



POLICY

ACADEMIC PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The Foundation for Professional Development (FPD) is committed to the quality of its programmes. It has a strong complement of full time and part time academic personnel who work closely with industry experts to identify and evaluate market needs and plan learning programmes. The Academic Programme Development Policy provides a framework to ensure that programmes match with the requirements set by the South African Qualifications Authority Act (58 of 1995)¹ National Qualifications Framework (NQF)², the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF)³, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Level Descriptors for the South African National Qualifications Framework⁴, Accreditation Criteria of the Higher Education Quality Committee of the (HEQC) Council on Higher Education (CHE)⁵ and Bloom's cognitive taxonomy.

The policy aims to provide an overview of the principles according to which learning programmes at FPD will be developed. These principles, once implemented, will ensure that FPD's learning programmes meet international good practices in curriculum design, are student-centred, and responsive to market needs.

¹ Republic of South Africa. 1995. South African Qualification Authority Act Number 58 of 1995. Available at: [https://www.uj.ac.za/about/Documents/policies/South%20African%20Qualifications%20Authority%20Act%2058%20of%201995%20\(2011\).pdf](https://www.uj.ac.za/about/Documents/policies/South%20African%20Qualifications%20Authority%20Act%2058%20of%201995%20(2011).pdf)

² South African Qualifications Framework. 2000. The National Qualifications Framework and Curriculum Development. Available at: https://www.saqa.org.za/docs/pol/2000/curriculum_dev.pdf

³ South African Department of Education. 2007. The Higher Education Qualifications Framework. Available at: <https://www.saqa.org.za/sites/default/files/2019-11/not0928.pdf>

⁴ South African Qualifications Authority. 2012. Level Descriptors for the South African National Qualifications Framework. Available at: https://www.saqa.org.za/sites/default/files/2019-11/level_descriptors.pdf

⁵ Council on Higher Education. 2004. Criteria for Programme Accreditation. Available at: http://nr-online.che.ac.za/html_documents/CHE_accreditation_criteria_Nov2004.pdf

Definitions and Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| Council on Higher Education (CHE): | Serves as a quality council on Higher Education |
| Exit Level Outcome (ELO): | The outcomes to be achieved by a qualifying learner at the point at which he or she leaves the programme, leading to a qualification. ⁶ The knowledge, skills and attitudes that a learner should have obtained or mastered on completion of a qualification and against which the learner is assessed for competence ⁷ |
| Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC): | Subcommittee of the CHE to ensure quality of Higher Education |
| Learning Programme: | A learning programme is a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences or activities that leads to a qualification. ^{7,8} |
| National Qualifications Framework (NQF): | The comprehensive system, approved by the Minister: HET, for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications and part-qualifications. The South African NQF is a single integrated system comprising three co-ordinated Qualifications Sub-Frameworks namely for: General and Further Education and Training; Higher Education; and Trades and Occupations. ⁷ |
| Part qualification/ Unit standard/ Module: | A part-qualification is an assessed unit of learning with a clearly defined purpose that is, or will be, registered as part of a qualification on the NQF. In Higher Education it is also known as a module , whereas in the Trades and Occupations Sector it is referred to as a Unit Standard . ⁷ The terms are used interchangeably in this document. |
| Qualification: | A registered national qualification consisting of a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose or purposes, intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning and which has been assessed in terms of exit level outcomes, registered on the NQF and certified and awarded by a recognised body. ⁷ Formal recognition and certification of learning achievement awarded by an accredited institution. ² |
| South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA): | The statutory authority established in terms of the SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995) and continuing in terms of the NQF Act (Act 67 of 2008), which oversees the further development and implementation of the NQF, the achievement of the objectives of the NQF, and the co-ordination of the three Sub-Frameworks. ⁷ |
| Standards Generating Body (SGB): | The bodies responsible for generation and recommendation of qualifications and standards. ⁹ |
| Work Integrated Learning (WIL): | A characteristic of vocational and professionally oriented qualifications that may be incorporated into programmes at all levels of all three Sub-Frameworks. WIL may take various forms including simulated learning, work-directed theoretical learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and workplace-based learning. ⁷ |

⁶ South African Qualifications Authority. 2005. Developing Learning Programmes for NQF Registered Qualifications and Unit Standards. Available at: <https://www.saide.org.za/resources/Library/SAQA%20-%20Developing%20Learning%20Programmes.pdf>

⁷ National Qualification Authority. 2017. Standard Glossary of Terms. Available at: <https://hr.saqa.co.za/glossary/pdf/NQFPedia.pdf>

⁸ South African Qualifications Authority. 2013. Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part-qualifications on the National Qualifications Available at: <https://www.saqa.org.za/sites/default/files/2019-11/Policy%20and%20Criteria%20for%20the%20Registration%20of%20Qualifications%20and%20Part-qualifications%20on%20the%20National%20Qualifications%20Framework.pdf>

⁹ South African National Qualifications Authority. 2000. The National Qualifications Framework and the Standards Setting. Available at: https://www.saqa.org.za/docs/pol/2003/standard_setting.pdf

The role of SAQA Level Descriptors, Critical Outcomes, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria in programme development

SAQA level descriptor ⁴

The purpose of level descriptors for Levels One to Ten of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is to ensure consistency in learning achievement in the allocation of qualifications and part qualifications to particular levels, and to facilitate the assessment of the national and international comparability of qualifications and part qualifications.

