

OPEN LETTER TO LEARNERS:

What you should know before enrolling for a study programme or qualification

Before you register for a qualification or programme, please ensure that you fully understand the status of the institution offering the qualification and the status of the programme or qualification. Use the following information when considering the course you wish to enroll for. The choice you make is your responsibility – but it is very important that you make an informed decision.

Umalusi (the Council for Quality Assurance in the General and Further Education and Training) is the official body that accredits private providers / colleges and monitors the suitability and adequacy of qualifications and programmes at NQF levels 1- 4. These include private FET colleges, independent schools and private adult education and training providers.

Umalusi also certifies the following qualifications:

- The National Senior Certificate (NSC) which was written for the first time in 2008 – the old Senior Certificate will be completely phased out by 2011
- The National Certificate Vocational (NCV) which commenced in 2007 and which has replaced the National Technical Certificate (N3) as well as the NSC (Vocational) both currently being phased out.
- The General Education and Training Certificate: Adult (GETC)

Registration and Accreditation of Providers

To ensure that you enroll with a credible provider make sure that the institution is firstly registered and secondly accredited (these are two separate processes). All private providers of education and training MUST be registered with the state in order to operate legally in South Africa. This means that independent schools must register with the appropriate provincial department of education and private FET colleges must register with the national department of Education in Pretoria. Private providers are required to display their registration certificate publicly and you, as a prospective client, MUST ask to see the certificate of registration.

Secondly, private providers must be accredited either with Umalusi or another quality assurance body. Quality assurance bodies issue letters or certificates accrediting a provider and you should check on which body accredited the institution to offer the programme you wish to enroll for, and ask for the accreditation number. A list of accredited institutions also appears on Umalusi's website at www.umalusi.org.za

Qualifications and Programmes

Private providers generally offer three main types of qualifications, namely National Qualifications, Provider Programmes and Agent Qualifications.

National Qualifications

National Qualifications are formal qualifications registered on the national qualifications framework (NQF), which is a centralized register of all the nationally recognized

qualifications in South Africa. National qualifications are quality assured by an education and training quality assessor (ETQA) such as a sector education and training authority (SETA) or Umalusi; they carry national credits and are certificated by an ETQA (the SETA or Umalusi), not by a provider.

Examples of such qualifications are: The National Senior Certificate as offered by most high schools in South Africa; The GETC: Adult as offered by many adult education and training providers; The National Certificate Vocational (NCV) offered by public FET colleges; Further Education and Training Certificates of various kinds also offered by private FET colleges, such as Perishable Produce Exportation or Mechanical Engineering: Pipe-Fitting or Small Business Management and so forth. There are many such qualifications.

The registration status of qualifications on the NQF can be checked on the website of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) at www.saqa.org.za

Please keep the following in mind before you enroll for a National Qualification:

- Ask the provider for written proof that the qualification is registered on the NQF – the NQF ID number should be in evidence.
- Ask for evidence that the provider is registered with the Department of Education – a certificate should be publicly displayed.
- Ask for evidence that the provider has approval or accreditation from the relevant SETA or Umalusi or the Council for Higher Education (CHE) to offer the qualification.
- If you are enrolling for an N Certificate / NCV or National Senior Certificate, keep in mind that you will write national examinations set by the Department of Education. Providers are not allowed to set their own examinations or issue certificates for these qualifications. These qualifications are certified by Umalusi.

Provider Programmes

- If you are enrolling on a Provider Programme remember that they serve a different purpose to National Qualifications. Provider Programmes are usually designed to address specific education, training and development needs that may not necessarily be addressed by National Qualifications, for example courses for self-enrichment, continuous professional development, self-employment, or orientation to a specific career.
- Provider Programmes are quality assured and certified by the provider, i.e. the college, rather than an ETQA; they are not registered on the NQF; do not carry any national credits; and do not lead to a National Qualification.

Agent Qualifications

- Some providers offer qualifications and programmes on behalf of other awarding bodies. Some of these qualifications are national qualifications registered on the NQF while others are not, or are foreign qualifications. The provider acts as an agent of the awarding body. Examples include qualifications and programmes examined and certified by Cambridge, Microsoft, IMM, ICSA, City and Guilds, Edexcel and so forth etc.

To summarise, establish the following:

- What kind of programme or qualification you are about to enroll for (National qualification, provider programme or agency qualification)
- The programme / qualification's "status" and what the certificate will mean once you have completed the programme or qualification i.e. Will it be recognized nationally? Will it ensure a job? (National qualifications) Will it be recognized internationally? (Foreign qualification – but also a national qualification) Will it provide enrichment or professional development? (Provider Programme)
- Is the provider accredited either with Umalusi or a SETA ETQA? A list of providers accredited with Umalusi can be found at www.umalusi.org.za; SETA accredited providers can be found on the SETA websites and also accessed through the SAQA website at www.saqa.org.za
- Is the provider registered with the Department of Education? For FET colleges check on the following website: www.education.gov.za

ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS:

- CHE: Council for Higher Education – the ETQA that accredits and quality assures higher education providers and qualifications such as universities and other higher education providers
- ETQA: Education and Training Quality Assurer – a body that accredits and quality assures providers and their programmes / qualifications. Umalusi and the Council for Higher Education are both ETQAs; All SETAs are also ETQAs
- FET: Further Education and Training – refers to a level on the NQF from NQF 2-4 (Grades 10-12)
- NQF: National Qualifications Framework – a list of nationally recognised qualifications at different levels of the system namely general education; further education and higher education
- NCertificate: National Technical Certificates N1-N3 – qualification offered in FET colleges but being phased out
- NCV: National Certificate Vocational – new vocational qualification developed by the Department of Education to replace the National Technical Certificate
- SAQA: South African Qualifications Authority – the body established to oversee the establishment and maintenance of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
- SETA: Sector Education and Training Authority – every industrial sector in South Africa has a SETA that ensures that training for the sector is funded and delivered in terms of the Skill Development Act. A SETA also has a quality assurance section called an ETQA (See above), that will accredit providers to offer training programmes/ qualifications for the sector