

Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes



Adopted 13 August 2003

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Short course provisioning is one of the most dynamic features of the emerging education and training system of South Africa. This kind of provisioning is particularly associated with 'just in time', and 'just enough' learning to meet a specific need in workplace environments. Therefore, it is considered a viable and common method for optimal workplace functioning in all contexts and greatly facilitates access to learning in a manageable manner in terms of cost, time, energy and resources, both for the employer and employee.

In addition, short course provisioning has a wider focus than workplace contexts: where research findings are disseminated and new knowledge is shared, it is also associated with continuing professional development.

A third area where short course provisioning is important, is where learners require a targeted short learning programme, to upgrade skills and knowledge to ensure success in their chosen field of learning.

With the new approach to education and training, short course provisioning has a very particular place in the system and has an important role to play in the development, up-skilling and multi-skilling of human resources. It is clear that it is relevant to all sectors and bands and it is therefore critical that it should be subject to the accreditation and quality assurance processes already in place for education and training providers of 'full' qualifications, i.e. providers who are offering a learning programme that will ensure that a learner is awarded with a certificate, diploma, degree, etc.

Some of the contexts where this kind of provisioning occur include:

- Teacher development through INSET-programmes
- Human Resources management where updates to acts have an impact on the human resource function of an organisation
- 'Hands-on' learning as part of a full qualification
- 'New' knowledge generated in a particular situation where this will impact operationally on an organization or profession and where this type of knowledge has not yet been included in a qualification
- Refresher courses for professionals, etc.

Further, provisioning of this nature will assist workplaces to develop meaningful career and learning pathways for their employees in a highly accessible manner. However, there is the real danger that this type of provisioning may result in disjointed and fragmented approaches and it is therefore important that designers of such learning programmes include a focus on the teaching and learning assumptions and the proposed approaches, in the interest of the learner, and where required, ensure that credits achieved through short courses, are articulated and has currency in terms of registered qualifications and unit

standards. If so, this may lead to improved workplace practice and to improved employability and mobility of the employee.

The need for this document stems from the lack of clarity about short course provisioning and the formalisation of a mode of delivery, which has been up to now, an informal and unregulated area of education and training. However, this does not say that all short course provisioning necessarily needs regulation, but where it impacts on public money expenditure and on the nature of credits towards registered unit standards and qualifications, it clearly needs quality assurance. An important point is that regulation of short course provisioning is only required where this may have an impact on the award of credits towards particular unit standards and qualifications. Short learning programmes with a non-credit bearing focus, do not fall within the ambit of this responsibility.

This document therefore hopes to clarify and formalise short course provisioning so that it could take its rightful place in the development of this country's human resources.

The *Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes* is not a stand-alone document and supports all the other SAQA documents dealing with accreditation and quality assurance of providers of education and training. The following documents are assumed to be familiar to the reader:

- ETQA regulations
- Criteria and guidelines for providers
- QMS for education and training providers

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Status of recorded short courses

In 2000 the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) initiated the recording of short courses to enable providers of short courses to be brought into the standard-setting and quality assurance processes set up for education and training system as a whole.

Some of the aims of the recording process were to:

- ❑ Gauge the current extent of short course delivery;
- ❑ Provide Standard Generating Bodies (SGBs) with information about how and the type of education and training currently being delivered in the system, thereby providing some idea of what appropriate unit standards and qualifications could be established;
- ❑ Provide SGBs with insights into how articulation between unit standards and/or part qualifications and full qualifications could be structured; and
- ❑ Reassure providers and learners that a process is being put in place to bring this area of provisioning into the new system in a coherent and systematic way.

The recording of short courses came to an end in November 2001. No new submissions were accepted and since then all short course providers have been referred to the appropriate ETQA to initiate their accreditation processes.

It should be noted that at the time, SAQA made it clear that the recording process did not replace the need for registration (with the Department of Education) or accreditation with an appropriate Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (ETQA) (refer to Appendix A: the Memorandum of Understanding between the provider and the South African Qualifications Authority). The recording of short courses was at the most an attempt to facilitate the development of processes to be more inclusive of different types of providers and modes of delivery in the emerging education and training system.

However, the recording process highlighted the following pertinent issues in the delivery of short courses:

- a. A relatively small number of providers submitted their short courses for recording (approximately 700), but these ranged from consultancies run by a single person, to large public and private providers such as universities and technikons
- b. The most significant number of short courses was submitted in the sub-field Business, Commerce and Management studies (a total of 2077 courses of which 701 courses fell within the Generic Management sub-field). This was followed by courses within the field of Education, Training and Development, Health

Sciences and Social Services, Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences and Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology.

