

Qualifications, Documents and Acronyms

Q What is the occupational qualification?

A They are modern, industry-based qualifications that are developed under the legal auspices of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO).

Q What is included in an occupational qualification?

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 - Knowledge modules - theory.
 - Practical skills modules - on-the-job learning in a training centre or simulated environment.
 - Work experience modules - applying the knowledge modules and practical skills modules in a real-world environment.

Q Once the QCTO has developed a qualification what happens to it?

A Once developed, an occupational qualification is submitted to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) that, subject to meeting prescribed criteria, allows for the qualification to be registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Q So where can I find these occupational qualifications?

A The best place to start is on the QCTO website at <http://www.qcto.org.za/> or the SAQA website at <http://www.saqqa.org.za/>. Or, if you're in the Western Cape, submit a request to redtape@westerncape.gov.za for help.

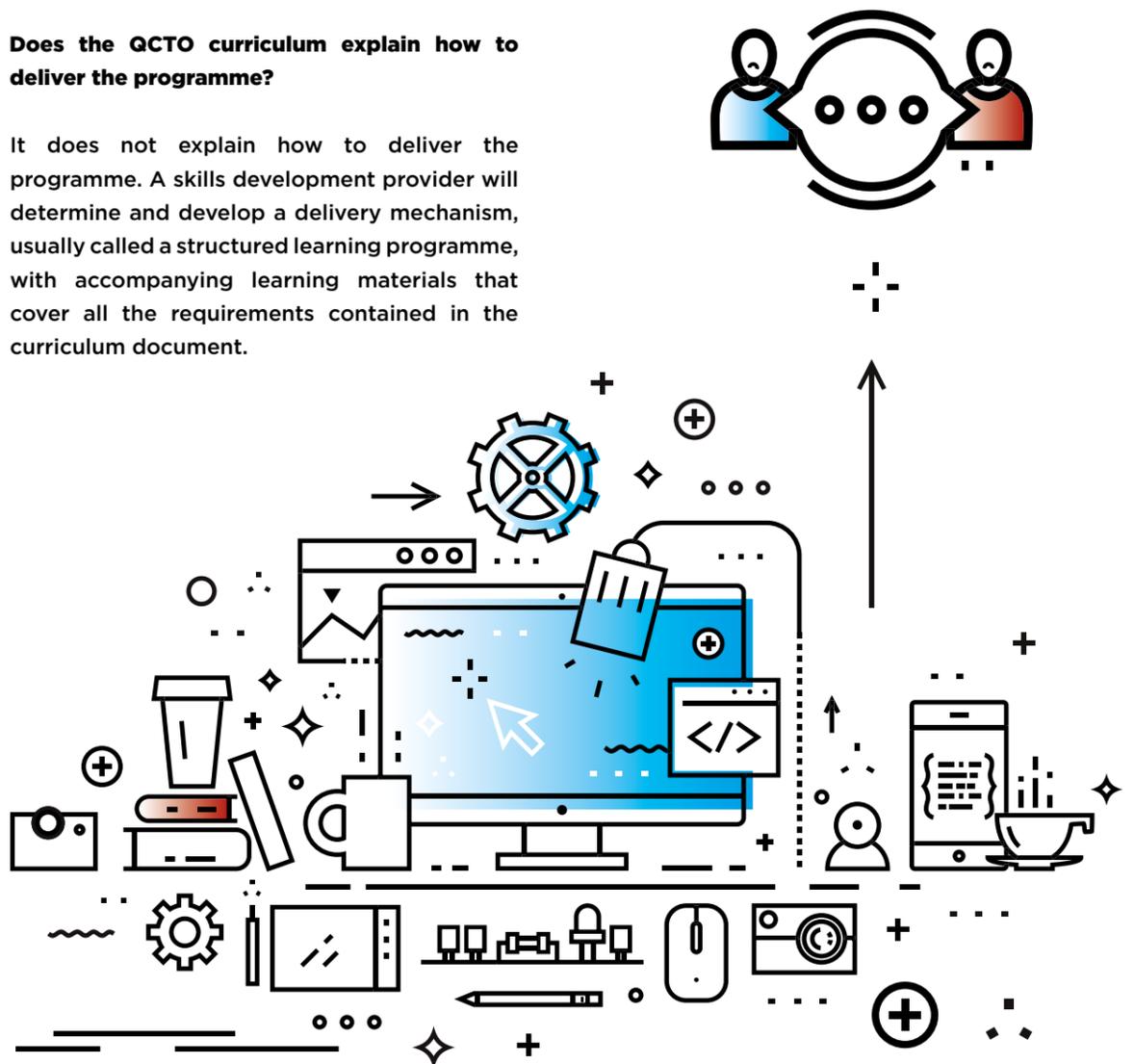
Q How are these occupational qualifications implemented?

