ASSESSMENT POLICY

Contents

1. Background

1.1. Legal / regulatory and policy reference

Sub Regulation 9(1)(d) of the Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies Regulations, 1998 (No. R 1127 of 1998) (ETQA Regulations), promulgated under Section 14 of the South African Qualifications Authority Act (Act No. 58 of 1995) requires ETQAs to **"evaluate assessments and facilitation of moderation amongst constituent providers"**.

Summary of legal and policy reference documents

- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No 108 of 1996)
- Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (Act No. 3 of 2000)
- South African Qualifications Authority Act (Act No. 58 of 1995)
- Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies Regulations (No. R 1127 of 1998)
- SAQA 2001 *Quality Management Systems for Education and Training Providers*
http://www.saqa.org.za/>Documents>Criteria and Guidelines>All Documents
- SAQA 2001 *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers*
http://www.saqa.org.za/>Documents>Criteria and Guidelines>All Documents
- SAQA 2002. *Criteria and Guidelines for the Registration of Assessors*
http://www.saqa.org.za/>Documents>Criteria and Guidelines>All Documents

1.2 Definitions

The definitions of the terms below apply to their use in this policy:

- "**Accreditation**" means the certification, usually for a particular period of time, of a person, a body or an institution as having the capacity to fulfil a particular function in the quality assurance system set up by the South African Qualifications Authority in terms of the SAQA Act.
- "**Accreditation scope**" means the list of qualification(s) and/or unit standard(s) for which a body is accredited for a defined purpose.

- "**Assessor**" means the person who is registered by the relevant Education and Training Quality Assurance Body in accordance with criteria established for this purpose by a

Standards Generating Body to measure the achievement of specified National Qualifications Framework standards or qualifications, and "constituent assessor" has a corresponding meaning.

- "**Education and Training Quality Assurance Body**" (ETQA) means a body accredited in terms of section 5(1) (a) (ii) of the SAQA Act, responsible for monitoring and auditing achievements in terms of national standards or qualifications, and to which specific functions relating to the monitoring and auditing of national standards or qualifications have been assigned in terms of section 5(1) (b) (i) of the SAQA Act.

- "**High-stakes assessments decision**" means an assessment decision that has consequences with significant implications for the life opportunities, safety and well-being of learners or other people.

- "**Moderation**" means the process which ensures that assessment of the outcomes described in National Qualifications Framework standards or qualifications is fair, valid and reliable.

- **Moderator**" means someone who is competent to conduct a moderation process.

- "**Primary focus**" means that activity or objective within the sector upon which an organisation or body concentrates its efforts.

- "**Provider**" means a body that delivers learning programmes which culminate in specified National Qualifications Framework standards or qualifications and manages the assessment thereof.

- "**Quality assurance**" means the process of ensuring that the degree of excellence specified is achieved.

- "**Registered standards**" means unit standards or qualifications registered on the National Qualifications Framework.

- "**Registration scope**" means the list of registered standards for which an assessor or moderator is registered with the SETA as an assessor or moderator.

1.3 Application and scope

The policy applies to all assessment, verification of assessment decisions, internal verification and external / moderation processes conducted by assessors and moderators registered in terms of the BANK SETA ETQA Assessor and Moderator Registration policy.

1.4 Relationship to other ETQA policies

- Accreditation Policy
- Monitoring and Evaluation Policy
- Certification Policy

1.5 Accountability and responsibility

The ETQA staff and or its representatives are responsible and accountable for managing and overseeing the implementation, maintenance, review and improvement of the BANKSETA assessment, internal and external verification policy and procedures.

2. Purpose and content

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure that assessment measures learning in line with the **national qualification framework.**
- Establish framework for **verification of assessment decisions** made against qualifications and unit standards for which the BANKSETA has been accredited as ETQA.
- Provide **learner access to assessment and accreditation services** within a framework of internal verification and or moderation system.
- Ensure verification of assessment decisions and moderation of training conducted against qualifications and unit standards for which the constituent providers has been accredited by the BANKSETA ETQA are **assessed validly, reliably and practicably**.

