formal learning offerings and for digital credentialing of formal learning. The CHE should act on the recommendations emanating from the investigation within a period of three years after the gazetting of the HEQSF.

The vast technological advances in the field of digital credentialing could potentially present the CHE with an opportunity for more granular detail on the outcomes achieved by the graduate to be provided in order to assist employers and other stakeholders to assess the graduate's overall achievements. A digital repository could enable comparability of SA's qualifications to be assessed more easily. For the CHE, designing and implementing such a system will be expensive and complex to implement, but indications are that this trend will be accelerated only over the next decade and beyond. Higher education providers will have to prepare and make available more granular detail on their qualifications and on students' achievements. In Africa, there are many barriers to accessing the internet, such as lack of infrastructure, lack of affordability, limited user abilities, lack of awareness and issues of cultural and social acceptance (Chakroun & Keevy, 2018). The authors warn that holistic approaches encompassing policy, implementation, funding and partnerships will be required to ensure that those marginalised by gender, ethnicity, geographical location or economic status are not left behind in the process of digitally enabled transformation.

The Panel acknowledges the developments in New Zealand with regard to including micro-credentials on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework, but, as in the review of the Australian Qualifications Framework (Noonan, 2019) and after careful consideration, the Panel concluded that it was premature to include shorter-form credentials, such as micro-credentials, in the HEQSF and that credit recognition is the preferred way of recognition. The CHE should continue to monitor trends in relation to the incorporation of micro-credentials on the NQF.

The comparative examples listed above should be considered in formulating terms of reference for the investigation.

3.13 Simplification

The Panel has made many recommendations to simplify the implementation of the HEQSF, including recommending that qualifications should be the unit of analysis for accreditation rather than programmes, the current binary of contact and distance be abolished, and the modification of several rules related to CAT and RPL.

Many institutional responses expressed concerns about the rule stipulating that a maximum of 50% of the credits in a qualification can be granted via CAT. The Panel considered these concerns and recommends that the rule be changed to a guideline. Institutions should have the authority to refer academic judgements on matters related to CAT subjects to the scrutiny of academic governance structures, notably Faculty Boards and Senates to validate and approve such judgments.

The Panel also recommends that the HEQSF should not prohibit an embedded approach to the offering of qualifications; for example, HCerts and Diplomas.

As mentioned in Section 3.10, it is a key objective of this review to enable enhanced flexibility in the design and delivery of programmes to cater for the lived realities of students. The Panel believes that the review cannot ignore the scale of poverty, unemployment, and inequality in our society, particularly in relation to young people. Students' circumstances change for a variety of reasons and the education system should promote access, flexibility, and movement. As an example, a student who embarked on a Diploma-journey may be forced to take up full-time employment after having completed the first year of the Diploma. The socio-economic realities in South Africa do not support a stance where such a student exits the higher education institution with 120 credits' worth of learning, but no formal qualification. This is particularly relevant in vocational contexts where the student is fully equipped to take on a specific entry-level role in industry on completion of a Higher Certificate (e.g., in the financial services sector as governed by the FAIS Act).

Furthermore, due to the challenges experienced in South Africa at basic education level, many matriculants do not achieve a Diploma or Bachelor's Degree pass in the NSC. For many school leavers the Higher Certificate offers a lifeline into higher education. Should they be successful, they are able to articulate to a cognate Diploma. Here, however, they will likely be forced to repeat learning for competencies already achieved in the Higher Certificate. This untenable scenario is a result of the limitations currently placed on CAT (CHE, 2016), and the prohibition of embedded qualifications. Requiring students to repeat content already covered cannot be justified educationally, or socio-economically, considering the high level of student indebtedness in South Africa.

The recommendation is based on the assumption that earlier years of study in HE usually focus on developing students' foundational capabilities in particular higher education learning areas by exposing them to, for example, historical traditions and

contemporary developments to help them develop skills to question, analyse and interpret in the broad knowledge area and transfer what they have learnt within and across related knowledge areas. Such capability is often developed through exposure to broad-based academic knowledge, skills and tools.

From a curriculum design perspective, it is, therefore, conceivable that the limits of flexibility in different contexts can be managed and monitored (Jones & Walters, 2015) both at accreditation stage (by the CHE) and at implementation stage (by the institution). Flexibility should not come at the expense of curriculum coherence. Academic judgements can be made about what would be deemed appropriate in terms of allowing a Higher Certificate embedded in a Diploma, with due consideration of the level, structure, purpose, and curriculum coherence of the qualification types. Finally, the Panel recommends that there should be no nationally determined limit on the proportion of students admitted to qualifications on the basis of RPL. Institutions should determine whether any limits are needed in particular qualifications to advance institutional goals and ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is maintained.

3.14 Nurturing Agency

In line with the Conceptual Framework the Panel recommends that the revised HEQSF should be supplemented by guidelines for implementing the HEQSF and by examples of good practice to enable different agents (institutional/organisational/individual) critically to reflect on how to interpret and implement key elements of the Framework in different contexts. In this regard the Panel was influenced by the 'capabilities' approach which holds that an individual's ability to make effective use of opportunities depends on a range of conversion factors, that is, variables and circumstances that influence an individual's ability to convert resources and opportunities into functionings which he or she values. These include personal biographies (for example, gender, age), social factors (for example, cultural values and norms) and social arrangements, such as policies and regulations. Social conversion factors can be enabling (for example, preferential policy provision for disadvantaged groups) or constraining (for example, a repressive gender culture that places women in a subordinate position). The key implication of this 'capabilities' approach is that it places the notion of 'agency' at the centre of education and human development in order to bring the importance of social justice, human rights and poverty alleviation (Ngcwangu, 2019) to the forefront of the education discourse. The need for supplementing the HEQSF with hyperlinks to relevant and regularly updated documents and policies, or a web-based bulletin board, surfaced frequently in the institutional submissions.

3.15 Language Provisions

The Language Policy Framework for Public HEIs (DHET, July 2020b) replaces the Language Policy for Higher Education (2002). The 2020 Language Policy Framework (LPF) comes into effect on 1 July 2022 and confirms South Africa's official languages, namely: 'Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu' (DHET, 2020b, p. 12). It requires universities to ensure competence in Sign Language (DHET, 2020b, p. 14) and to address underdevelopment in the 'Khoi, Nama and San languages' (DHET, 2020b, p. 14). The intention of the 2020 LPF is to 1) "provide a framework for the development and strengthening of indigenous languages as languages of scholarship, teaching and learning and communication at HEIs; 2) provide guidelines for the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of institutional language policies; and 3) contribute to transformation in higher education with specific reference to universities through enhancing the status and roles of previously marginalised South African languages to foster institutional inclusivity and social cohesion" (DHET, 2020b, p. 10).

The Panel believes that the policy has implications for all HEIs, not just for universities, particularly with regard to developing strategies for strengthening indigenous languages in the design of qualifications. The Panel was also mindful of the need for collaboration, support and funding to enable systemic implementation (Bawa & Lewin (reported in the Daily Maverick of 30 September 2021;

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za>)

The Panel considered recommendations that related to the scope of the HEQSF and the NQF. It recommends that multilingualism can be expanded through a revised HEQSF and amendments to the NQF in several ways:

- Currently there are 10 level descriptors to describe applied competencies across each of the ten levels of the NQF. The Panel believes that multilingualism should be regarded as a key competence to be advanced through education and training and that the level descriptors should be revised accordingly.
- Mindful of the financial and human resource constraints impacting on the capacity of institutions to strengthen indigenous African languages, the Panel has included references to multilingualism in the qualification descriptors. The Panel believes that the approach adopted in advancing multilingualism in teacher education should be considered for adoption by other major professional communities, such as lawyers, social workers,

medical and allied health professionals, engineers, psychologists, human resource practitioners and managers. Target dates could be set for stipulating credits for developing appropriate levels of communicative competence.

- The revised qualification descriptors require graduates to demonstrate basic communicative functionality to operate in multilingual South African contexts as determined with the help of input from, for example, professional bodies and/or academics/experts involved in the various specialisation areas or disciplines and with due cognisance to resource availability.
- The Panel recommends that the CHE should consider the translation of the HEQSF into all official languages.

3.16 Legal Changes

The higher education environment is awash with different definitions and terminologies that are contained in various legislative documents, policies and frameworks. Alignment of definitions between the HE Act and the NQF Act is, therefore, fundamental as lack of clarity in meaning may lead to serious legal implications for HEIs or the regulatory bodies (CHE, DHET and SAQA) concerned.

The Panel undertook a comparison between definitions contained in the DHET Glossary of Terms and the SAQA NQFPedia and proposed changes to definitions arising from the Panel's recommendations (See Annexure N). The Panel recommends engagement between the DHET, the CHE and SAQA regarding definitions with a view to aligning them in the revised HEQSF, the DHET Glossary of Terms and the SAQA NQFPedia.

3.16.1 Definition of Qualifications/Programmes

The National Qualifications Framework Act (Act No. 67 of 1998) defines a qualification in Section 1 of the Act as a registered "national qualification" on the NQF. Section 65D(i) of the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997) states that "no person may offer, award or confer a Degree, or a higher education Diploma or a higher education Certificate, provided for on the HEQF (now HEQSF), unless such Degree, Diploma or Certificate is registered on the Sub-Framework for higher education on the NQF contemplated in Section 1(b)."

The Panel recommends that:

- a **qualification** be defined as the formal recognition and certification of learning achievement awarded by a higher education institution and which is registered on the HEQSF of the South African NQF (this definition aligns with the CHE's Norms for Certification, 2020c);
- a **programme** be defined as a purposeful and structured set of learning activities designed to enable a student to meet the outcomes necessary for

the award of a qualification (this definition aligns with the CHE Norms and Standards for Certification, 2020). This definition takes into account the fact that non-formal educational and training offerings can be highly purposeful, structured and oriented towards the attainment of specified learning outcomes.

3.16.2 Definition of Higher Education and Providers of Higher Education

The Higher Education Amendment Act (Act No. 9 of 2016) defines higher education in Section 1(h) as meaning “all learning programmes which must be registered in accordance with the provisions of the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No. 67 of 2008), as a qualification or part-qualification on the HEQSF, regardless of whether such programmes are in fact registered or not on the sub-framework.”

The Panel recommends that the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997, as amended) should define “higher education” as “all learning programmes leading to qualifications [or the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes] that meet the requirements of the HEQSF.” Broadening of the definition is recommended to enable the recognition of non-formal learning programmes through RPL or direct recognition on the basis of academic judgements, where the criteria for making the academic judgements are clearly defined.

While part-qualifications have not been a feature of the higher education policy ecosystem, they have, in one form or another, been used by institutions. The most prevalent form of practice has been that of occasional students registering for one or two modules, which are credit-bearing and embedded in accredited and registered qualifications. In higher education, part-qualifications are not accredited or registered as stand-alone units. The Panel recommends that recognition of part-qualifications should be accommodated within the flexible approach to credit accumulation and transfer which is being advocated for the recognition of learning in this Report.

Section 1(p) of the Higher Education Amendment Act (Act No. 9 of 2016) currently defines “provide higher education” as meaning “the performing of any or all of the following functions—

- (a) registering of students for higher education;
- (b) taking responsibility for the provision and delivery of a higher education curriculum;
- (c) assessing a student’s performance in a higher education programme; and
- (d) conferring a higher education qualification.’’

1. The Panel recommends that Chapter 1 of the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997 as amended) be amended to expand the definition of “provider of higher education” to reflect the shift for HEIs to take greater responsibility and accountability for the approval of programmes within qualifications in line with the Panel's recommendation to shift the unit of accreditation from

programmes to qualifications. Such a shift will have a major impact on improving the efficiency of external accreditation processes as it will reduce the number of applications submitted at the CHE. This expansion of responsibility may be accommodated under Section 1(p)(b) of the Higher Education Amendment Act (Act No. 9 of 2016). The CHE will need to formulate an implementation strategy for determining when and how this function will be delegated to institutions - which should be noted in the HEQSF.