- c. Short courses are being offered at all levels and in most fields of learning of the National Qualifications Framework, ranging from courses for Continuing Professional Development to skills-based courses.

In terms of the aims of the recording process, SAQA felt satisfied that it did achieve clarity on some areas of delivery. However, a large percentage of courses were not captured, notably those offered by the Department of Labour in the form of their “Training of Unemployed Persons” (TuP) courses and the public Further Education and Training Institutions (Technical Colleges) short courses that fall under the Department of Education.

Further, in terms of the extent to which standard and qualification generation was informed by current short course delivery, the success was limited, largely due to a lack of Standard Generation Bodies in the particular sub-fields.

Lastly, in terms of reassuring providers and learners that this type of provisioning is being brought into the system, this process was hampered by the setting up phase within which most of the ETQAs were finding themselves and the lack of clarity as to the processes required for the quality assurance of short course provisioning.

In the interim, providers of short courses were increasingly subjected to pressures created by employers for registration and accreditation as providers so that the repayment of a percentage of the levy grant (as per the Skills Development Levies Act) by Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) can be effected. There is a belief that employers can only claim their levies back when making use of accredited providers. This is not entirely correct. In the Government Gazette (No 20865 of 7 February 2000) it is made clear that the Skills Development Levies Act provides for recovery of the levy payment based on the submission of Workplace Skills Plans (WSPs), Workplace Skills Implementation Plans (WSIPs) and the submission of the names of Skills Development Facilitators (SDFs), not on the basis of making use of accredited providers and NQF-aligned learning programmes.. The Regulations to the Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998) stipulate that:

There are six types of grants that an employer might claim. These are:

- A workplace skills grant;
- A workplace skills implementation grant;
- A grant towards the costs of learnerships and learner allowances;
- A grant towards the costs of skills programmes;
- A grant towards the costs of providing apprenticeship training; and
- A grant towards a programme, project or research activity that helps the relevant SETA to implement its sector skills plan.

The first two grants – for the submission of a workplace skills plan, and for a subsequent implementation report on the training provided – MUST be paid by the relevant SETA as long as an employer submits the application correctly on time, as assessed by the appropriate SETA. The Regulations refer to these as mandatory grants.

Discretionary grants MAY be disbursed by a SETA based on the extent to which providers are facilitating the implementation of the skills plan for the particular sector.

(Refer to Appendix B for the Skills Development Regulations Guidelines)

These guidelines make it clear that the payment of grants hinge on the extent to which an employer implements the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) and the extent to which this is in line with the Sector Skills Plan (SSP).

This clearly gives the system the necessary space to develop and implement the new approach to education and training in the workplace, but it impacts on the way in which providers of short courses view and construct their short learning programmes. Many short learning programmes for example, that traditionally were seen as short courses, may be considered to be skills programmes. This will make it possible for employers to claim back the mandatory grant, as well as the grant allocated for ‘skills programmes’.

However, the term ‘skills programmes’ may be too restrictive to deal with the variety of short learning programmes offered by different providers, particularly in Higher Education contexts. (In the chapter dealing with “Defining Short Courses and Skills Programmes”, this document proposes several interpretations of short course provisioning which may be helpful to clarify the approach.) While it may therefore not be possible to call such short learning programmes ‘skills programmes’, these programmes clearly have a particular purpose and may also facilitate the implementation of Workplace Skills Plans and Sector Skills Plans.

To re-iterate: in interpreting the Skills Development Act and the Skills Development Levies Act, many providers, particularly private providers, were placed under pressure from employers and government to be accredited and to have their courses registered. This is important and will remain a key objective for the quality assurance of short course provisioning, but it is clear from the two Acts mentioned above that this is not the basis upon which skills grants are disbursed. The need for registration and accreditation stems from the need to award credits for learning, i.e. that learners who enroll for learning programmes be given formal recognition for their learning attained through a short learning programme. A balance between the two imperatives: delivering training against WSPs and SSPs and delivering learning programmes that will lead to credits towards unit standards and part qualifications, will ensure that short course provisioning takes its place in the development and implementation of the emerging education and training system.