- Ensure the **credibility of learner achievements** as depended on appropriate internal quality assurance system of assessments, moderation and external moderation process.
- Recognize the **roles and responsibilities of assessors, internal verifiers and external verifiers** as being essential to the delivery and quality assurance processes within the NQF framework.
- Provide mechanisms for handling **appeal decisions** on assessments.
- Give effect to quality assurance in assessment processes by establishing quality control mechanisms for assessment through a **system of sampling, moderation** and verification as appropriate to qualifications and skills programmes.

3. Principles

3.1 BANKSETA ETQA has identified the following **principles which underpin this assessment policy**. These principles are consistent with BANKSETA ETQA values and policies in other areas.

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION
Integration	To form part of a system of human resources development that provides for the establishment of a unifying approach to education and training.
Relevance	To be and remain responsive to national development needs.
Credibility	To have international and national value and acceptance.
Coherence	To work within a consistent framework of principles and certification.
Flexibility	To allow for multiple pathways to the same learning ends.
Standards	To be expressed in terms of a nationally agreed framework and internationally acceptable outcomes.
Legitimacy	To provide for the participation of all national stakeholders in the planning and co-ordination of standards and qualifications.
Access	To provide ease of entry to appropriate levels of education and training for all prospective learners in a manner that facilitates progression.
Articulation	To provide learners, on successful completion of accredited prerequisites, to move between components of the delivery system.
Progression	To ensure that the framework of qualifications permits individuals to move through the levels of national qualifications via different appropriate combinations of the components of the delivery system.
Portability	To ensure learners to transfer credits of qualifications from one learning institution and/or employer to another.
Recognition of Prior Learning	To, through assessment, give credit to learning which has already been acquired in different ways.
Guidance of learners	To provide for counselling of learners by specially trained individuals who meet nationally recognised standards of educators and trainers.

3.2 The **basic values and principles** governing public administration are enshrined in Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. In particular:

- the SETA shall use resources in provider assessment and moderation processes economically, efficiently and effectively (subsection (1)b);
- the SETA's administration of assessment and moderation processes shall be development-oriented, especially regarding assessors who are registered through emerging and SMME providers (subsection (1)c).

3.3 Adherence to procedural fairness as required by the Promotion of Justice Act (Act No. 3 of 2003) in terms of:

a) Reasonable notice (nature and purpose);
b) A chance to make representations;
c) A clear statement of the administrative action;
d) Advice as to review or internal appeal; and
e) Advice as to the right to request reasons.

4. General requirements

- BANKSETA ETQA **will ensure** that providers **conduct fair and consistent assessment policies and practices**, by adopting the policy on assessment; quality assuring provider's assessment processes, validating assessment arrangements per programme and monitoring their fair and consistent implementation.
- BANKSETA ETQA will put in place **internal quality systems and processes** regarding the processing of results received from providers and the operation of an appeals process.
- Accredited providers will be **required to develop an assessment policy and procedures as part of their quality assurance** with BANKSETA ETQA. The provider will outline their assessment arrangements per programme as part of their submission for validation.
- BANKSETA ETQA will **monitor providers**, their programmes and the attainment of the national standards to **ensure the effective implementation of fair and consistent assessment within and across** all providers.
- The BANKSETA ETQA will provide a policy requiring providers to **develop quality assurance system of learning provision in terms of assessment practices, internal and external moderation.**

5.   Assessment requirements

5.1   Planning & implementation of assessment

- Providers will develop a coordinated assessment plan per programme.
- The selected assessment methods will be appropriate to the programme content and its outcomes, which are in line with the standards of knowledge, skill and competence of the unit standard and or qualification.
- Where appropriate, a range of assessment methods should be applied - assessment should, where possible, be integrated and over-assessment avoided.
- Appropriate language and expressions will be used in the assessment.
- Appropriate timing of assessment will occur, including setting of deadlines and related policy (e.g. for treatment of assessment evidence submitted late).

5.2   Recognition of prior learning

Assessment processes will be in place for the recognition of prior learning.
These should be consistent with BANKSETA ETQA policy on the recognition of prior learning.