A Each occupational qualification comes with a curriculum document which details the requirements for each of the modules contained within the qualifications. This is:

- A list of topics.
- Internal assessment specifications.
- Provider accreditation criteria.
- Workplace approval criteria.
- Allowed lecturer/trainer/mentor to learner ratio.

Q Does the QCTO curriculum explain how to deliver the programme?

A It does not explain how to deliver the programme. A skills development provider will determine and develop a delivery mechanism, usually called a structured learning programme, with accompanying learning materials that cover all the requirements contained in the curriculum document.



Q Is there an assessment or exam before a person can be certificated?

A An External Assessment Specifications document that describes how a person is "tested or examined" at the end of the full learning period to check for competence before being recommended for certification is also available with each occupational qualification.

Q How are occupational qualifications assessed or examined?

A All occupational qualifications have both the theoretical tests (exams in an academic context) and a practical test (a trade test in an artisan context). The actual assessment is called an EISA (External Integrated Summative Assessment).

Q What can you expect when you go for an EISA?

A The EISA includes a range of questions to test theory and practical tasks for the learner to check for actual hands-on competence. These questions and tasks are developed by experienced and qualified experts under the guidance of an Assessment Quality Partner (AQP) appointed by the QCTO.

Q Are the EISA questions and tasks always the same?

A No, there's a databank of questions, tasks and exemplars of such questions and tasks that are developed by the AQP for access by an accredited assessment centre to use when testing or examining a person. During an EISA, not all questions and/or tasks are carried out, instead a random sample is selected. This means the learner must have covered and be competent across all the component parts of a qualification.

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Q Where and who assesses a learner with an EISA?

A Only assessment centres accredited by the QCTO for that particular occupation.

Q What is this National Occupational Curriculum Content (NOCC)?

A The current QCTO process does not give the actual step-by-step process that is to be followed by providers, employers and learners on how to deliver an occupational qualification.

This approach allows for different delivery methodologies to be implemented, as long as the minimum requirement specified by the QCTO documents are met.

A NOCC document is required when using the dual system apprenticeship of learning. This system integrates theory and practise, based on a progressive set of learning projects, and requires a learner to rotate between an institution, such as a college, and the actual workplace at an employer.

Q So a NOCC is not mandatory for all occupational qualifications?

A No, as long as the skills development provider satisfies the QCTO that learning occurs in an integrated manner, other delivery mechanisms can be utilised.

Q Why is the NOCC being developed for all programmes at Centres of Specialisation?

A To set a minimum standard for an integrated structure learning programme for that occupational qualification, and to ensure that the public system chosen to deliver occupational qualifications does so in a standardised way across all 50 public TVET Colleges.

Q So can a NOCC be used by a private skills development provider?

A Yes, and they are encouraged to, allowing for a standardised minimum level of quality for delivery.

Q How is a NOCC developed?

A The NOCC is developed based on the occupational qualifications and supporting documents as well as the EISA. The result is a set of learning areas that contain a set of work situations. When learners commence an A21 they are guided through the learning process by the NOCC as to what to learn and in what order, until all work situations have been successfully completed.

Q What is the benefit of an NOCC to a learner?

A The NOCC is carefully designed to ensure that ALL the modules of the occupational qualifications are covered as the learner progresses through the various projects. This will ensure a learner covers all modules before he or she goes for an EISA.

Q How will the new A21 with a NOCC improve throughput?

A The internal assessment criteria for each work situation and learning area in a NOCC must be aligned to external assessment specification criteria with a single minimum standard guideline that all providers are to adhere to.

Q Does the new A21 & Centres of Specialisation consider employed or experienced workers?

A All occupational qualifications allow for the recognition of previous or prior learning, commonly known as RPL. Often, many people have already learnt by doing certain tasks related to certain occupations. RPL avoids unnecessary duplication, offering learners an opportunity to compile and submit "evidence" of their learning for "credit" - potentially shortening the time required for a programme and saving on costs.

Q So how does this "RPL" work?

A To facilitate the compilation of evidence for an RPL, an "RPL Mechanism or Toolkit" is also developed at the same time as the NOCC with industry experts. The "toolkit" details what constitutes acceptable evidence that should be submitted and may also include some practical tasks that an applicant may have to demonstrate in a training centre and/or at an actual workplace to prove their competence.

Q Is there any actual training involved in the RPL process?

A An RPL process replaces the training process with many years of self-training. However, the RPL toolkit and process also allows a person to determine his or her competency gaps and allows for gap training. However, should they have competency gaps of more than 40% of the competency required, it is often advised they enter into a formal apprenticeship rather than the RPL route.

Q Where can a person gain an RPL?

A RPL is offered by assessment centres accredited by the QCTO for that occupation. But, since the occupational qualifications are relatively new, not many RPL Toolkits are available.