1.2 Consultative process

In keeping with the normal consultative processes followed by the South African Qualifications Authority, SAQA hosted a workshop with ETQAs and the Department of Education and Labour in February 2002. This was followed by a series of focus group meetings with ETQAs throughout 2002. In addition, the draft discussion document was made available for public comment from November 2002 to February 2003. The discussion document was published in the Government Gazette of ... and was placed on the SAQA website for the duration of the public comment period. These processes culminated in the development of the document: *Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes*. A second round of consultation was undertaken through focus group meetings in April 2003. The document was adopted by the SAQA meeting of 13 August 2003.

CHAPTER 2 will deal with Defining Short Course provisioning and clarifying its position in terms of education and training

CHAPTER 2

DEFINING SHORT COURSE PROVISIONING

In the Executive Summary and Introduction (Chapter 1), ‘short course provisioning’ is used to describe the type of provisioning which is considered to be short learning programmes, including what is known as short courses and skills programmes. This section puts forward terms and definitions that will be used for the remainder of the document. Every attempt has been made to use terminology closely related to our current understanding of this area of provisioning. The term ‘skills programmes’, for example is clearly defined in the Skills Development Act, but the term ‘short courses’ is almost a ‘catch-all’ description for everything else that does not necessarily fall within the description for skills programmes. There clearly is a need for a common understanding of short course provisioning. This chapter will propose some workable definitions.

However, before the discussion details the descriptions of the variety of short learning programmes that may either fall within the ambit of skills programmes or short courses, there is a need to clarify the terms ‘registration’ and ‘accreditation’. These two terms are often used interchangeably, but in fact relate to two different processes.

2.1 Registration and Accreditation

The following diagram deals with ‘registration’:

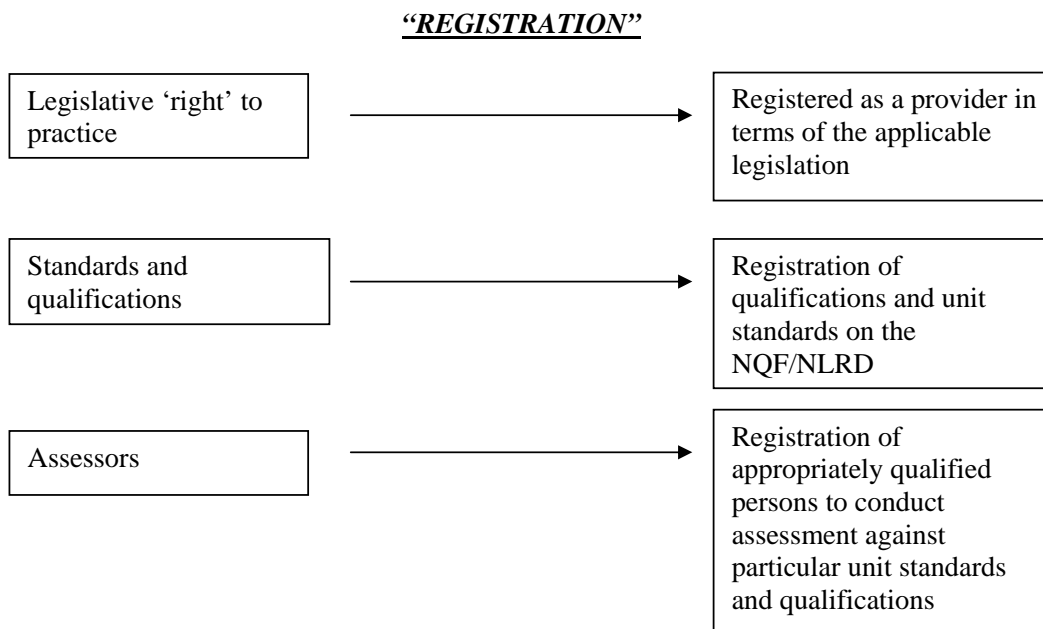


Figure 1: Registration

The term 'registration' is therefore particularly associated with **the 'right' to practice**. This is true for providers, as well as for assessors.

In terms of the registration of unit standards and qualifications, the point needs to be made that **courses**, i.e. the **learning content** of a learning programme is not registered on the NQF. What is registered on the NQF is a description of the outcome, or **the result of learning**. The course (content) therefore is the vehicle whereby providers of education and training ensure that learners meet the requirements of the unit standard and/or qualification. Learning programmes/learning content may be subject to programme evaluation initiated by the Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (ETQA), but will never appear as such on the NQF.