5.3   Making assessment decisions

- **Sufficient evidence** will be gathered upon which to **make an assessment decision.**
- Assessment marking will be **consistent / reliable across internal assessors.**
- Assessment will be undertaken by a **suitably qualified and registered assessor** (i.e. have relevant qualifications and/or relevant current knowledge, skill and competence in the area which they are assessing).
- **Assessment systems** will include **internal moderation** and checking processes.
- Learner information forwarded to BANKSETA ETQA for certification purposes should be accurate and reliable.
- An **internal appeals mechanism** will be in place for learners wishing to appeal the outcome of an assessment.
- Providers will have in place arrangements for **corrective action**, if and when issues arise which could impact on the validity of certificates.

- These arrangements will include immediate notification to BANKSETA ETQA.

5.4 Informing learners

Assessment will be **transparent** and all pertinent information will be made available to learners, **prior to the assessment**.

Processes will be in place to ensure **clear results** are given to learners.

Constructive formative feedback as appropriate should be given to learners.

6. Assessment methods

The following principles and methodologies will guide and inform BANKSETA's assessment policies and procedures:

6.1 Integrated assessment

Integrated assessment will allow for the integration of knowledge and skills, theory and practice, and will require the learner to demonstrate competence in adapting to changed circumstances.

"Competence" in SAQA terms refers to applied competence and "outcomes" are the end products of a learning process. They are statements regarding the learner's competence that can be demonstrated and assessed.

Integrated assessment will work as follows:

- In unit standards, specific outcomes and critical cross-field outcomes will be assessed simultaneously.
- Where there is a logical progression of tasks, a number of outcomes / assessment criteria /unit standards will be assessed together.
- A varied combination of assessment methods and instruments will be used.
- Where possible, naturally-occurring evidence (such as in a workplace setting) will be collected.
- Evidence will be acquired from other sources such as supervisors' reports, testimonials, portfolios of work previously done, logbooks, journals, etc.

6.2 Criterion vs. norm-referenced methods

- In keeping with the outcomes-based philosophy, **criterion-referenced** assessments will be used.
- Norm-referenced methods, such as exit level examinations may still be used to assess knowledge but it will not be the only and decisive form of assessment.
- Designers of assessment should ensure that norm-referenced methods are only used as part of a range of assessment methods.

Conditions for formal testing:

Where traditional methods are used e.g. tests or exams, the following conditions will apply:

- The time allowed will be flexible to accommodate the "exam-mentality" e.g. 2hours, up to a maximum of 3hours may be allowed.
- If the learner is assessed as not-yet-competent, the assessor should check for possible reasons other than a lack of competence e.g. language barriers. In such instances the learner should be allowed to redo the portion of the test, using another method of assessment if necessary, depending on the need.
- Codes should be used for ranking results, not percentages, e.g. C for competent, NYC for not-yet-competent, VHC for very highly competent.

6.3 Formative and summative assessments

- **Formative assessment** refers to assessment that takes place during the process of learning and teaching and is developmental in nature.
- **Summative assessment** is conducted to make a judgement about learner achievement, at the end of a learning programme and when a learner is ready to be assessed.
- With the agreement of the learner, results collected from formative assessment activities may be used for summative assessment.

Note: It will be imperative that the learner be made to understand up front that he/she is being assessed towards a credit and that learning achievements will be recorded and reported on.

6.4 Assessing unit standards and qualifications

6.4.1 Unit standards

Learning programmes may be organized around one outcome or a set of outcomes depending on what is appropriate in terms of the unit standard/s and ensuring learner success. Summative assessments should be administered when a learner has achieved learning against a learning programme and is ready to be assessed.

6.4.2 Assessing qualifications

Learning programmes may be designed around one outcome or set of outcomes. Assessments may take place at the end of each learning programme developed for this unit, or at the end of all the outcomes of the qualification.

A learning programme designed along this basis makes it possible for summative assessments to be done on a continuous basis, throughout the learning experience, as for formative assessment. It can be carried out at any of the given points of the programme of learning.

This notion of summative assessment would mean that assessment would not be confined to a written examination that can only assess a sample of learning within a limited time, such as the old-fashioned 3-hour exam. It allows for the use of a range of assessment methods and instruments, which mean that evidence can be collected from a variety of sources.

This will be applicable to both formative and summative assessment with the proviso that the assessment method and instruments match what is being assessed and that appropriate and sufficient evidence has been collected.

Every outcome and its associated assessment criteria specified in a unit standard or qualification will be assessed for credit purposes.