3.16.3 Mode of Delivery

Chapter 1 of the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997 as amended) defines a "higher education institution" as any institution that provides higher education on a fulltime, part-time or distance basis. This is the only place in the Act where any form of reference is made to the "mode".

Section 24 (j) of the Regulations for Private HEIs states that "an institution must publish at least once each year a calendar, prospectus or brochure for the information of students and the public containing 'mode of instruction' among the requirements."

The Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African universities in the context of an integrated post-school system (DHET, 2014) defines a "mode of provision" (not delivery) as "the dominant mix of methods by which institutions mediate their curricula. In a single mode institution, all courses and programmes are mediated either by distance- or contact-based methodologies; in a dual mode institution courses and programmes may be mediated by either distance- or contact-based methods and often equivalent forms of the same course or programme may be offered in either mode; in a mixed mode institution, all courses and programmes involve a mix of methods associated traditionally with distance- and contact-based provision with the blend of methods varying from context to context. However, individual programmes will be accredited either as contact or distance provision" (DHET, 2014).

Motivated by the quest for increased flexibility across the different dimensions, the Panel recommends that the dominant binary view of mode of delivery (contact and distance) be abolished and that modes of delivery should be defined as "the manner in which education and training is delivered." This would include contact, distance, blended, online and mixed modes of delivery.

This definition should be included in the HEQSF while the CHE submits the recommendation to the DHET as part of the 'legislative changes' process. The change in definition would accommodate the major changes in the delivery of higher education internationally, prompted by the Covid Pandemic, but which are likely to continue to be a feature of higher education in the future.

3.16.4 HEIs Offering Qualifications on the OQSF

Section 1 of the Higher Education Act as amended (2016) defines higher education as “all learning programmes which must be registered in accordance with the provisions of the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No. 67 of 2008), as a qualification or part-qualification on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF)...” This means that higher education institutions must routinely offer programmes leading to qualifications that are accredited by the Council on Higher Education and registered by SAQA. However, in terms of this Act the Minister may, in terms of the policy contemplated in Subsection (1) [of the Act] and in the interest of the higher education system as a whole, determine the scope and range of operations of public and private higher education institutions [Sub-s. (3) added by S. 2 of Act 54/2000]. This makes it possible for the Minister to determine the scope of a particular higher education institution in a manner that would permit the institution to offer learning programmes which fall outside the remit of higher education as defined by the HE Act. For example, the Minister can grant approval for institutions to offer part- or full qualifications on the OQSF, which are accredited by the QCTO and registered by the SAQA.

In addition, Section 65 D (2) of the Act authorises the Minister to identify public higher education institutions which “must offer an education programme or trade and occupational learning programme that leads to a qualification or part-qualification on the sub-framework for trades and occupations contemplated in Section 7(c) of the NQF Act and in compliance with any condition set by the Minister.” The Panel recommends that guidelines be developed by the DHET in consultation with the QCTO to provide clear direction regarding the procedures to be followed by universities wishing to offer QCTO accredited qualifications.

Notwithstanding the provision allowing the Minister to determine the scope of private HEIs beyond the provision of qualifications registered on the HEQSF, the registration and issuance of the registration certificates by private HEIs is regulated by different and specific provisions in the Act. The HE Act does not authorise the Registrar in the Department to include qualifications accredited by the QCTO on the Certificates of Registration of an institution that is registered as a private HEI. The HE Act allows only for qualifications accredited by the CHE to be listed on Certificates of Registration. The Skills Development Act (SDA) currently also does not make provision for automatic registration of private institutions offering higher education as Skills Development Providers (SDPs). An amendment to the Skills Development Act will be needed to enable private HEIs to operate simultaneously as both a private HEI (in terms of the HE Act) and an SDP (in terms of the SDA). The Panel recommends that, after the amendment to the SDA has been promulgated, guidelines will need to be drawn up for private HEIs wishing to apply to the QCTO for accreditation to offer particular full or part-qualifications.

3.16.5 Work Integrated Learning

The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 85 of 1993 (as well as the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Bill, 2020), is silent on the status of students placed in workplaces for the purpose of WIL.

3.16.6 Residency Clause

Although the Universities Act, 61 of 1955, and the Technikons Act, 125 of 1993, were repealed by the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997 as amended), Section 74(2) of the Higher Education Act extended the legitimacy and validity of the joint statutes and joint regulations and rules until the Minister responsible publishes a notice, in a Government Gazette, indicating that the transitional arrangements are no longer valid. Since such a notice has not yet been published, the joint statutes and joint regulations and rules, of which the '50% residency rule' is but one, remain legally valid. On 28 October 2020, the Minister published The Draft Proposal on the implementation of the provisions of Section 74 (S74) of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997): Abolition of Statutory Status of Committee of University Principals, Matriculation Board and Committee of Technikon Principals in Government Gazette 43851. The proposal provides for the joint statutes and joint regulations and rules made in terms of the Universities Act, 1955 (Act No. 61 of 1955) and the Technikons Act, 1993 (Act No. 125 of 1993) to cease to exist (and by implication the residency clause in the joint statutes and regulations).

The Panel noted and supports the Minister's proposal to amend the Higher Education Act, effectively making the residency clause null and void. However, the Panel is of the view that there is a strong educational case for retaining a national guideline that 50% of the curriculum should be taught by an awarding institution. The national imperatives in South Africa necessitate an approach aimed at assisting students who are forced to change their higher education institution before completion of their studies due to unforeseen circumstances which are often financial in nature. HEIs should be entrusted with the responsibility to find ways to recognise credible learning successfully completed.

The Panel recommends that the decision to grant an institutional qualification to students who enter a different institution and complete the exit year at that institution should be guided by institutional criteria, approved and monitored by the institution's Senate to safeguard the integrity of the institution's qualifications.

3.16.7 Reporting Regulations

The Panel recommends that the DHET should amend the reporting regulations (for both public and private HEIs) for annual reports to include the requirement for institutions to report on the numbers of students admitted via RPL and articulation from other sub-frameworks within the HEQSF, as well as between the three different learning pathways within the HEQSF itself.

3.16.8 Policy Framework for (the) Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa

The inclusion of the term “national” in the definition of qualifications in the NQF and HE Acts have been widely interpreted to mean that institutions can offer only South African qualifications registered on the NQF. As such it has constrained many institutions from offering collaborative qualifications offered jointly by a South African institution and an international partner even when the qualification is registered on the South African NQF. A cross-border qualification seems to be more of an international qualification (thus, shared resource representing joint effort) than a national or foreign qualification. The Panel recommends that the wording of the NQF Act (Act No. 67 of 2008) and the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997 as amended) be changed to eliminate any ambiguity regarding whether joint degrees, co-badging, consecutive degrees and cross-border offerings are permissible or not. The changes will be in line with the policy framework for (the) Internationalisation of higher education in South Africa which was approved by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology in 2020. This policy allows for co-badging and joint degrees between South African and international institutions, as well as consecutive degrees and cross-border offerings, provided that the qualifications comply with the legislation and policies of the relevant agencies of the host country, and that the qualifications offered in South Africa are approved by the DHET and accredited by the CHE/HEQC for delivery in South Africa.

The HEQSF should include a new sub-section on internationalisation, setting out clear parameters for cross-border collaborations, joint degrees and co-badged or consecutive qualifications must be defined in line with Sections 6.5, 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8 of the Internationalisation Policy.

3.16.9 CAT, RPL and Articulation Policies

The CHE published its Combined CAT, RPL and Assessment Policy in September 2016. The Minister’s RPL Coordination Policy was published in March 2016 and the Minister’s Articulation Policy in January 2017. SAQA updated its National RPL Policy in 2019 and the National CAT Policy in April 2021. The ministerial policies were published in terms of Section 8 of the NQF Act (Act No 67 of 2008) and SAQA policies in terms of Section 13 of the same Act.

The CHE policies on RPL and CAT would need to be revised in line with the Panel’s recommendations that credits should be awarded for RPL, non-formal offerings and OQSF and TVET offerings where academic judgements deem this appropriate. DHET and SAQA will need to consider implications of the revised HEQSF for their policies in these areas.

3.16.10 Minimum Admission Requirements for Entry into Higher Education (with specific reference to OQSF qualifications)

In 2009, Government Gazette No 32743 made provision for TVET college graduates to gain access to higher education programmes by setting minimum admission requirements in terms of the National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) at Level 4 of the NQF, whose specifications were approved by the Minister of Education in the Policy for the National Certificate (Vocational): A qualification at Level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework, Gazette, Volume 489, No. 28677, 29 March 2006 and amended in Government Gazette, Volume 507, No. 30266, 7 September 2007.

The Panel recommends that the admissions sections linked to all the qualifications should be updated to accommodate QCTO and TVET qualifications which could potentially be used for progression in a learning pathway or to gain access to higher education qualifications.

The minimum admission requirements for each qualification type should be expanded to include a direct reference to RPL as a permitted access route, subject to the admission and selection policies of the institution.

The Panel noted that a review of the National Qualifications Framework Act (Act No. 67 of 2008) is on the agenda of the DHET. The Panel advises that the recommendations in this report, pertaining to possible legislative changes, be considered by the CHE for referral to the DHET. The Panel, furthermore, advises that, where the legislation is silent on certain recommendations, these be accommodated in the policy (HEQSF).

3.17 Monitoring and Evaluation

The HEQSF should be reviewed every five years to ensure that it is responsive to changes in the national, regional, continental and wider international contexts. Views of key stakeholders, namely higher education institutions, national student associations, professional bodies and relevant regulatory bodies should constitute important sources of information for such reviews.

Reviews of qualifications should form key components of institutional quality management systems. Systematic reporting requirements are needed to support articulation (CHE, 2021). In this regard the Panel recommends that public HEIs, in their Annual Performance Reports, should be required to report to the DHET on any formalised agreements, collaborations and partnerships between universities and other types of institutions in the post-school system, as well as on the number of students who gained admission into universities on the basis of completed TVET or occupational qualifications. The Regulations - Reporting by public HEIs (Gazette 37726, RG 10209, Govt Notice 464) - should be amended accordingly.

The Panel learned that it is difficult to obtain accurate data on the number of students who articulate from TVET colleges to universities because the measurement of post-

school qualifications in surveys, such as the General Household Survey and the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, is currently complicated by the following questionnaire design limitations:

- Not all the categories in the 'highest qualification completed' variable used in the most common surveys align with a qualification on the NQF.
- There is no information about the institution where the highest completed qualification was obtained.
- It is not possible to assess whether the respondent completed Matric/Grade 12 prior to enrolling and completing the highest level of education.
- Not all surveys distinguish between a Grade 12 that was completed with an exemption or Bachelor's pass versus not.
- It is not possible to assess whether the respondent completed Matric prior to enrolling and completing the highest level of education, which is important for understanding whether the pathway is being used as a post-secondary option or an alternative to the formative stream. This is explicitly the case for the categories 'certificate with less than Grade 12', 'certificate with Grade 12' and 'diploma with less than Grade 12' and the N-qualifications but could apply to all qualifications if articulation between college and university became more common.
- There is no information about the institution where the qualification was obtained. The question pertaining to the institution type is asked only of those currently enrolled. This makes it impossible to distinguish between, for example, an NQF 5 qualification obtained from a TVET college versus a university. It is, therefore, not possible to assess whether there are differences in life-outcomes (for example, employment, earnings, health and other related variables) based on qualifications of similar NQF levels obtained from different institutions.

A review of the measurement of post-school qualification in surveys and the census instrument would improve the usefulness of these data in monitoring and evaluating the longer-term outcomes (for example, employment, earnings, health and other related variables) associated with different qualifications. (See Annexure L for a detailed report on this).

A summary of the Panel's recommendations is contained in Section Five.