A formal definition taken from the ETQA Regulations (No 1127 of 8 September 1998) for registration is as follows:

“Registration means to be registered as a provider in terms of the applicable legislation”

However, currently not all providers of short learning programmes are in the position to 'register'. The Department of Education will only register providers who are offering 'full' qualifications and therefore part qualifications derived from such 'full' qualifications. Until such time that the Department of Education develops a system whereby providers of short learning programmes, i.e. providers offering programmes which will lead to credits towards 'part' qualifications, could be registered, providers cannot be prevented from developing and offering such short learning programmes.

A critical issue that arises out of this situation is the extent to which credits can be awarded for learning outcomes achieved through short learning programmes. It may mean that we are unwittingly creating a situation where recognition of prior learning (RPL), will become a critical service to be offered at public and private institutions offering 'full' qualifications, in order to recognise learning achieved outside of formal institutions. Whilst it should be acknowledged that the education and training system is evolving, and that the Department of Education may wish to focus on providers offering full qualifications at the moment, to bring short course provisioning fully into the system, pressure must be maintained for the issue of registration of short learning programme providers to be resolved (refer to Appendix C).

Note: The term '**conditional registration**' is particularly associated with the registration of a private higher education institution as specified in the Higher Education Act (No 101 of 1997) and therefore also deals with the requirement to register to be given the 'right to practice' as an education and training provider.

The next issue, which seems to create much confusion, is 'accreditation' as an education and training provider, with the appropriate Education and Training Quality Assurance body.

Consider the diagram for ‘accreditation’

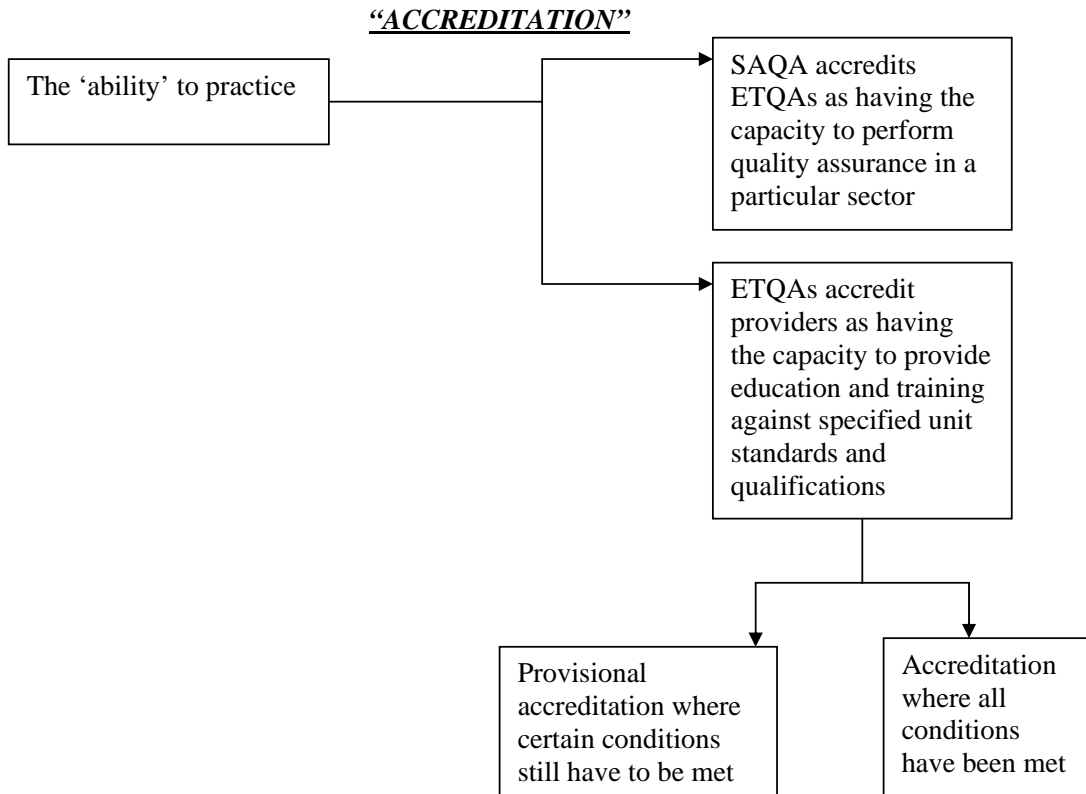


Figure 2: Accreditation

A formal definition taken from the ETQA Regulations (No 1127 of 8 September 1998) for ‘accreditation’ is as follows:

“Accreditation” means the certification, usually for a particular period of time, of a person, a body or an institution as having the capacity to fulfill a particular function in the quality assurance system set up by the South African Qualifications Authority in terms of the Act (No 58 of 1995).