6.4.3 Transparency is imperative

It must be made clear to the learner whether the assessment being administered is formative or summative in nature and the implications of each.

When summative assessment is carried out, it must be clear that the results of the assessment will be recorded and reported as a credit gained or not gained.

The learner must be clear about what he/she is being assessed on, by whom, and when.

The learner will have recourse to appeal if the assessor does not adhere to these conditions.

6.4   Types of evidence

Assessment design should allow for direct, indirect and historical evidence but the different types should be used in combination to corroborate the quality of evidence produced.
The following indicators will be used to evaluate the quality of evidence:

Validity

Evidence should be appropriate for the specific outcomes and criteria to be assessed e.g. it would not be appropriate to assess a practical skill such as conducting a risk survey by means of a knowledge test alone.

Authenticity

Where the assessor does not have the luxury of direct observation, the assessment design should build in checks to ensure that evidence produced is the learner's own work, and in the case of group work that he/she has made a fair enough contribution to the end result.
An option would be to assess clusters of unit standards where performance outcomes can be integrated.

Sufficiency

Evidence produced should be sufficient to meet all the criteria and applicable range statements needed to certify the learner as competent. Various sources of evidence and a variety of assessment activities should be used towards ensuring that the evidence is sufficient and that the learner is able to repeat the performance

Currency

Past evidence provided of a learner's skills, knowledge and understanding should be applicable to present circumstances. Evidence produced should not be more than 3 years old, unless the learner's portfolio has been maintained and the learner has kept up to date with current practice.

7.   Internal moderation requirements

- The internal moderator is at the heart of quality assurance in all programmes, both within the national framework and within the quality and management systems of each approved centre. The role, in terms of managing assessment is that it consistently meets national standards.
- Where it is impracticable to have moderators who are subject-matter experts, moderators should establish partnerships with others who are competent to provide endorsement of decisions relating to the subject-matter of an assessment. This may include another competent moderator.
- The internal moderator of an assessment shall be a different person from that who did the assessment. Such moderator shall also have no actual or perceived interest in the outcome of the assessment. If no such moderator answering to these qualifications is available, the relevant ETQA shall be requested to appoint a moderator.
- In relation to any "high-stakes" assessment (e.g., where the declaration of competence impacts on the health and safety of persons), subject-matter competence of assessors and moderators / moderators is mandatory.
- Moderators must be also familiar with (and continuously refresh their understanding of)
  - Current unit standards and qualifications;
  - Relevant policies, legislation and regulations; and
  - Quality assurance and reporting requirements.
- Internal moderators must have all skills required to effectively perform all functions according to latest methods, including, but not limited to communication with the ETQA, providers, assessors, assessment agencies and candidates.
- Internal moderation includes consideration of:
  - The design of the assessment itself to ensure that the choice and design of assessment methods are appropriate for the standards being measured by the assessment.

- The implementation of the assessment according to the specified guidelines.
- The verification and review of the assessment process to ensure that assessors are using feedback to develop their assessment procedures.

7.1 Role of moderators

Moderators must fulfil the roles and functions allocated to them in terms of the relevant policies and procedures of SAQA, the ETQA and in particular that of constituent accredited providers. Such roles and functions may include:

- Carrying out and evaluating internal assessment and quality assurance systems.
- Supporting providers and assessment agencies **in identifying the assessment and moderation capacity required to implement the NQF** and the skills development strategy effectively.
- **Conducting moderation of assessment instruments, plans and guides** on any occasion in which these are first used, or are revised, including documenting proof of individual learners' competence status.
- **Verifying that** assessments are fair, valid, reliable and practical.
- **Identifying areas of improvements** within the assessment system.
- **Provide support and guidance to the assessors**.
- **Identifying the need to redesign assessments, assessment tools / instruments** if required.
- **Identifying the need to redesign moderation, moderation systems**, tools if required.
- **Conducting moderation of assessment results and records** using a 10% minimum sample as prescribed by organizational and sectoral policies.
- **Evaluating** the performance of registered assessors.
- **Providing an appeals procedure for dissatisfied** learners.
- Reporting on quarterly basis **to relevant parties, including the ETQA, on the results** of their moderation.
- **Initiating appropriate strategies to continuously improve the quality of assessments**, and hence the **integrity and credibility of the national system for assessment** and **certification**.