SECTION FOUR: QUALIFICATION DESCRIPTORS OF QUALIFICATION TYPES

Qualification Descriptors for the Higher Certificate (Access)

Purpose		The primary purpose of access to the Higher Certificate is to consolidate and strengthen students' foundational knowledge and skills required for success in a particular field of practice or discipline in higher education. It provides graduates with the basic introductory knowledge, conceptual tools and practical techniques for higher education studies in a particular discipline or field of practice. It serves a necessary purpose, not only to widen access to higher education but also to improve success rates in higher education studies.
Attributes		A Higher Certificate certifies that its graduates exhibit the following attributes:
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence in their ability to succeed at further higher education studies. • Ability to formulate and negotiate their own purposes, values and ideals within a specific field of study.
	Learning	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an introductory level of knowledge related to a particular discipline or field of practice. • Demonstrate an informed understanding of the core areas of the field, discipline or practice of the field of study. • Can apply the key terms, concepts, facts, rules and theories in their discipline or field of practice. • Are prepared for further study. <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate requisite levels of numeracy and academic literacy appropriate to their target field of practice or discipline.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can write clearly and coherently in an academic discourse. • Can undertake supervised, routine problem-solving. • Can apply standard methods and techniques related to a discipline or field. • Can communicate orally in a South African multilingual context within their discipline or field. <p>* Have basic technical and digital skills for information gathering and processing.</p>
	Contexts of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate in familiar contexts related to their discipline or field of practice. • Have an appreciation for how their intended discipline or field of practice relates to possible future careers.
	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate empathy and respect for others. • Demonstrate ethical decision-making in the learning environment. • Can work effectively with others as members of a group with the aim of improving group performance. • Have an appreciation for the wider context in which their intended discipline or field of study is situated. • Are aware of the impact of their practice on society and the environment.
Admission		<p>The minimum admissions requirement for the Higher Certificate is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Senior Certificate (SC) with achievements that meet the legislated requirements set for entry into a Higher Certificate; or • A National Senior Certificate (NSC) with achievements that meet the requirements set for entry into a Higher Certificate; or • A National Certificate (Vocational)(NCV) Level 4 with achievements that meet the legislated

		<p>requirements set for entry into a Higher Certificate; or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) with achievements that meet the requirements set for entry into a Higher Certificate; or • A National Occupational Certificate that may meet the requirements for admission. • Applicants may be admitted to the Higher Certificate on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Progression		<p>Completion of the Higher Certificate meets the minimum admissions requirement to a cognate Advanced Certificate and Diploma. A Higher Certificate may also allow access to an appropriate Bachelor's Degree.</p>

Qualification Descriptor for the Higher Certificate (Vocational)

Purpose		As an entry point into a vocation, the Higher Certificate has a strong practice-oriented focus. The purpose of this qualification is to equip graduates with basic levels of knowledge, cognitive and conceptual tools and practical techniques related to a particular vocation. The logic of the curriculum is derived from practice. The qualification involves opportunities for students to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge at a basic level within a specific field of practice. The qualification prepares people for entry-level jobs in specific fields and intermediate jobs in other fields and/or advanced study.
Attributes		A Higher Certificate certifies that its graduates exhibit the following attributes:
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an emerging vocational identity in a specific field. • Exercise autonomy and judgement within defined parameters and take responsibility for their own decisions in vocational practice in a specific field. • Are confident when performing routine tasks in familiar vocational contexts but can adapt in a dynamically changing space. • Know when to ask for guidance to ensure responsible practice. • Are committed to further learning.
	Learning	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have introductory knowledge related to a vocational practice in a specific field. • Demonstrate an understanding of the core principles that inform the discipline or field of practice. • Can apply the key terms, concepts, evidence and rules in their field, discipline, or practice. <p>Skills:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can undertake supervised, routine problem-solving within a familiar context. • Can apply standard methods and techniques related to the field. • Can write clearly and coherently using a vocational discourse. • Can communicate orally in a South African multilingual context within their scope of practice. • Have basic technical and digital skills for information gathering and processing related to their practice. • Are prepared for continuous professional development of, in particular, technical, and vocational skills.
	Contexts of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate in familiar contexts but are adaptable to the changing world of work. <p>Work-integrated learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have engaged in classroom-based and practice-based learning, both under supervision and independently, that has enabled them to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge in a specific field.
	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate empathy and respect for others. • Demonstrate ethical decision-making in their vocational space. • Collaborate with a diverse range of others in their field of practice, with the aim of contributing to group performance. • Have an appreciation for the wider context in which their practice is situated which enables them to apply their knowledge in a responsible and accountable way. • Are aware of the impact of their practice on society and the environment.

Admission		<p>The minimum admissions requirement for the Higher Certificate (Vocational) is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Senior Certificate (SC) with achievements that meet the legislated requirements set for entry into a Higher Certificate; or • A National Senior Certificate (NSC) with achievements that meet the requirements set for entry into a Higher Certificate; or • A National Senior Certificate – Vocational Level 4 (NCV) with achievements that meet the legislated requirements set for entry into a Higher Certificate; or • A National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) with achievements that meet the requirements set for entry into a Higher Certificate; or • A National Occupational Certificate (Level 4) may meet the requirement for admission. • Applicants may also be admitted to the Higher Certificate on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Progression		<p>Completion of the Higher Certificate (Vocational) meets the minimum admission requirement to a cognate Advanced Certificate and Diploma. It may also allow access to an appropriate Bachelor's Degree or Diploma.</p>

Qualification Descriptor for the Advanced Certificate

Purpose		The Advanced Certificate qualification is primarily practice-oriented. The logic of the curriculum is derived from practice. The qualification involves opportunities for students to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge at an intermediate level within a specific field of practice, while equipping them to undertake more specialised and intensive learning.
Attributes		The Advanced Certificate certifies that its graduates exhibit the following attributes:
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an emerging vocational identity. • Exercise autonomy and judgement within the defined parameters of their practice. • Demonstrate ethical, responsible, and accountable conduct in a vocational practice in a specific field. • Confidently perform specific tasks related to their vocational practice and can provide guidance to others in this regard. • Can evaluate their own and others' performance against given criteria. • Take action to address their own learning needs.
	Learning	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an intermediate level of knowledge related to a vocational practice in a specific field. • Demonstrate understanding of the concepts and principles that underpin technical or vocational practice in a specific field. • Can apply the key terms, concepts, evidence and rules in their field, discipline or practice to unfamiliar contexts. <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can undertake supervised problem-solving within a specific field of practice.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can communicate clearly in writing using occupational conventions, formats, and technologies. • Can communicate orally in a South African multilingual context within their scope of practice. • Have the technical and digital skills for information gathering and processing related to their practice. • Are prepared for continuous professional development of, in particular, technical and vocational skills.
	Contexts of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually operate in familiar contexts but can apply key concepts in an unfamiliar environment. <p>Work-Integrated Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have engaged in classroom-based and practice-based learning, both under supervision and independently, that has enabled them to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge in skilled technical or vocational practice in a specific field.
	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an appreciation for the wider context in which their practice is situated, which enables them to apply their knowledge in a responsible and accountable manner. • Demonstrate empathy and respect for others. • Set an example of ethical decision-making in their vocational space and provide guidance to others in this regard. • Collaborate with a diverse range of others in their place of practice, occasionally taking responsibility for coaching and guiding others in a specific vocational context. • Are aware of the impact of their practice on society and the environment and take action to remediate or enhance environmental outcomes.

Admission		The admissions criteria for the Advanced Certificate are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Higher Certificate in an appropriate field; or• A Higher Occupational Certificate may meet the requirement for admission in an appropriate field.• Applicants may also be admitted to the Advanced Certificate on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Progression		Completion of the Advanced Certificate meets the admissions requirement into a cognate Diploma or Bachelor's Degree.

Qualification Descriptor for the 240 Diploma (Vocational)

Purpose		<p>The 240-credit Diploma qualifies graduates to undertake mid-level skilled technical or vocational work in a specific field of practice, as well as to undertake further studies at the Advanced Diploma level, after an assessed period of supervised practice equivalent to 120 credits at Level 6.</p> <p>The 240-credit Diploma should not be offered in more knowledge-intensive or technical sectors (e.g., health science and engineering), concern being that 240 credits may not provide the necessary scope for graduates to accumulate sufficient practical exposure and acquire the requisite knowledge to equip them appropriately in these fields.</p>
Attributes		<p>A 240-credit Diploma certifies that its graduates exhibit the following attributes:</p>
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an emerging vocational identity. • Exercise individual agency and can formulate and negotiate their own goals, values, and ideals within a specific field of practice. • Demonstrate ethical, responsible, and accountable conduct in their field of practice.
	Learning	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduates have a coherent understanding of the concepts and principles that underpin intermediate vocational practice in their specific field. • Have engaged with disciplinary and vocational knowledge and understand the strengths and limitations of such knowledge in practical application. • Are respectful of indigenous and local knowledges in the field of practice. <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can undertake supervised problem-solving within a specific field of practice. • Can engage in reflective practice. • Have the technical and digital skills for information gathering and processing.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can communicate clearly orally and in writing (or in braille/sign language) using occupational conventions, formats, and technologies. • Demonstrate communicative functionality in multilingual South African communities. • Are prepared for continuous professional learning, particularly technical and vocational skills. <p>Note: National policies and professional bodies may require institutions to incorporate credits for communicative competence in an indigenous African language to ensure that graduates in designated fields have this competence.</p>
	Contexts of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can adapt and apply their knowledge and skills to a range of contexts. • Have the capacity for intermediate skilled practice in varied contexts. • Demonstrate independence and responsibility across a range of contexts. <p>Work-integrated Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have engaged in classroom-based and practice-based work-integrated learning as part of the curriculum that has enabled them to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge in mid-level skilled practice.
	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are ready to take up mid-level practitioner roles ethically, responsibly and with accountability. • Have empathy and the capacity to act for the benefit of others. • Are aware of the range of social contexts involved in their field of practice, the importance of mutual respect, reciprocity, and ubuntu. • Can contribute to societal development within their scope of practice. • Are aware of the impact of their practice on society and the environment and can take

		action to remediate or enhance environmental outcomes.
Admission		<p>The minimum admissions requirement is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Senior Certificate (SC) with achievements that meet the legislated requirements set for entry into a Diploma; or • A National Senior Certificate (NSC) with achievements that meet the requirements set for entry into a Diploma; or • A National Senior Certificate Vocational (NCV) Level 4 with legislated achievements that meet the requirements set for entry into a Diploma; or • A National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) with legislated achievements that meet the requirements set for entry into a Diploma; or • A Higher Certificate or Advanced Certificate in a cognate field. • A Higher Occupational Certificate may satisfy the minimum requirement for admission. • Applicants may also be admitted on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Progression		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of the 240-credit Diploma meets the entrance requirements to the Advanced Diploma, provided an assessed period of supervised practice equivalent to 120 credits at NQF Level 6 is attained; or an Advanced Occupational Diploma.