In order to advance the objectives of the NQF, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is responsible for the development of the content of the level descriptors for each level of the NQF in agreement with the three Quality Councils: The Council on Higher Education (CHE), Umalusi Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, and the Council for Trades and Occupations.

The philosophical foundation of the NQF and the level descriptors is applied competence, which is in line with the outcomes-based theoretical framework adopted in the South African context.

Ten categories are used in the level descriptors to describe applied competencies across each of the ten levels of the NQF:

- Scope of knowledge.
- Knowledge literacy.
- Method and procedure.
- Problem solving.
- Ethics and professional practice.
- Accessing, processing and managing information.
- Producing and communicating of information.
- Context and systems.
- Management of learning.
- Accountability.

A level descriptor is a standard according to which the varying levels of complexity of qualifications are distinguished. Level descriptors are designed to act as a guide and a starting point for: writing learning outcomes and assessment criteria, pinning down a qualification at an appropriate level on the NQF, assisting learners to gain admission through RPL, making comparisons across qualifications in a variety of fields and disciplines, managing programme quality, etc.

It is important to note that:

- Level descriptors are not learning outcomes or assessment criteria, but rather provide a broad frame from which the specific and contextualised outcomes and assessment criteria for a particular programme can be reached.
- The competencies listed at a particular level in the framework broadly describe the learning achieved at that level, but an individual learning programme may not necessarily meet each and every criterion listed.
- Level descriptors do not describe years of study.
- In the level descriptors, the accessing, analysing and managing of information and communication in terms of reading, listening and speaking will, where applicable, include Braille and sign language to accommodate learners with special needs. In the case of sign language, listening and speaking refer to receptive and productive language use.

Critical outcomes ⁵

Critical outcomes are those generic outcomes determined by SAQA which inform all teaching and learning, including but not limited to:

- Identifying and solving problems demonstrating the use of critical and creative thinking.
- Working effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation or community.
- Organising and managing oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
- Collecting, analysing, organising and critically evaluating information.
- Communicating effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written persuasion.
- Using science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
- Demonstrating an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.
- Contributing to the full personal development of each student and the social and economic development of society at large, by making it the underlying intention of any programme of learning to make an individual aware of the importance of:
 - reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
 - participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
 - being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social circumstances;
 - exploring education and career opportunities; and
 - developing entrepreneurial opportunities.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements of what students will learn. Learning outcomes are defined as the contextually demonstrated end-products of specific learning processes, which include knowledge, skills and values. ⁷

An outcome should focus on the student's behaviour and describe what the student will be able to do once he/she has achieved the outcome as a result of the learning that has occurred. Outcomes should be phrased as:

At the end of this learning experience the student should be able to ...

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| verb | + | noun | + | condition |
| <i>demonstrate</i> | + | <i>blood pressure measurement</i> | + | <i>of a normal adult</i> |

Example:

Assessment criteria

Assessment Criteria are statements that express in explicit terms how the performance of desired learning outcomes might be demonstrated. They are the standards used to guide learning and to assess learner achievement and/or to evaluate and certify competence. ⁷ Assessment criteria should be phrased as:

This (the Learning Outcome) will be evident when...

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|---|
| noun | + | verb | + | Condition (content/ practice) (content & extent) |
| <i>the student</i> | + | <i>measures blood pressure</i> | + | <i>of a normal adult with an accuracy of +/- 10% as determined by an examiner</i> |

Example:

Curriculum

The curriculum is the whole set of learning experiences that constitute a particular qualification or module. It is a statement of the training structure and expected methods of learning and teaching that underpin a qualification or part-qualification.⁷ A curriculum includes key aspects of teaching and learning such as:

- what is to be learnt – content.
- why it is to be learnt – purpose and underlying philosophy.
- how it is to be learnt – process.
- when it is to be learnt – structure of the learning process.
- where it will be learnt – venues and delivery modalities such as classroom, laboratory, clinic, online.
- how the learning will be demonstrated in creative ways and achievement similarly assessed.