The term ‘**provisional accreditation**’ is associated with providers who have met a set of minimum criteria as established by the ETQA, but where some conditions still have to be met. This makes it possible for providers to continue offering their learning programmes, but to, within a particular time frame, meet the outstanding requirements for accreditation.

2.2 Short courses and Skills Programmes

In an attempt to understand the delivery of education and training via short learning programmes, it has to be taken into account that some terms have become embedded in

the way in which we understand this form of provisioning. The following descriptions will try to retain this understanding. However, short course provisioning has not been formally conceptualised – therefore this document proposes a number of definitions based on formally accepted SAQA terminology as it appears in regulations, policies and criteria and guidelines documents. It has also considered the understanding of concepts as they appear in the draft New Academic Policy (CHE, 2001). However, in order to fill the vacuum in terms of commonly understood concepts, new definitions have been developed. It therefore seems necessary to develop a term that will encompass all programmes considered to be ‘short’. This super-ordinate term is ‘**short learning programmes**’ (Refer to definitions below).

Also, in trying to clarify the quality assurance measures needed for short learning programmes within the emerging education and training system, the key criterion for identifying whether a short learning programme needs regulation, is the relationship of the programme in terms of the award of credits towards unit standards and/or (part) qualifications. Short learning programmes are therefore differentiated by the extent to which they are ‘**credit-bearing**’. The diagram (Figure 3), below explains this notion.

2.2.1 Definitions

Term	Definition
Short Learning Programme	A short learning programme describes all short programmes, whether credits are awarded or not and is inclusive of skills programmes, credit-bearing short courses and non-credit-bearing short courses
Skills Programme	A skills programme is occupationally based and when completed will constitute credits towards a qualification registered in terms of the National Qualifications Framework. Provisioning is undertaken by a training provider accredited by an Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998). A skills programme is a type of short learning programme.
Short course	A short course is a type of short learning programme through which a learner may or may not be awarded credits, depending on the purpose of the programme
Credit-bearing short course	A credit-bearing short course is a type of short learning programme for which credits, in relation to its contribution to a particular programme, unit standard and/or (part) qualification, is awarded. (Paraphrased from CHE, 2001:44). A credit-bearing short course contains less than a 120 credits.
Non-credit bearing short course	A non-credit-bearing short course is a type of short learning programme for which no credits are awarded in relation to unit standards or (part) qualifications depending on the purpose and/or assessment of the programme.
Course	Course refers to the content of the short learning programme whereby learners may progressively attain

	the applied knowledge as described in unit standards and/or qualifications
Learning Programme	Learning programme means the sequential learning activities, associated with curriculum implementation, leading to the achievement of a particular qualification or part qualification (SAQA, 2000:5)
Programme	Programme means a coherent set of courses, leading to a certain qualification (SAQA, 2000:5)
Accreditation	Accreditation means the certification, usually for a particular period of time, of a person, a body or an institution as having the capacity to fulfill a particular function in the quality assurance system set up by the South African Qualifications Authority in terms of the Act (No 58 of 1995)
Approval/recognition or any other term appropriate for the sector	The approval/recognition of providers of short learning programmes that are not aligned to unit standards and qualifications ¹
Unit standard(s)	A unit standard is a description of the end points of learning for which the learner will get credit.
Exit level outcomes	An outcome is the demonstrable and assessable end products of a learning process. An exit level outcome has the same meaning, but is expressed as the overall result of learning for a qualification.

2.2.2 The notion of ‘short’ in relation to short learning programmes

In an outcomes-based education and training system there exists a tension between the credit rating in relation to an outcome (or result of learning) and the notional hours associated with the achievement of such credits. It is well documented and commonly understood that to achieve 1 credit towards a unit standard or qualification, it will take the average person 10 hours to master the embedded knowledge, skills and understanding required. It is therefore commonly understood that a 120 credits will take the average person 1 200 hours to meet the requirements of the qualification. In most cases, a 120 credits is considered to be the minimum number of credits awarded for a full qualification and that it would therefore take the average person 1 year to complete such a qualification. A short learning programme must therefore contain less than 120 credits.

However, in addition to the notional hours, a further important differentiation is made between qualifications and short learning programmes:

- ❑ A qualification must, in terms of the rules of combination, contain fundamental, core and elective learning.
- ❑ A short learning programme focuses on a particular part of a qualification, which may include learning in the fundamental **or** core **or** elective areas (or a combination thereof), but will not lead to the achievement of the full qualification.