Qualification Descriptor for the 360 Diploma (Higher Vocational)

Purpose		The 360-credit Diploma qualifies graduates to undertake skilled technical or vocational work in a specific field of practice, as well as to undertake further studies.
Attributes		A 360-credit Diploma certifies that its graduates exhibit the following attributes:
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have developed a technical or vocational identity. • Exercise individual agency and can formulate and negotiate their own goals, values, and ideals within a specific technical or vocational field of practice. • Demonstrate ethical, responsible, and accountable conduct in their field of practice.
	Learning	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a broad and coherent understanding of the concepts and principles that underpin technical or vocational practice in a specific field. • Have had extended engagement with disciplinary and technical or vocational knowledge and understand the strengths and limitations of such knowledge in practical application. • Are respectful of indigenous and local knowledges in the field of practice. <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can undertake independent problem-solving within a specific field of practice. • Engage in reflective practice. • Have the technical and digital skills for information gathering, processing and management. • Can communicate clearly orally and in writing (or braille or sign-language) using occupational conventions, formats, and technologies. • Can communicate clearly and coherently in a South African multilingual context within their scope of practice.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are prepared for continuous professional learning, particularly, technical, and vocational skills. <p>Note: National policies and professional bodies may require institutions to incorporate credits for communicative competence in an indigenous African language to ensure that graduates in designated fields have this competence.</p>
	Contexts of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can adapt and apply their knowledge and skills to a range of contexts. • Have the capacity for skilled technical or vocational practice in varied contexts. • Demonstrate independence and responsibility across a range of contexts. <p style="text-align: center;">Work-integrated Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have engaged in classroom-based and practice-based learning, both under supervision and independently, that has enabled them to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge in skilled technical or vocational practice in a specific field. It is the responsibility of institutions that offer qualifications requiring credits for WIL to provide opportunities for this. These opportunities may take different forms informed by consultation and agreement with professional or other relevant bodies.
	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are ready to take up skilled practitioner roles in a manner that is ethical, responsible, and accountable. • Have empathy and the capacity to act for the benefit of others. • Understand the range of social contexts involved in the field of practice, the importance of mutual respect, reciprocity and ubuntu. • Can contribute to societal development within their scope of practice.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are aware of the impact of their practice on society and the environment and can take action to remediate or enhance environmental outcomes.
Admission		<p>The minimum admissions requirement is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Senior Certificate (SC) with achievements that meet the legislated requirements set for entry into a Diploma; or • A National Senior Certificate (NSC) with achievements that meet the requirements set for entry into a Diploma; or • A National Senior Certificate Vocational (NCV) Level 4 with achievements that meet the legislated requirements set for entry into a Diploma; or • A National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) with achievements that meet the legislated requirements set for entry into a Diploma; or • A Higher Certificate or Advanced Certificate in a cognate field. • A Higher Occupational Certificate may satisfy the requirement for admission. • Applicants may also be admitted on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Progression		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of the 360-credit Diploma meets the entrance requirements for the Advanced Diploma and the Advanced Occupational Diploma.

Qualification Descriptor for the 360-credit General and Professionally oriented Bachelor's Degrees

Purpose		<p>A Bachelor's Degree is designed to provide students with a well-balanced education and the skills necessary to pursue work or create livelihoods. Graduates will develop cognitive, academic proficiency and learn how to apply theories in addressing a broad range of problems in our rapidly changing technological, economic and social environment.</p> <p>In the professionally oriented degree, graduates will develop knowledge, skills and abilities for application in particular fields and their communities.</p> <p>The professionally oriented Bachelor's Degree may enable graduates to meet the requirements for registration as professional designations with professional bodies, for example, as technologists.</p>
Attributes		<p>A Bachelor's Degree certifies that its graduates exhibit the following attributes:</p>
	Disposition	<p><i>General and professionally oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have high levels of self-awareness. • Understand themselves in relation to others in society. • Question taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs and are aware of how they have been shaped by history, society, and culture. • Formulate and negotiate their own goals, values, identities, and ideals. • Are independent, resilient learners. • Are autonomous, self-authoring social actors. • Demonstrate initiative and responsibility. • Can imagine new forms of practice and ways of acting.
	Learning	<p>Knowledge:</p> <p><i>General</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a coherent and broad knowledge base in one or more disciplines.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can analyse and synthesise knowledge in their discipline(s). • Understand the limitations of institutionalised knowledge in their discipline(s) and how it has been validated historically. • Can understand the relationships between concepts and agents within a system and make system-appropriate inferences and generalisations. <p><i>Professionally oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a coherent and broad knowledge base in a related discipline(s) for a field of practice. • Are aware of indigenous ways of knowing related to the field of practice. • Can independently select, evaluate, adapt and apply relevant theoretical and practical knowledge related to a field of practice to solve broadly defined problems in that field of practice. • Understand the limitations of institutionalised knowledge in the knowledge bases of the field of practice and how they have been validated historically. <p>Skills:</p> <p><i>General</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to undertake procedures and use methods appropriate to their discipline(s) correctly and proficiently. • Demonstrate technical and digital proficiency for information gathering, processing and management. • Can undertake critical and independent problem-solving within broad parameters. • Have specialised conceptual and creative skills to express ideas and perspectives. • Demonstrate high levels of communicative competence and basic communicative
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		<p>functionality in multilingual South African communities.</p> <p><i>Professionally oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate conceptual, technical and digital proficiency for information gathering, processing and application to solving unfamiliar technical, practical, organisational, and sometimes complex, problems. • Have specialised conceptual, technical and/ or creative skills to express ideas and perspectives. • Demonstrate high levels of communicative competence for engaging with a range of audiences involved in the field and basic communicative functionality in multilingual South African communities. <p>Note: National policies and professional bodies may require institutions to incorporate credits for communicative competence in an indigenous African language to ensure that graduates in designated professional fields have this competence.</p>
	<p>Contexts of Application</p>	<p><i>General</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can adapt and apply their knowledge and skills to a range of contexts. • Can pursue postgraduate studies in cognate fields. • Can function in cognate multi- or interdisciplinary contexts. • Can work in a range of work contexts (that may require further specialised training). <p><i>Professionally oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can adapt and apply their knowledge and skills to a range of contexts. • Can work independently and proficiently as individuals and in teams and can manage projects/processes and/or services in the field.

		<p>Work-integrated learning for general and professionally oriented contexts</p> <p>Have engaged in problem-based, project-based, or practice-directed theoretical learning, both under supervision and independently, as part of the curriculum.</p>
	Society	<p><i>General and professionally oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand themselves to live in a relationship of reciprocity with others in their families, communities, society, and environment. • Demonstrate respect and tolerance for others. • Can participate productively in the sustainable development of the country and act as change agents. • Are ready to take up practitioner roles in various contexts in a manner that is ethical, responsible, and accountable. • Demonstrate a critical awareness of the impact of their practices on communities, society and the physical environment.
Admission		<p>The minimum admissions requirement for the Bachelor's Degree is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Senior Certificate (SC) with achievements that meet the legislated requirements set for entry into a Degree; or • A National Senior Certificate (NSC) with achievements that meet the requirements set for entry into a Degree; or • A National Senior Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) - Level 4 - with achievements that meet the legislated requirements set for entry into a Degree; or • A National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) with achievements that meet the legislated requirements for entry into a Degree; or • A Higher Occupational Certificate or an Advanced Occupational Certificate in a

		<p>cognate field may satisfies the minimum admission requirements, especially for the professionally oriented Bachelor's Degree.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants may also be admitted on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Progression		<p>A Bachelor's Degree is the minimum requirement for admission to a Bachelor Honours Degree, a Postgraduate Diploma or Specialised Occupational Diploma. Admission into these qualifications is usually in the area of specialisation or in the discipline taken as a major, or field of practice, in the Bachelor's Degree.</p>

Qualification Descriptor for the Advanced Diploma

Purpose		<p>The Advanced Diploma provides preparation for vocational or professional practice by offering an intensive, focused and applied specialisation which meets the requirements of a specific niche in society and/or the economy.</p> <p>The Advanced Diploma also provides an orientation to professional careers for graduates of general degrees.</p>
Attributes		<p>The Advanced Diploma certifies that graduates exhibit the following attributes:</p>
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take personal responsibility for their ideas and actions. • Comprehend and apply ethical principles and commit to professional ethics, responsibilities, norms and accountability within their field of practice. • Are independent, resilient learners who engage in lifelong learning through well-developed learning skills.
	Learning	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate specialised knowledge and skills and advanced transferable skills in a vocational or professional context or field of study. • Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of specialised knowledge and can select, adapt and apply them appropriately in a field of practice. <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correctly select and use a range of processes, techniques and methods appropriate to generating solutions to unfamiliar, and sometimes complex, theoretical, and practice-related problems related to the field of practice.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate conceptual, technical, and digital proficiency for information gathering, processing and application to solving unfamiliar technical, practical, organisational, and sometimes complex, problems. • Demonstrate wide-ranging, specialised technical, creative, or conceptual skills to express ideas and perspectives. • Demonstrate high levels of communicative proficiency for engaging with a range of participants and stakeholders involved in the field and basic communicative functionality in multilingual South African contexts.
	Contexts of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate initiative and judgement in planning, design, technical or management functions. • Apply a range of fundamental principles and sometimes complex techniques in familiar and unfamiliar situations. • Work collaboratively and effectively in a team context. • Take accountability for personal outputs and personal and team outcomes across a broad range of technical or management functions.
	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a critical awareness of the impact of their practice on communities, society and the physical environment. • Are prepared to take up practitioner roles in various contexts in an ethical, responsible, and accountable manner. • Can contribute ideas for new ways and forms of practice that advance an equitable and sustainable social order. <p>Note: National policies and professional bodies may require institutions to incorporate credits for communicative competence in an indigenous African language to ensure that graduates in designated fields have this competence.</p>

Admissions		<p>The minimum admissions requirement is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Diploma of 360 credits; or • A Bachelor's Degree; or • An appropriate Occupational Diploma or Advanced Occupational Diploma which may meet the requirement for admission; or • A Diploma of 240 credits which satisfies the admission requirement if a combination of work-integrated learning and course work have been satisfactorily completed. • Applicants may also be admitted to the Advanced Diploma on the basis of the recognition of prior learning.
Progression		<p>Completion of an Advanced Diploma may meet the requirements for entry into a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Postgraduate Diploma; • A Bachelor Honours Degree; • A Bachelor's Degree • A Specialised Occupational Diploma

Qualification Descriptor for 480-credit Professional Bachelor's Degree

Purpose		<p>The Professional Bachelor's Degree qualifies graduates to undertake professional training or work in a specific field of practice, ethically, responsibly and with accountability. Graduates will develop a broad and coherent understanding of the concepts, principles and methodologies that underpin professional or industry-related practice in a specific field.</p> <p>The degree may contain a component of work-integrated learning and may be designed in consultation with a professional body and recognised by a professional body as a requirement for a licence to practise that profession.</p>
Attributes		<p>A Professional Bachelor's Degree certifies that its graduates exhibit the following attributes:</p>
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have developed a professional identity. • Demonstrate independence, judgement, and responsibility across a range of contexts. • Have individual agency and can determine and negotiate their own goals, values and ideals within a specific field of professional practice and in their communities.
	Learning	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a broad and coherent understanding of the concepts and principles that underpin professional practice in a specific field. • Have had extended engagement with disciplinary and professional knowledge and understand how knowledge is validated, as well as the strengths and limitations of disciplinary and professional knowledge in professional practice. • Are respectful of indigenous and local knowledges in the field of practice. • Can independently and critically make judgements about the validity of different knowledges. <p>Skills:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are prepared for professional practice in a specific field. • Can independently identify and provide solutions to complex problems. • Can engage in reflective practice. • Have the technical, methodological and digital competence for information gathering, processing and management. • Can communicate clearly and coherently in a South African multilingual context within their scope of professional practice. • Are prepared for continuous professional, as well as life-wide and lifelong learning. <p>Note: National policies may require institutions to incorporate credits for communicative competence in an indigenous African language into the curriculum to ensure that graduates in designated professional fields of practice have this competence.</p>
	Contexts of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can adapt and apply their knowledge and skills to a range of contexts and have the capacity for professional practice in varied contexts. <p>Work-integrated learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have engaged in classroom-based and practice-based learning, both under supervision and independently. This enables them to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge in professional practice in a specific field. Graduates may have undertaken research in a manner appropriate to the discipline or field of study to prepare them for postgraduate study.
	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are ready to take up professional roles ethically, responsibly and with accountability. • Have empathy and the capacity to act for the benefit of others. • Have engaged in learning that raised their awareness of the range of social contexts in the field of professional practice, the importance of mutual respect, reciprocity and ubuntu.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in practices that contribute to societal development within their scope of practice and communities. • Understand the impact of their practice on society and the environment and can take action to remediate or enhance positive outcomes.
Admission		<p>The minimum admissions requirement for the Professional Bachelor's 480-credit Degree is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Senior Certificate (SC) with achievements that meet the legislated requirements set for entry into a Degree; or • A National Senior Certificate (NSC) with achievements that meet the legislated requirements set for entry into a Degree; or • A National Senior Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) - Level 4 - with achievements that meet the legislated requirements set for entry into a Degree; or • A National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) with achievements that meet the legislated requirements for entry into a Degree; or • A Higher Certificate in a cognate field. • A Higher Occupational Certificate or an Advanced Occupational Certificate in a cognate field may satisfy the minimum admission requirements especially for the professionally oriented Bachelor's Degree. • Applicants may also be admitted on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Progression		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Professional Bachelor's Degree allows graduates to undertake postgraduate studies at Master's level.