8.   External verification requirements

BANKSETA ETQA verification of providers, and or qualifications is a comprehensive check on achievement and ensures that a learner is given the best opportunity to achieve their best quality of work and therefore their best overall result / competence.

External verification is conducted at ETQA Level by an external organization; the external verifier uses a random sample of 10%. It usually involves:

- Confirming provider accreditation status;
- Structured curriculum;
- Implementation mechanisms of the provider's QMS. In particular, elected workplaces providing learners with the required exposure as per the qualification / learnership / skills programme requirement;
- Learning material and relevance to the qualification / learnership / skills programme;
- Constituent status of assessors and moderators;
- The provider's assessment guides indicating the following:
    - Design of assessment activities and the process that will be followed.
    - The provider's assessment tools that will be used for formative assessments.
    - The provider's assessment tools that will be used for summative assessments.
    - Portfolio of Evidence (PoE) indicating the following review of formative assessment.
    - The work being assessed is the learner's own work – authenticity;
    - summative assessments;
    - Progress and assessor reports;
- Learner records database and upload of enrolment / achievements;
- The provider's moderation guides indicating the following:
    Design of moderation activities and the process that will be followed;
    Moderation plan;
    Sampling requirements;
    Moderation report.

9.   Appeals

9.1 Appeals can be brought against:

- Assessments that are perceived to have been unfair, invalid or unreliable.
- The assessment outcome, if the assessor's judgement is considered to be biased.

- Inadequate expertise or experience of the assessor, if this is considered to have influenced the assessment.
- Unethical practices.
- Learners should be secure in the knowledge that they can appeal against an unfair assessment.
- Every candidate being assessed and or moderated has the right to appeal against the decisions, conduct or compliance of the assessor or moderator.
- All candidates shall be familiarized with proper appeals procedure.

9.2 Appeals procedure

The following steps will apply:
- Assessment is conducted. If the learner is found competent this leads to credit in the normal way. If the learner is found not-yet-competent, the learner may lodge an appeal, in writing on specially-designed forms, within 10 working days. This appeal will be lodged with the internal moderator.
- The internal moderator conducts an investigation in consultation with the assessor and learner, within 15 days of receipt of appeal notice.
- If the learner is still found not-yet-competent, a further appeal may be lodged with the external moderator. The external moderator conducts an investigation within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal notice. This investigation may involve the internal moderator, assessor, learner and possibly an expert-witness and/or an objective third party in agreement with all parties.
- If the learner is found to not be competent at this stage he / she should be given guidance on other possible and more suitable learning pathways. A career guidance counsellor will play a major role in this process.

Any learner, who feels that s/he has been unfairly assessed, may institute an appeal as defined in this policy. The purpose of this appeals procedure is to give assessment and or moderation candidate's avenues through which they can challenge the assessor or moderators decision.

9.3 Re-assessment requirements

In line with the objective of cost effectiveness prescribed by the NQF, it is recommended that the assessment system should allow for re-assessment of learners. It is the ETQA

recommendation that learners should be given no more than one summative assessment and two re-assessment opportunities to reflect competence, without first completing the development plans as set by the learner, facilitator and assessor together, and incurring additional financial costs for the learner (or employer, at their discretion) to pay for additional re-assessments.

There are different cases for re-assessment. These could be:

• If a learner **has not yet achieved the level of competence required** to meet the stated learning outcomes of a summative assessment task(s), the learner should be re-assessed. Where possible, this re-assessment could take the form of an oral presentation.
• If a student has not yet achieved the level of competence required in an assessment to be credited with the registered unit standards or qualifications, the learner should be re-assessed. The accredited provider policy should guide the process.
• Dealing **with irregularities in assessment** practices.

10. Deviation from this policy

In the event of any deviation from this policy, explicit justification and alternative guidelines need to be provided to the ETQA manager, or his or her equivalent, prior to the implementation of the said deviation.

11. Evaluation, review and improvement

The effectiveness of the Verification Policy and procedures shall be monitored and annually reviewed against quality objectives and associated performance indicators to identify and implement appropriate amendments aimed at improving the effectiveness, economy and efficiency of said policy and procedures.