¹ The terms ‘recognised’ and/or ‘approved’ are not prescribed. The ETQA will decide what is most appropriate in this regard. However, care should be taken to use a term that will not be confused with other recognised terms in formal policy documents.

Therefore, even if a short learning programme could award 119 credits, by adding 1 credit to make up 120 credits, it would still not be a qualification unless it meets all the requirements for a qualification, i.e. the planned combination of fundamental, core and elective learning (For details on the construction and structure of qualifications, please refer to the NSB Regulations, No. R 452 of 28 March 1998).

2.2.3 The place of short learning programmes in education and training

Under 2.2 (above), mention is made of the ‘credit-bearing’ nature of short learning programmes as a means to differentiate the diverse forms of education and training that is being delivered through this medium. The following diagram explains this notion:

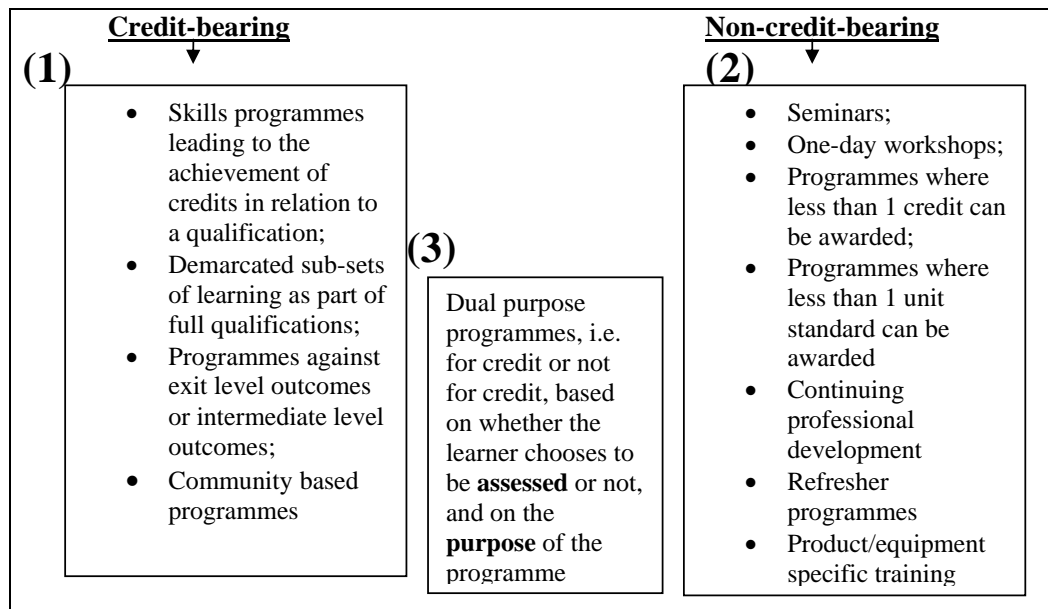


Figure 3: Credit-bearing versus non-credit-bearing programmes

(1) Credit-bearing short courses

Credit-bearing short courses include all short learning programmes that will make it possible to award credits towards particular unit standards or part qualifications, whether they are considered to be occupationally based or not. It therefore includes skills programmes, (which are particularly associated with learning programmes developed in accordance with unit standards and has an occupationally directed nature), but it also includes clearly demarcated parts of non-unit standard based qualifications, which may or may not have an occupationally directed nature and purpose. This opens up the scope for short learning programmes to be developed and offered by all types of providers against a part of the qualification for which they are formally accredited.

Refer to the framework of a hypothetical qualification within which short learning programmes may be developed and offered (Figure 2):