Qualification Descriptor for the Bachelor Honours Degree

Purpose		<p>A Bachelor Honours Degree enables students to consolidate and advance their knowledge and skills in a field of study or practice and to develop research capacity in the methodology and techniques used in their field of study or practice.</p> <p>A Bachelor Honours Degree must include conducting and reporting research under supervision, worth at least 30 credits, in the form of a discrete research component that is appropriate to the field of study or practice.</p> <p>In some cases, the Bachelor Honours Degree may enable graduates to meet the requirements for registration as professional designations with professional bodies.</p>
Attributes		<p>A Bachelor Honours Degree certifies that its graduates exhibit the following attributes:</p>
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are self-motivated, open-minded and self-regulating. • Devise their own learning strategies for sustained independent learning for academic or professional development and other learning contexts. • Exhibit self-awareness, reflective perspective-taking and practice in a discipline, field of practice, or community. • Adhere to the requirements of ethical, responsible, and accountable academic/professional conduct in a field of practice or study.
	Learning	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a broad understanding of an area of knowledge and theory. • Can critically analyse, synthesise and problematise concepts and principles in their field of study. • Engage conceptually with current research and scholarly or professional literature.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the limitations of institutionalised knowledge in their field(s) of study or practice and how it has been validated historically. • Can devise and sustain written arguments in their field of study, profession, or vocation. • Can explain the underlying concepts and principles that inform judgements in their field of study, profession, or vocation. • Can compare, contrast, and draw ideas/solutions from a multiplicity of knowledges (including indigenous, experiential and academic) for their own benefit and that of the society of which they are part. <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can select an appropriate methodology to conduct independent research. • Can gather data and apply appropriate concepts, tools and technologies to solve problems in familiar and unfamiliar contexts. • Have the methodological and digital competence to interpret and analyse qualitative and quantitative data. • Can communicate their ideas and solutions to peers, supervisors, as well as specialist and non-specialist audiences/clients. • Demonstrate high levels of communicative proficiency for engaging with a range of participants and stakeholders involved in the field, as well as basic communicative functionality in multilingual South African contexts.
	Contexts of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can apply knowledge and skills in diverse and unfamiliar contexts. • Can make contextually relevant and informed judgements and decisions. <p>Work-integrated learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some form of practice-based learning may be required in professional specialisations.

	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the ability to work collaboratively with others in teams. • Understand themselves to live in a relationship of reciprocity with others in their families, communities, society and environment. They engage with the views of those outside of dominant culture(s). • Critically evaluate and transform prevailing ideas, policies and practices based on the values of <i>ubuntu</i> and the Constitution. • Show sensitivity towards equity and environmental sustainability by making decisions and engaging in activities and practices that take account of social, economic and environmental needs.
Admission		<p>The minimum admissions requirement into a Bachelor Honours degree is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An appropriate Bachelor's Degree; or • An Advanced Diploma within a cognate field of study. • An Advanced Occupational Diploma in a cognate field may satisfy the minimum requirement for admission. • Applicants may also be admitted to the Bachelor Honours Degree on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Progression		<p>Completion of a Bachelor Honours Degree is the minimum requirement for admission into a Master's Degree in a cognate field of study or specialisation area of the Bachelors Honours Degree.</p>

Qualification Descriptor for the Postgraduate Diploma

Purpose		<p>The primary purpose of a Postgraduate Diploma is to strengthen and deepen working professionals' theoretical and practical knowledge to enhance their professional and leadership capabilities.</p> <p>Postgraduate Diplomas can also enable people from different disciplinary backgrounds to gain access to, and specialise in, a professional or interdisciplinary field. In some cases, a Postgraduate Diploma carries recognition by an appropriate professional or statutory body.</p> <p>A sustained research project is not required, but students will learn about methods and techniques for analysing and resolving practice-related problems and tasks. Critical reflection on experience in the field of practice will be a key pedagogical tool.</p> <p>The Postgraduate Diploma may be offered with a combination of coursework and/or appropriate forms of work-integrated learning and applied research.</p>
Attributes		<p>A Postgraduate Diploma certifies that its graduates exhibit the following attributes:</p>
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are motivated, open-minded, and self-regulating. • Can devise their own learning strategies for sustained, independent learning, in both formal and informal learning contexts, for academic or professional development. • Have the knowledge, tools and networks to draw on to enhance self-awareness and reflexivity. • Can review and renew prevailing ideas, policies and practices based on a commitment to the common good. <p>Note: National policies may require institutions to incorporate credits for communicative competence in an indigenous African language into the curriculum to ensure that graduates in designated professional fields of practice have this competence.</p>

	Learning	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an advanced knowledge-base related to the scope of the specialised field of practice. • Have a coherent and critical understanding of the concepts and principles of relevant disciplines and practical procedures and techniques in the specialised field of practice. • Are aware of indigenous ways of knowing related to the field of practice. • Can develop independent and research-based views about contemporary issues of theory and practice related to the field of practice. <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ theoretical knowledge, digital and technological tools, procedures, and techniques needed for independent professional practice. • Apply knowledge and skills in a manner that demonstrates high levels of autonomy, professional judgement, adaptability, and responsibility as a practitioner. • Can provide leadership in the field of practice. • Apply techniques and principles of research to improve and develop practices and solve complex problems in unpredictable contexts. • Can communicate their ideas and solutions to peers, supervisors, as well as specialist and non-specialist audiences. • Demonstrate basic communicative functionality in multilingual South African communities.
	Contexts of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply critical thinking, problem solving, applied research and effective communication skills in a range of contexts. • Can relate knowledge of specialised practices and procedures to unpredictable contexts that may require adaptation and innovation.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can work independently and effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation or community. • Can develop networks for support, advice, and information. <p>Work-integrated learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have engaged in project-based and/or practice-directed theoretical learning, both under supervision and independently.
	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act ethically in line with respect for human rights and professional codes of conduct. • Reflect on their own and other's positionality in society. • Have personal insight, open-mindedness and inter-personal capabilities to advance sustainable and equitable development and the values of <i>ubuntu</i>. • Can engage in, and shape, a community of practice. • Can participate productively in the sustainable development of the country.
Admission		<p>The minimum admissions requirement is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Bachelor's Degree, preferably in a cognate field; or • An Advanced Diploma. • An Advanced Occupational Diploma in a cognate area may satisfy the requirements for admission. • Applicants may be admitted on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Progression		<p>Completion of a Postgraduate Diploma meets the minimum entrance requirement for admission to a cognate Master's Degree, usually in the area of specialisation of the Postgraduate Diploma.</p> <p>Note: Mastery of research methods may be a requirement for entry into some Master's Degrees.</p>

Qualification Descriptor for the Master's Degree (Professional)

Purpose		Graduates of a Master's Degree (Professional) have a body of knowledge that promotes deep understanding of developments in a field of study and specialised professional practice, as well as knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the discipline and its professional practice. The Degree may be offered by applied research only or with a combination of coursework and/or appropriate forms of work-integrated learning and research.
Attributes		The Master's Degree (Professional) certifies that graduates exhibit the following attributes:
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks with a professional orientation. • Work independently and responsibly, applying original thought and judgement to technical, organisational and risk-based decisions in complex situations. • Develop their own learning strategies to sustain independent learning and academic and professional development. • Have a broad appreciation of the field of professional practice and their roles as specialist practitioners within it. • Identify as a professional specialist with in-depth knowledge in one or more particular fields of practice. • Are aware of and reflective on the presuppositions with which they work. • Demonstrate ethical relational agency in engaging with others.
	Learning	Knowledge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use advanced and current knowledge to address complex issues both systematically and creatively. • Engage in and connect with the claims of others, through intelligible discourse, in a practice area.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relate knowledge, conduct applied research, and perform in-depth investigations to solve complex problems, demonstrating innovation and/or professional expertise. <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to use academic, professional and occupational discourses, including engagement with indigenous and experiential knowledge, to communicate and defend substantial ideas that are products of research, investigation or development in an area of specialisation. • Write analytically and critically evaluate specialised texts in their fields. • Communicate, in multilingual contexts, with a range of audiences with different types of knowledge or expertise. • Are comfortable with the use of technology when bridging theory and practice. <p>Note: National policies may require institutions to incorporate credits for communicative competence in an indigenous African language into the curriculum to ensure that graduates in designated professional fields of practice have this competence.</p>
	Contexts of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop and improve their knowledge, understanding and skills related to a particular profession or field of practice. • Apply specialist knowledge to solve complex problems, conceptualise solutions, and engage with, and critique, current and emerging research and practices. • Apply knowledge to new and complex situations in a practice context. • Provide leadership and management in the specialised field of practice. <p style="text-align: center;">Work-integrated learning</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have engaged in independent Advanced-Practice Directed Theoretical Learning or an independent study component that comprises at least a quarter of the total credits at NQF Level 9, consisting of either applied research or a technical project or a series of smaller projects demonstrating innovation or professional expertise.
	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate critical awareness of the sustainability and impact of professional practice on the social, economic, industrial, and physical/natural environment. • Conceptualise and advance ethical practice in the professions in service of the public interest/good. • Engage with practices and lived experiences in society as resources to clarify the relevance of theories used and assumptions that underpin them. • Effectively interact within their professional group or community of practice as a means of enhancing learning through practice.
Admission		<p>The minimum admissions requirement is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A relevant Bachelor Honours Degree; or • A relevant Postgraduate Diploma; or • A cognate Professional Bachelor's Degree. • A Specialised Occupational Diploma may also be recognised as meeting the minimum entry requirement to a cognate Master's Degree (Professional) qualification. • Applicants may also be admitted to on the basis of recognition of prior learning.

Progression		Completing a Master's Degree (Professional) meets the minimum entry requirement for admission to a cognate Doctoral Degree, usually in the area of specialisation in the Master's Degree.
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Qualification Descriptor for the Master's Degree

Purpose		<p>A Master's qualification can either require the writing of a dissertation, or combined coursework and a research project culminating in a minor dissertation, or other output commensurate with the characteristics of the discipline and field, for example, a creative performance.</p> <p>A Master's Degree by dissertation provides students with opportunities to conduct research on a particular topic/issue at an advanced level in a field of specialisation, comprising a minimum of 180 credits. A coursework Master's Degree with a research project culminating in a minor dissertation, with a minimum of 60 credits at Level 9, deepens knowledge and understanding of theory and research methodology, required for high levels of scholarly research in a field of specialisation.</p>
Attributes		<p>The Master's Degree certifies that its graduates exhibit the following attributes:</p>
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a strong grasp of their knowledge area and their roles as specialists within it and as critical citizens. • Show intellectual independence, awareness, and reflexivity about the presuppositions with which they work. • Show some independence in developing and/or applying ideas when undertaking research. • Show ethical relational agency in engaging with others.
	Learning	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematically understand the different traditions, interrogation techniques and validation processes in an area of specialisation.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use advanced and current knowledge systematically and creatively to address complex issues in a field or society. • Integrate concepts from different knowledge areas when making judgements or evaluations. • Know, understand, and use current research theories, methods and skills in a knowledge area/ field of specialisation. • Engage critically with the claims of others in a knowledge area and link them to develop deep insights. <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independently conceptualise, design, and implement a research project and report on it. • Clearly communicate concepts, conclusions and their rationales to specialist and non-specialist audiences. • Use a range of technologies to conduct research, to analyse information/data and to solve problems. • Use literature/research to address, theorise and solve problems in new or unfamiliar environments.
	Contexts of Application	<p>Master's graduates can adapt and apply their knowledge and skills to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judge and draw conclusions that are contextually responsive. • Create inclusive communication platforms for sharing ideas. • Build communities of practice based on engagement with diverse viewpoints/approaches to develop shared goals and projects.

	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the impact of epistemic, philosophical and cultural judgements on society and that social impact [intelligibility within society] requires theoretical rigour and practical relevance. • Engage with practices and lived experiences in society as resources to clarify the relevance of theories used, assumptions that underpin them, and co-create knowledge that advances an equitable and sustainable social order. • Adhere to research integrity and reflect critically on power relationships in research.
Admission		<p>The minimum admissions requirement is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A relevant Bachelor Honours Degree; or • A relevant Postgraduate Diploma; or • A relevant Professional Bachelor's Degree. • Applicants may also be admitted on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Progression		<p>Completion of a Master's Degree meets the minimum requirement for admission into a doctoral degree in the knowledge area of the Master's Degree or cognate knowledge area.</p>

Qualification Descriptor for the Doctoral Degree (Professional)

Purpose		<p>A Doctoral Degree (Professional) allows graduates to develop the highest level of performance and innovation in a professional, industry/work or creative context. It provides an opportunity to entrench professional knowledge in a given field of study into a theoretical framework through an original contribution to knowledge or original application of existing knowledge to advance the frontiers of professional practice or creative domain and solve highly complex problems in a wide range of professional, industry/work and/or creative contexts. It also provides crucial skills to professionals who have to navigate complexities of a chosen profession.</p> <p>The Degree may be offered by research only or with a combination of coursework and/or appropriate forms of work-integrated learning and research. The research component should comprise at least 60 per cent of the Degree.</p> <p>The research focuses, in general, on the ability to use theory to explain or clarify practice by examining the theoretical knowledge-base upon which it (practice) draws and, if necessary, identify what is essential to improve practice.</p> <p>The Doctoral Degree (Professional) by research only requires a candidate to undertake research culminating in the submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis. However, candidates may also present peer-reviewed academic articles and papers, and, in certain fields, creative work, such as artefacts, compositions, public performances and public exhibitions in partial fulfilment of the research requirements.</p>
Attributes		<p>A Doctoral Degree (Professional) certifies that its graduates exhibit the following attributes:</p>
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibit intellectual autonomy, originality, authority, accountability, professional integrity, and ethical respect.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage independently, showing thematic and conceptual coherence in a professional practice. • Assume a role as custodian and steward and collaborate with peers from diverse professional backgrounds without compromising independent critical thinking. • Make important theoretical and practical contributions to professional knowledge and competencies. • Adapt to changing and varying contexts and serve as an agent of intellectual advancement. • Engage with, and lead thinking with local, national, regional and international professional or practice communities. • Serve as an authority and leader in the profession.
	Learning	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have well-informed relevant knowledge in the selected field or discipline through an original contribution. • Deepen the frontiers of professional practice by making contributions to debates in the field. • Demonstrate expert, specialised and in-depth current knowledge of a specific area of professional practice. • Demonstrate awareness of how the specific area of research relates, or is relatable, to the chosen professional field of study and practice. • Demonstrate awareness of, and compliance with, the relevant principles of ethics in their profession. • Show evidence of original and innovative thinking in a creative practice and/or profession. • Supervise and evaluate the research of others in the area of specialisation concerned.

		<p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise appropriate research methods and skills that characterise disciplinary or inter-disciplinary discourse. • Conceptualise, reflect critically, work independently in order to draw conclusions, and formulate solutions, based on appropriately substantiated and defensible premises and analysis. • Demonstrate an advanced level of communicative competence through capacity for extended, sustained, and rigorous professional writing, including relevant and appropriate digital literacy skills. • Communicate, defend, and disseminate research findings effectively to expert and non-expert audiences. • Conduct critical and analytical thinking, which shows an intellectual competence for problem-solving in diverse contexts, both familiar and unfamiliar.
	<p>Contexts of Application</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can apply original and creative ideas, and analytical and critical thinking skills, to investigate problems, generate new knowledge and develop inventive solutions. • Apply and develop theoretical frameworks, methods and techniques to solve practical professional problems. • Communicate ideas effectively in a range of professional contexts, inside and outside the field of study or discipline. • Work collaboratively and effectively with others, respecting individual roles and responsibilities. • Lead, manage and execute projects within or across disciplines. • Identify appropriate concepts from multiple knowledge areas to carry out interdisciplinary analysis.

		<p>Work-integrated learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where applicable, have engaged in practice-based learning that has enabled them to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge in professional practice in a specific field.
	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure benefit of the research to any community or social group that was the subject of, or participated in, the study. • Demonstrate personal and professional awareness. • Ethical conduct, responsibility, and accountability. • Respect for and tolerance of others. • Understand the formative and regulative function of their roles in professional contexts and society and are ready to take up roles as co-creators of culture, society and nature. • Impact society in a manner that promotes the “idea that human societies must live and meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”
Admission		<p>The minimum admissions requirement is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An appropriate Master's Degree. • Applicants may also be admitted on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Progression		<p>The Doctoral Degree is a terminal qualification awarded within this framework.</p>

Qualification Descriptor for the Doctoral Degree

Purpose		<p>A Doctoral Degree allows graduates to develop the highest level of holistic and systematic understanding of scholarship in, and stewardship of, a field of study through an original contribution that deepens the frontiers of knowledge and/or a creative domain.</p> <p>This Doctoral Degree is based on empirical or theoretical/conceptual research and intends to generate new knowledge. The emphasis is on scientific research that investigates some aspect of reality or theory in detail and depth in order to introduce into a field of expertise a new concept/theory that should be acceptable to a particular community of practice or researchers.</p> <p>The Doctoral Degree requires a candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic levels culminating in the submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis. However, candidates may also present peer-reviewed academic articles and papers, and, in certain fields, creative work, such as artefacts, compositions, public performances and public exhibitions in partial fulfilment of the research requirements. Coursework may be required as preparation or value addition to the research but does not contribute to the credit value of the qualification. The Degree may be earned through pure discipline-based or multidisciplinary research.</p>
Attributes		<p>A Doctoral Degree certifies that its graduates exhibit the following attributes:</p>
	Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibit intellectual autonomy, originality, authority, accountability, scholarly integrity and ethical respect. • Engage independently in an extended course of research, showing thematic and conceptual coherence. • Assume a role as custodian and steward and collaborate with peers from diverse academic

		<p>backgrounds without compromising independent critical thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt to changing and varying contexts and serve as an agent of intellectual advancement. • Engage with, and lead thinking with local, national, regional and international research communities. • Serve as an authority and leader in their chosen discipline.
	Learning	Knowledge
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibit well-informed relevant knowledge in the selected field or discipline through an original contribution. • Advance the frontiers of knowledge by making a contribution to debates in the field of study. • Present expert and in-depth current knowledge of a specific area of research. • Demonstrate awareness of how the specific area of research relates, or is relatable, to other fields of study and practice. • Demonstrate awareness of and compliance with the principles of ethics in research. • Show evidence of original and innovative thinking in research, creative practice and/or performance.
		Skills
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, in pursuit of knowledge, appropriate research methods and skills that characterise disciplinary or inter-disciplinary discourse. • Conceptualise and reflect critically, work independently, and arrive at conclusions and solutions based on appropriately substantiated and defensible premises and analysis. • Demonstrate an advanced level of communicative competence, through capacity for extended, sustained, and rigorous academic writing, including relevant and appropriate digital literacy skills.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate, defend and disseminate research findings effectively to expert and non-expert audiences. • Conduct research-related critical and analytical thinking, which shows an intellectual competence for problem-solving in diverse contexts, both familiar and unfamiliar.
	Contexts of application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply original and creative ideas, as well as analytical and critical thinking skills, to investigate problems, generate new knowledge and develop inventive solutions. • Communicate ideas effectively in a range of contexts, inside and outside the field of study or discipline. • Work collaboratively and effectively with others, respecting individual roles and responsibilities. • Lead, manage and execute projects within or across disciplines. • Supervise and evaluate the research of others in the area of specialisation. • identify appropriate concepts from multiple knowledge areas to carry out inter-disciplinary analysis.
	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure benefit of the research to any community or social group that was the subject of, or participated in, a study. • Demonstrate personal and professional awareness. • Ethical conduct, responsibility, and accountability. • Respect for and tolerance of others. • Understand the formative and regulative function of their roles in institutions and society and are ready to take up roles as co-creators of culture, society and nature. • Impact society in a manner that promotes the idea that human societies should live and meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Admission		The minimum admissions requirement is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• an appropriate Master's Degree.• Applicants may also be admitted on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Progression		The Doctoral Degree is a terminal qualification awarded within this framework.

SECTION FIVE: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose

1. The Panel affirmed support for the aims of the HEQSF as outlined in 2013. However, drawing on the literature analysing different types of qualification frameworks, the Panel feels that it is important to be clearer about what qualification frameworks can and cannot achieve. The revised HEQSF should be viewed as a 'reforming framework' that takes the existing system as its starting point but aims to improve it in specific ways; for example, by enhancing the quality or clarity of key concepts, such as the qualification descriptors, simplifying requirements and enhancing flexibility.

Internationalisation

2. To strengthen awareness of, and transparency about, the regional and continental qualifications frameworks, the Preamble to the revised HEQSF should include objectives to: a) facilitate and enhance broader comparability of continental and regional qualifications; b) facilitate recognition and verification of foreign qualifications; and c) promote access, mobility and progression of international students. This should be done by means of clearly defined learning domains, assessment contexts, as well as the graduate qualities that are required for the award of the qualification. This would make it possible to draw broad comparisons in terms of the level of complexity and graduate qualities between HEQSF qualifications and foreign qualifications. The Preamble should also contain information about the Harmonisation of African Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) project, the African Standards and the Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, as well as the African Quality Rating Mechanism for HEIs, and plan for establishing an African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF).
3. Information should be provided on the facilitating entities, such as the SAQA Foreign Qualifications Evaluation Unit and the SADC Regional Qualifications Verification Network (SADCQVN). Links to sites where additional information on key continental policies can be located, should be provided.
4. Finally, the HEQSF should also include a summary of the credit allocation systems in operation in the BRICS countries to promote transparency.

Articulation

5. The Panel recommends that the diagrammatic representation of the relationships between the Sub-Frameworks of the NQF should indicate which qualification types form part of the Post-School Education and Training System.
6. The revised HEQSF should include examples of systemic, specific and individual articulation in annexures to the HEQSF, or incorporate hyperlinks to examples, to help build agency for navigating boundaries between different learning pathways and different forms of learning.
7. The Panel recommends that the heuristic of the four quadrants of different forms of learning (developed by Shay, modified by Winberg, and outlined in Section 2 of the Report) should be integrated into a conceptual framework, which accommodates (a) fluidity within and between knowledge and practice types to address decolonisation imperatives, and (b) the role of border-crossing practices intended to enable people to navigate and transcend boundaries. Such a revised conceptual framework would best enable the goals of curriculum transformation, access, and articulation.
8. The Panel recommends that ideally all programmes at all levels on the HEQSF should consist of a mix of developmental and regular curriculum offerings, designed and offered by collaborative teams of staff who work in close partnership. Specialised pedagogic skills are needed to equip students/applicants with the tools needed to navigate transitions during the course of their studies. All students should be advised to choose flexible combinations of both developmental and regular activities, depending on their educational needs at the time. In order to be taken seriously and work effectively, these developmental activities will require funding and accountability for that funding.

Admission

9. The Panel recommends that the admissions sections linked to all the qualifications should be updated to accommodate QCTO and TVET qualifications - where appropriate - for meeting minimum requirements for access into HEQSF qualifications. Due consideration would need to be given to the underpinning knowledge configurations of the completed qualification and the qualification to which applicants seek admission. In addition, the sections on progression for each qualification type from Levels 5 – 8 should refer to the appropriate occupational qualification at the level below as meeting the minimum requirements into a cognate qualification on the HEQSF whilst recognising that institutions set their own admission requirements for particular qualifications.

10. It is recommended that the minimum admission requirements for each qualification type be expanded to include a direct reference to RPL as a permitted access route, subject to the admission and selection policies of the institution.