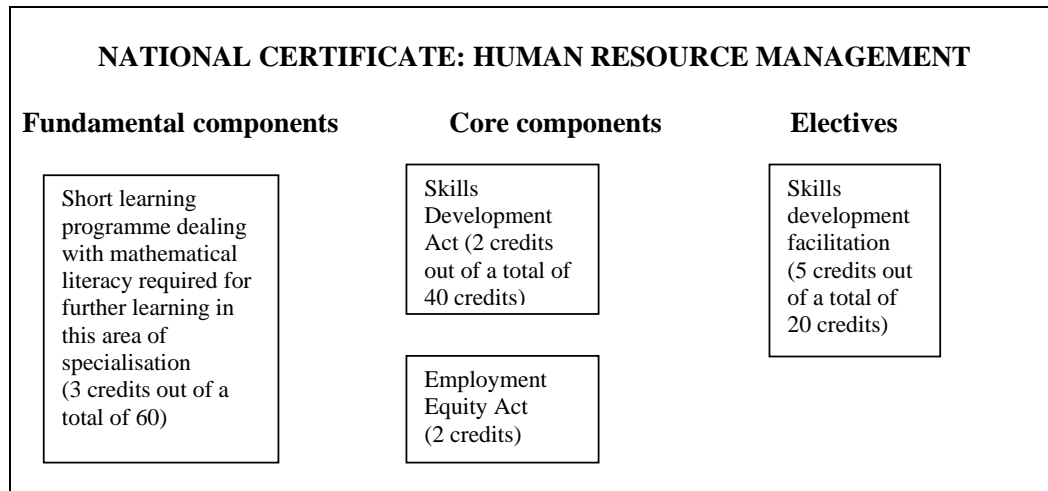


Figure 4: Short learning programmes within the framework of a particular qualification

An important point here is that a short learning programme should be conceptualised within the framework for a particular qualification to ensure that articulation with that qualification may take place. This could include inter-qualification articulation, which are situated within a particular field of learning, but should most certainly also include inter-institutional articulation. This will have an impact on the transferability of credits between qualifications and providers.

Some examples of this type of provisioning include:

Example 1:

*A skills programme leading to credits towards the qualification: **National Certificate in Tourism: Reception***

For the **National Certificate in Tourism: Reception**, on NQF level 4, the following are some of the unit standards that have been identified and for which learning programmes have been developed:

- Operate a personal computer (Fundamental unit standard) - 6 credits
- Care for Customers (Core unit standard) – 3 credits
- Maintain Occupational Health and Safety (Core unit standard) – 2 credits

Any of these unit standards can be utilised for the development of a short learning programme (in this case it may be a skills programme), which potentially can improve workplace practice and deals with ‘just in time’ learning required in a workplace environment, while at the same time can be part of the learning pathway and career planning of the employee.

Example 2:

A credit-bearing short course leading to credits towards the qualification: **Bachelor of Commerce: Management**

For the **Bachelor of Commerce: Management** on NQF level 6, the following clearly demarcated sub-sets have been identified and programmes developed:

- Quality management systems
- Budgeting
- Resource (human and infrastructure) management

Any of these sub-sets of the qualification can be utilised for the development of a short learning programme which potentially can improve workplace practice and deals with 'just enough' learning required in a workplace environment, while at the same time can be part of the learning pathway and career planning of the employee.

Both these examples seem to have a very occupationally based nature, but short learning programmes could also include short courses that will lead to the award of credits against the fundamental component of a qualification, (i.e. 'that learning which forms the grounding or basis needed to undertake the education, training or further learning required in the obtaining of a qualification' – refer to Figure 4) (SAQA, 1998:4). The point is that short learning programmes can be developed against any part of a qualification, but that it is critical that the credits awarded through the short course will have currency in terms of the full qualification. Look at example 3:

Example 3:

Modules from the **Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE)**, could be utilised as stand-alone short learning programmes for teachers in need of exposure to an outcomes-based approach in assessment. The module identified as being critical for this up-skilling exercise is *Assessment Strategies for OBE (10 credits)*. On successful completion of this module, learners are awarded, based on an appropriate assessment, the 10 credits at NQF level 6. Should learners later decide to formally register for the full programme, these credits are transferred and acknowledged.

In the example given above, a full module, as a sub-set of a qualification, was utilised, but it is also possible to make use of less than a module for customised, 'just enough' type of learning. Refer to example 4:

Example 4:

The module *Entrepreneurship*, (total credit value is 10) includes topics such as:

- Feasibility studies
- Business plans
- Marketing operations

- Financial, purchasing and administrative plans

A need was identified for the development of a short learning programme dealing with “Business plans”. On successful completion of this part of the module, the number of credits relating to “Business plans” could be awarded. Should learners later be exposed to the remainder of the module, or wish to register for the full programme, these credits are transferred and acknowledged.

The examples given above, to some extent, assume that the provider offering the short learning programme, is also accredited for the full qualification. However, this is not necessarily the case. Many providers offer only short learning programmes based on unit standards and/or clearly demarcated sets of learning. This clearly has implications for the award of credits and the transferability of such credits between providers.