Level descriptors and learning outcomes

11. The Panel suggests that the revised HEQSF should acknowledge the debates concerning the value of level descriptors and LOs for designing learning programmes in higher education. The HEQSF should also explicitly acknowledge that not all academics work with LOs to design their curricula. Many, if not most, design their curricula around content. To accommodate differences in approach to qualification design across disciplinary communities, the Panel recommends that academics should be allowed to structure their applications for accreditation around learning objectives, content or learning outcomes, depending on what is generally deemed appropriate by communities of practice in a particular discipline or field, provided that the applications for accreditation indicate how engagement with the qualification descriptors in the HEQSF have informed their thinking about the design of their curriculum and the choice of assessment and pedagogical methods. Senates of institutions will need to exercise oversight regarding this.

Unit of accreditation

12. The Panel supports the proposal in the CHE's QAF (2020) that the unit of accreditation should shift to qualifications rather than programmes. The CHE will need to formulate an implementation strategy for determining when and how this function will be delegated to institutions, which should be noted in the HEQSF.
13. The QAF recognises the essential roles played by the professional bodies in quality assurance. The Panel noted that the CHE is considering the adoption of an approach whereby statutory professional bodies will sign a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with the CHE to outline roles and responsibilities and to promote simplification and collaboration in relation to accreditation. The Panel suggests that the MoAs should include a mechanism for stipulating areas in which named qualifications accredited by the CHE will require the CHE to initiate standard setting processes. The authority for re-accreditation and de-accreditation, as per the HE Act, should rest with the CHE.

Mode of delivery

14. Motivated by the quest for increased flexibility across the different dimensions, the Panel recommends that the official binary view of mode of delivery (contact and distance) be abolished. Instead, institutions should, at the time of applying for accreditation, be required to provide information on the unique combination of methods being considered by the institution, as informed by the specific pedagogical design of the programme. The limit of flexibility in different contexts needs to be recognised and monitored (Jones & Walters, 2015), and, therefore, institutional capacity to make use of the online modality should be assessed by the CHE in institutional reviews, similar to the current practice of verifying physical infrastructure.
15. The Panel notes that this enabling approach, and the recommendation to move away from a model that recognises only contact and distance modes of delivery, will necessitate a review of the funding framework in public higher education. A possible model to explore would be one that takes account of the proportion of time that students spend physically on campus in order to allocate costs towards maintaining activities and services that contribute to the value of a campus experience. A minimum threshold could be set for this for subsidy purposes; for example, 50% of a student's time should be spent on campus. Each course could be weighted by the complexity of the cost of delivery, such as laboratory costs, NQF level and the proportion of time which a student spends on campus.

Naming of qualifications

16. For the first cycle of the implementation of the QAF, the Panel recommends the retention of the nested approach, but with significant changes related to the naming of qualifications to reduce proliferation. The Panel recommends a gradual shift after the first round of reviews, implemented in terms of the QAF, towards granting self-accreditation status to institutions that are deemed to have adequate quality management systems in place. This would allow such institutions to offer any qualification that is registered on a national qualifications framework as is the case with many other qualifications frameworks across the world. Other providers would need to comply with the streamlined approach outlined below until a date deemed appropriate by the CHE, after the next review of the HEQSF.
17. The panel recommends the retention of designators in the naming of general degrees. The designators indicate broad learning fields or fields of study, within which smaller foci of study may be identified. General qualifications take the form of a general formative degree wherein the curriculum can be designed with multiple combinations of courses and majors to obtain the

degree. Where a general degree, for example, a Bachelor of Arts, comprises a structured programme with formative and specialised components the area of specialisation can be signalled through the reference to the specialisation on the certificate. This would not require external accreditation.

18. Qualifiers should not be permitted as part of the title of general undergraduate degrees. Only designators should be used.
19. Qualifiers in the name of qualifications should be used for higher certificates, Diplomas and Postgraduate Diplomas.
20. Qualifiers should be used in professional qualifications that are linked to professional registration.
21. Qualifiers should be permitted where they provide eligibility for professional practice or where the qualification has a professional orientation. e.g. Agriculture (CESM 01), Music (0306), Business Administration (0401), Business and Economics, Communication Studies (0501), Computer and Information Sciences (0601), Education (07), Consumer Sciences (10), Law (12), Military Sciences (16), Psychology (18), Public Management (19), Theology (1703). Naming conventions in these learning fields vary considerably, with the choice of naming convention seemingly not directly linked to the nature or purpose of the qualifications. The Panel suggests that these offerings should be described as 'professionally oriented qualifications' when distinct designators can be used, and general qualifications where specialisations are indicated on the transcripts and not in the titles of the qualifications. For example, a Bachelor of Psychology can denote the professionally oriented nature of the qualification as opposed to a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Psychology which would form part of a general qualification. See p. 72 for the proposed definition of a professionally oriented qualification.
22. Second qualifiers should fall away.
23. The Panel has made a number of recommendations regarding the naming conventions for doctoral degrees. (See Section 3.7.2)

Qualification descriptors

24. The Panel recommends the use of 'graduate attributes', which refer to conceptual knowledge (procedural, declarative) and the contextual and societal application of knowledge and skills, to frame thinking about qualifications and curriculum design. (See Section 3.6. 1 for the rationale for this recommendation)
25. The Panel has adopted the view that attributes are developed in disciplines and that — if properly conceived of and understood — they can provide a

logical departure point for curriculum renewal based on a re-casting of the curriculum in a manner that takes account of the normative values enshrined in the Constitution, the values of *Ubuntu*, and the purposes of higher education outlined in the Education White Paper 3.

26. The Panel believes that the use of 'graduate attributes' foregrounds the agency and social and cultural resources of students (a) to acknowledge both the social and epistemic relations used to validate knowledge, (b) to counteract a tendency in qualification frameworks to objectify and decontextualise students and knowledge, (c) to recognise the specialised dispositions and qualities of knowers, and (d) to underscore the need to strengthen the links between qualification design, knowledge, pedagogy and the subjectivities of students (Maton, 2014).
27. The Panel recommends the use of the following domains for describing graduate attributes for each qualification type:
 - Disposition of knowers
 - Learning (knowledge and skills)
 - Contexts of application including WIL
 - Societal
28. Learning through and in doing (WIL) is primarily intended to enhance student learning, and to this end the Panel notes that several innovative curricular, pedagogical and assessment forms have developed in response to concerns about gradueness, employability and civic responsibility. Examples include: action-learning, apprenticeships, cooperative education, experiential learning, inquiry learning, inter-professional learning, practicum placements, problem-based learning, project-based learning, scenario learning, service-learning, team-based learning, virtual or simulated WIL learning, work-based learning, work experience, workplace learning, and so on. The Panel recommends that the HEQSF should embrace a broader, flexible approach which is essential in the digital era and the post-pandemic context. The Panel further recommends the use of the framework, provided in the main report, for conceptualising appropriate forms of WIL at the different HEQSF levels.

Language

29. Mindful of the financial and human resource constraints impacting on the capacity of institutions to strengthen indigenous African languages, the Panel recommends the inclusion of references to multilingualism in the qualification descriptors. The Panel proposes that the approach adopted in advancing multilingualism in teacher education should be considered for adoption by other major professional communities, such as lawyers, social

workers, medical and allied health professionals, engineers, psychologists, human resource practitioners and managers. Target dates could be set for stipulating credits for developing appropriate levels of communicative competence for teacher education qualifications.

30. The revised qualification descriptors require graduates to demonstrate basic communicative functionality to operate in multilingual South African contexts as determined with input from, for example, professional bodies and/or academics/experts involved in the various specialisation areas or disciplines, and with due cognisance of resource availability.
31. The Panel recommends that the CHE should consider the translation of the HEQSF into all official languages.
32. The Panel recommends the approval of the revised Qualification Type Descriptors contained in Section four.

Standard Development

33. The Panel recommends that the Framework for Standard Setting should be framed around 'graduate attributes' and should cover the same domains as those used in the qualification types, namely disposition, learning (knowledge and skills), contexts of application and societal. . The proposed new naming conventions should guide prioritisation of the standard setting processes.

Qualification types

34. The Panel recommends that all the qualification types listed in the 2013 HEQSF should be retained.
35. The Panel recommends that HCerts intended to enable access into higher education should be permitted, subject to certain conditionalities around the design and structuring of such certificates.
36. The Bachelor's Degree at Level 8 should be a separate qualification type on the HEQSF and should be called a Professional Bachelor's Degree.
37. The Panel believes that it would not be appropriate to remove the 240-credit Diploma which retains currency from the HEQSF in some sectors; for example, the banking and counselling sectors. However, the Panel recommends that the 240-credit Diploma should not be offered in more knowledge-intensive or technical sectors (e.g., health science and engineering) due to concerns about whether it is possible for the graduates to accumulate sufficient practical exposure and acquire the requisite knowledge to equip them appropriately *within* two years in these fields. Conditions should be attached to the approval and accreditation of 240-credit Diplomas linked to

- evidence of embedding opportunities for practical exposure in the curriculum.
38. The Panel recommends that the 360-credit Diploma should be retained and endorses the current provision in the HEQSF, namely that it is the responsibility of institutions that offer qualifications requiring credits for WIL to provide opportunities for this. These opportunities may take different forms informed by consultation and agreements with professional bodies.
 39. The Panel recommends the retention of the Advanced Certificate as it is meeting occupational needs in several sectors.
 40. The Panel recommends that a proper evaluation of the AdvDip should be undertaken after five years of the complete phasing out of the BTechs. This would allow time to determine whether an additional qualification type is needed or not.
 41. The Panel believes that the PGDip is meeting a need for training high level professionals and enabling existing professionals to improve existing practices in a field of practice. They are also used to enable access into Master's Degrees. The Panel debated whether conducting research should be made a requirement or not, as suggested by several participants in the roundtable. However, the Panel was persuaded to retain the focus on practice and rather strengthen the emphasis on the development of reflective capacities related to improving professional practice, given the primary purpose of this qualification.
 42. The Panel was persuaded that the Doctoral (Professional) Degree should be retained, notwithstanding the present low takeup rate, as the need for this qualification may grow, which has been the trend internationally. However, it is recommended that there should be a single standard for Level 10 regardless of the route taken to meet the standard.
 43. The Panel recommends that an additional provision be included in the HEQSF that would enable the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation to approve a new qualification type with unique descriptors when a proven need arises as a result of developments in knowledge, production, skills development or acknowledged international good practice without requiring a review of the HEQSF and after appropriate consultation in the sector and the receipt of formal advice from the CHE. This provision can also be used to remove a qualification from the HEQSF.
 44. The Panel recommends that permitted exceptions to qualification type descriptors should be incorporated in the outlines of the relevant qualification types rather than in an Annexure.

Credits

45. With due consideration for fair workloads for students, as well as different disciplinary imperatives in relation to curricula, the Panel recommends that the prescribed number of credits not be exceeded by more than 15%. In cases where the prescribed number of credits is exceeded by more than 15%, institutions must, at accreditation stage, expressly outline the curriculum requirements that necessitate the extra credits. Institutions must also detail how students will be supported in dealing with the demands brought about by the additional notional hours within the minimum programme duration.

Embedded and early exit qualifications

46. The Panel recommends that the HEQSF should not prohibit an embedded approach to the offering of qualifications; for example, HCerts and Diplomas. Academic judgements should be made about what would be deemed appropriate with due consideration of the level, structure, purpose and curriculum coherence of the qualification types. Requiring students to repeat content already covered cannot be justified educationally.
47. Early exit qualifications from a higher level qualification type to a lower level one for individuals should be allowed but only where (a) this does not compromise the integrity and coherence of the curriculum of the higher academic qualification, (b) the purposes of the two qualification types are broadly aligned, (c) where students have completed all the requirements for the lower level qualification (for example, a Postgraduate Diploma can be awarded for an early exit from a Master's) and (d) where both qualifications form part of the institution's approved Programme and Qualification mix.