Where a provider is accredited for the full qualification, the articulation with short learning programmes offered by them and the credits awarded are straightforward – it could be regulated by internal moderation processes and articulation agreements.

It is where a learner has achieved credits outside of that institution where articulation of credits becomes difficult. It is therefore critical that credit-bearing short courses use the registered unit standard and/or qualification, as the overarching standard, as the basis upon which the learning programme is developed. (Refer to Figure 4 above). It is also critical that the assessment is credible, valid and reliable. It is here that the ETQA has a major role to play, i.e. in ensuring consistency of delivery and assessment in terms of the internal logic and coherence of programmes between its constituent providers.

(2) Non-credit-bearing short courses

Non-credit-bearing short courses include a variety of short learning programmes for which no credits are awarded. The differentiation of such learning programmes is based on the following:

- The short learning programme is too short in terms of notional hours to meet the minimum requirements for 1 unit standard, for example a one-day seminar where an attendance certificate is issued;
- The short course covers less than 1 credit towards a unit standard or qualification where only one specific outcome is covered by the learning programme rather than all the specific outcomes as stipulated in a unit standard or sub-set of learning in non-unit standard based qualifications;
- The purpose of the short course does not lend itself to the award of credits, i.e. personal enrichment, where learners are not formally assessed;
- Highly customised short courses developed for a particular purpose (not for credit), possibly dealing with learning programmes on so-called ‘soft skills’.

Some examples of this type of short learning programmes include:

Example 5:

A one-day seminar on eating disorders, with a particular focus on 'anorexia nervosa'. The target audience may include social workers, health practitioners or parents of teenage children.

This short course does not have as a purpose to award credits towards unit standards or (part) qualifications, but is intended to share information and perhaps to update practitioners on the latest developments and research. An attendance certificate is awarded.

It is important to note that the short courses market does not just demand short learning programmes, which are building blocks towards a qualification, but often demands a highly flexible and responsive approach to an identified need. This is often based on a Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) as identified by an employer. Customised short courses, using a small part of a learning area, are often in demand.

Look at the following example:

Example 6:

An employer has identified the need for training in 'diversity management' in a multi-cultural organization. The managers of the organization will be exposed to a small part of the module *Business Management*.

Two aspects are relevant in this regard:

- The short course may not cover enough of 'management' to warrant awarding credits.
- The learners may not meet the requirements for formal admittance to the full qualification

The examples given above are not exhaustive. One of the reasons why short course provisioning is so prevalent is because it is such an appropriate mode of delivery within many different contexts. The highly flexible nature of this form of provisioning is an advantage, particularly for the client, and it should not be lost.

(3) Some short learning programmes may also have a **dual purpose**, i.e. for credit, or not for credit. Look at the following example:

Example 7:

A group of pre-school teachers attend a short course focusing on the milestones and developmental tasks in each phase of the pre-school child's development. This learning programme will lead to some credits towards the module *Child Development* (total credits of 5). Credits will be awarded based on appropriate forms of assessment.

However, the same short course may be used for young parents as part of a parenting skills initiative offered by the pre-school where their children are cared for. These participants will not be awarded credits, neither will they expect credits to be awarded – it is not the purpose of the course. No assessment will take place.

Both these learning programmes are based on the formal curriculum of the full qualification, but **the purpose of the programme** is the deciding factor whether credits are awarded or not.

Other ‘dual purpose’ short learning programmes may include ‘refresher courses’, ‘continuing professional development’ courses and ‘community based’ courses where such learning programmes are offered as a service by an institution, but depending on whether the learner requires **formal assessment and/or is eligible for a formal assessment**, it will be a credit-bearing or non-credit-bearing programme.

In conclusion, the purpose of short learning programmes could be any, or a combination of the following:

- Provide learners with practical (hands-on) learning where appropriate
- Increase employability, self-employment possibilities and mobility within a workplace and a sector
- Provide access to learning opportunities towards nationally registered unit standards and qualifications
- Provide occupationally-directed and focused learning
- Contribute towards closing the skills gap as identified in the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP), the Sector Skills Plan (SSP) and National Skills Plan (NSP) (Paraphrased from: Criteria for Approving Skills Programmes, DoL, 2001).

In addition, a short learning programme could also have as its purpose to:

- Update learners on new developments and insights in their professions
- Upgrade foundational knowledge for successful completion of a chosen field of learning
- Earn credits towards formal programmes should learners wish to build on the learning attained through short learning programmes
- Personal enrichment