Flexibility

48. The Panel recommends the adoption of an enabling approach to address the calls for flexibility regarding recognition of different forms of learning. An enabling approach would allow for credits to be allocated for informal and non-formal learning on the basis of evidence of quality assurance measures. Institutions that wish to allocate credits for non-formal learning through RPL, or who wish to utilise OERs, micro-credentials and/or MOOCs as credit-bearing components in a full qualification, or who wish to allow students to do a proportion of credits towards their qualification using approved non-formal offerings should be able to do so if they meet interim guidelines provided by the CHE. Suggestions regarding the interim guidelines are made in the full report and draw on international experience.
49. In the medium term, the Panel proposes that, at a systemic level, provision be made for peer review to provide credibility to the judgements made by

institutions regarding the credit-worthiness of the non-formal learning courses. Examples of different options for facilitating this are contained in the full report drawing on international experience.

50. Where a curriculum is intentionally designed to draw on offerings from a range of different kinds of providers it is proposed that at least 50% of the credits of a qualification should be based on courses designed, taught and assessed by academics at the awarding institution to ensure an adequate basis for providing an award from a particular institution and to protect the institution's identity.
51. The Panel further recommends that the CHE launch an investigation to explore options for establishing a permanent infrastructure for evaluating potentially credit-worthy non-formal learning offerings and for digital credentialing of formal learning. The CHE should act on the recommendations emanating from the investigation within a period of three years after the gazetting of the HEQSF. The Interim Guidelines should be approved by the CHE concurrently with the release of the HEQSF.
52. The Panel recommends that the decision to grant an institutional qualification to students who had entered a different institution to begin their studies, but complete their exit year at a second institution should be guided by institutional criteria, approved and monitored by the Senate of that institution to safeguard the integrity of the institution's qualifications.

Implementation of the new HEQSF

53. The Panel recommends that the CHE should not embark on a systemic exercise to align qualifications with the new descriptors. The Panel rather recommends that a phased approach be adopted involving the use of the new qualification descriptors for applications for new qualifications two years from the date of the gazetting of the revised HEQSF. Alignment of existing qualifications should be managed through the re-accreditation processes outlined in the QAF, institutional language plans and the standard setting processes. Guidelines should be prepared by the CHE to support implementation.

Legislation

54. The Panel recommends that Chapter 1 of the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997 as amended) be amended to expand the definition of "provider of higher education" to reflect the shift for HEIs to take greater responsibility and accountability for the approval of programmes within qualifications in line with the Panel's recommendation to shift the unit of accreditation from

programmes to qualifications. Such a shift would have a major impact on improving the efficiency of external accreditation processes as it would reduce the number of applications serving at the CHE. This expansion of responsibility may be accommodated under Section 1(p)(b) in the Higher Education Amendment Act (Act No. 9 of 2016).

55. The Panel recommends that the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997 as amended) should define "higher education" as "all learning programmes leading to qualifications [or the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes] that meet the requirements of the HEQSF". Broadening of the definition is recommended to enable the recognition of non-formal learning programmes through RPL, or direct recognition on the basis of academic judgements, where the criteria for making the academic judgements are clearly defined. The Panel recommends that:

- A **qualification** be defined as the formal recognition and certification of learning achievement awarded by a higher education institution and registered on the HEQSF of the South African NQF (this aligns with the CHE's Norms and Standards for Certification). The amendments should also explicitly state that the link with registration on the NQF does not prevent co-badging, joint degrees between South African and international institutions, consecutive degrees and cross-border offerings, provided that the qualifications comply with the legislation and policies of the relevant agencies of the host country, and that the qualifications offered in South Africa are approved by the DHET, accredited by the CHE/HEQC for delivery in South Africa and are registered on the NQF.
- A **programme** be defined as a purposeful and structured set of learning activities designed to enable a student to meet the outcomes necessary for the award of a qualification. This definition takes account of the fact that non-formal educational and training offerings can be highly purposeful, structured and oriented towards the attainment of specified learning outcomes.

56. The Panel recommends that the wording of the NQF Act (Act No. 67 of 2008) and the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997 as amended) be changed to eliminate any ambiguity regarding whether joint degrees, co-badging, consecutive degrees and cross-border offerings are permissible or not.

Policies

57. The Panel recommends the adoption of an enabling approach to address the calls for flexibility regarding recognition of different forms of learning. An enabling approach will allow for credits to be allocated for informal and non-formal learning on the basis of evidence of quality assurance measures. Institutions, that wish to allocate credits for non-formal learning through RPL, or who wish to utilise OERs, micro-credentials and/or MOOCs as credit-bearing components in a full qualification, or who wish to allow students to do a proportion of credits towards their qualification using approved non-formal offerings, should be able to do so if the offerings meet interim guidelines provided by the CHE. Suggestions regarding the interim guidelines are made in the full report drawing on international experience.
58. The 10% restriction on the number of students (CHE, 2016) admitted to qualifications via RPL should be removed. Senates should have the responsibility to monitor admissions on the basis of RPL to ensure that appropriate forms of curriculum design, pedagogy and support are in place to take account of particular needs of RPL students where necessary. Senate will also need to ensure that appropriate and thorough forms of assessment are undertaken before approving the granting of credits on the basis of RPL.
59. The current 50% rule related to the maximum credits that can be awarded for CAT should be treated as a guideline, thereby allowing the receiving institution to assess the learning outcomes achieved, the volume of learning completed, as well as the assessment methods and any other relevant information related to the individual's circumstances, to decide whether to allow a credit transfer of more than 50% of the receiving programme's credits. Such cases should be subject to the approval by institutional governance structures, namely Faculty Boards and ultimately Senate.
60. Currently, there are 10 level descriptors to describe applied competencies across each of the ten levels of the NQF. The Panel recommends that multilingualism should be regarded as a key competence to be advanced through education and training, and that the NQF level descriptors should be revised accordingly.
61. The Panel recommends that the Framework for Standard Development should be framed around 'graduate attributes' and should cover the same domains as those used in the qualification types, namely disposition, learning (knowledge and skills), contexts of application and societal. (CHE Framework for Standard Setting, 2013).

62. The CHE policies on RPL and CAT will need to be revised in line with the Panel's recommendations; for example, the recommendation that credits be awarded for RPL, non-formal offerings, as well as OQSF and TVET offerings where academic judgements deem this appropriate. DHET and SAQA will need to consider the implications of the revised HEQSF for their policies in these areas. Developing recommendations on the funding implications of these policies was beyond the scope of the review.

Regulations

63. The Panel recommends that regulations are needed to afford recognition to occupational qualifications (on the OQSF) and the National Adult Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA), which includes four 30-credit subjects at Grade 12 level that require a 50% pass rate in each module, in order to meet admissions requirements of appropriate levels of qualifications on the HEQSF. As with the NCV Level 4, there will be a need to clarify that admission into HEQSF programmes is not automatic, given that HEIs are entitled to set admission requirements which are above the minimum requirements for entry into HEIs.

64. The Panel recommends that the DHET should amend the reporting regulations (Gazette 37726, RG 10209, Govt Notice 464), applicable to both public and private HEIs, for annual reports. The regulations should require institutions to report on the following: the numbers of students admitted via RPL and from other sub-frameworks within the HEQSF and between the 3 different learning pathways within the HEQSF itself, as well as formalised agreements, collaborations and partnerships between universities and other types of institutions in the post-school system. Similar regulations should be introduced for private higher education institutions.

64. The QAF recognises the essential roles played by professional bodies in quality assurance. The Panel noted that the CHE is considering the adoption of an approach whereby statutory professional bodies will sign a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with the CHE to outline roles and responsibilities and to promote simplification and collaboration in relation to accreditation. The Panel suggests that the MoAs should include a mechanism for stipulating which named qualifications accredited by the CHE will require the CHE to initiate standard-setting processes for professional practice areas. The authority for re-accreditation and de-accreditation, as per the HE Act, should rest with the CHE.

65. The Panel notes that the recommendation to move away from a model that recognises only contact and distance modes of delivery, will necessitate a review of the funding framework in public higher education. A possible model to explore would be one that takes account of the proportion of time that students spend physically on campus in order to allocate costs towards

maintaining activities and services that contribute to the value of a campus experience. A minimum threshold could be set for this for subsidy purposes, for example, 50% of a student's time should be spent on campus. Each course could be weighted by the complexity of the cost of delivery, such as laboratory costs, NQF level and the proportion of time a student spends on campus.

66. The Panel recommends that the CHE should not embark on a systemic exercise to align qualifications to the new descriptors. The Panel rather recommends that a phased approach be adopted involving the use of the new qualification descriptors for applications for new qualifications two years from the date of the gazetting of the revised HEQSF. Alignment of existing qualifications should be managed through the re-accreditation processes outlined in the QAF, institutional language plans and the standard-setting processes. Guidelines should be prepared by the CHE to support implementation.
67. The Panel, therefore, recommends that the revised HEQSF be supplemented by standards, guidelines and examples of good practice developed by communities of practice to enable different agents (institutional/organisational/individual) to reflect critically on how to interpret and implement key elements of the framework in different contexts.

Discourse

68. The Panel suggests that the revised HEQSF should be written in a manner that reflects the critical role of agency (institutional, organisational, individual) in navigating within and between sub-frameworks.

Definitions

69. The Panel undertook a comparison between definitions contained in the DHET Glossary of Terms and the SAQA NQFPedia and proposed changes to definitions arising from the Panel's recommendations (See Annexure N). The Panel recommends engagement between the DHET, the CHE and SAQA regarding definitions with a view to aligning the definitions in the revised HEQSF and the DHET Glossary of Terms and the SAQA NQFPedia.

Monitoring and Evaluation

70. The HEQSF should be reviewed every five years to ensure that it is responsive to changes in the national, regional, continental and wider international contexts. Views of key stakeholders, namely higher education institutions, national student associations, professional bodies, and relevant regulatory bodies, should constitute important sources of information for such reviews. Reviews of

qualifications should form key components of institutional quality-management systems.

71. A review of the measurement of post-school qualifications in surveys and the census instrument would improve the usefulness of these data in monitoring and evaluating the longer-term outcomes (for example, employment, earnings, health and other related variables) associated with different qualifications. (See Annexure L for a detailed report on this).

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ANNEXURE A: PROGRAMME FOR WEBINAR HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2020



ANNEXURE A
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ANNEXURE B: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE FORM



ANNEXURE B
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ANNEXURE C: BRIEF FOR RESEARCH INTO TAKE UP RATES OF QUALIFICATION



ANNEXURE C
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ANNEXURE D: BRIEF FOR RESEARCH INTO KEY ARTICULATION ROUTES



ANNEXURE E: RESEARCH INTO APPLICATIONS FOR NEW QUALIFICATIONS AND PROGRAMMES



ANNEXURE E
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**ANNEXURE F: ANALYSIS (QUALITATIVE) OF INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES ON THE
REVIEW OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK**



ANNEXURE F
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ANNEXURE G: REPORT ON ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA












ANNEXURE H: SUMMARY OF HIGHER CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS FROM 2014 TO 2019



ANNEXURE H
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ANNEXURE I: COMBINED LITERATURE REVIEW AND DATA RESULTS

 Combined Literature Review 1 March 21.p	
 Copy of Bullet 2 Results.xlsx	 bullet 1.xlsx
 Copy of Bullet 3 Results.xlsx	 Copy of Bullet 4 Results.xlsx
 Copy of Bullet 5 Results.xlsx	 Copy of Bullet 7 Results.xlsx
 Copy of HEQSF Data Extraction Publics an	 MG_Copy of Copy of HEQSF Data Extrac

ANNEXURE J: SOME INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES OF RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL LEARNING



ANNEXURE K: COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES OF METHODS TO ASSESS NON-FORMAL LEARNING



ANNEXURE K
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ANNEXURE L: DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED WHEN USING SURVEY DATA FOR POST-SCHOOL QUALIFICATION MEASUREMENT



ANNEXURE M: RISK ASSESSMENT



Risk
assessment.pdf

ANNEXURE N: GLOSSARY OF DEFINITONS



definintions
comparison.pdf