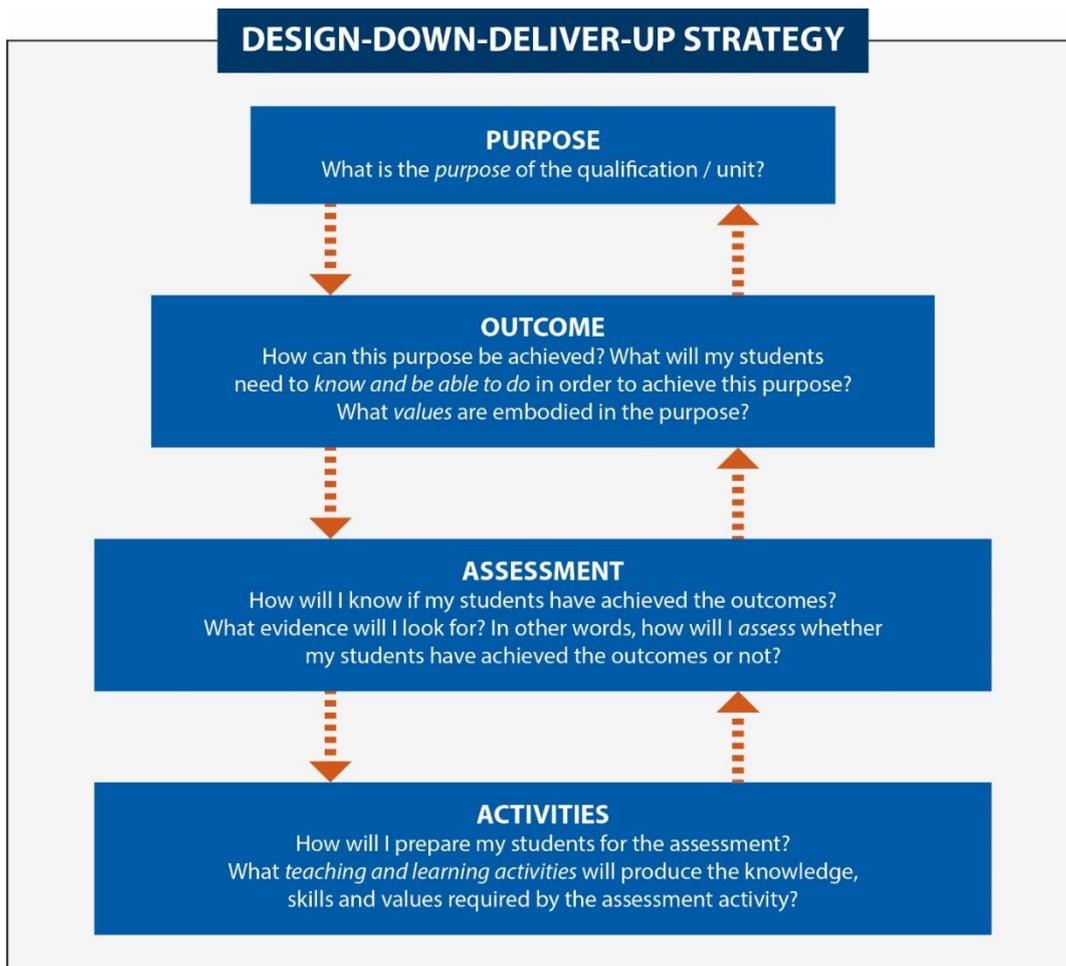
Procedures

Educational Development Strategy

The strategy employed at FPD for educational development is that of constructive alignment, as follows:

- Course design: including ensuring that courses and modules are built on a sound educational basis, in relation to the student profile and the desired learning outcomes.
- Teaching approaches: including the use of educational technology, and with particular reference to dealing effectively with the realities of diversity and large classes.
- Assessment: particularly the alignment of assessment with curriculum/course design and learning outcomes.

In order to ensure constructive alignment, a “design-down-deliver-up” strategy is followed.⁶ The diagram below informs the process of programme design at FPD:



The major steps in programme design at FPD are:

1. Formulate the motivation of the programme:
 - Provide details of the reasoning that led to identifying the need for the qualification.
 - Indicate how the qualification meets specific needs in the sector for which it is developed. Details of consultation with a recognised professional body or industry body must be provided in respect of the need.
 - Identify the range of typical learners and indicate the occupations, jobs or areas of activity in which the qualifying learners will operate.
 - Indicate the projected enrolment in the programme.
 - Indicate the learning pathway where the qualification features.
 - Indicate how the qualification will provide benefits to the learner, society and the economy.
2. Formulate the purpose of the programme:
 - The purpose should describe the context of the qualification or part-qualification and what it is intended to achieve in the national, professional and/or career context.
 - The purpose statement should confirm what the qualifying learner will know and be able to do on achievement of the qualification or part qualification.
 - Graduate attributes may be used where appropriate.
3. Compare the programme to similar programmes internationally and nationally.

4. Formulate the exit level outcomes for the qualification, ensuring that they are linked to the purpose:
 - The exit level outcomes (ELO's), which are framed against the level descriptors, should indicate what the learner will be able to do and will know as a result of completing the qualification or part-qualification.
 - These competencies relate directly to the competencies required for the further learning and/or the work for which the qualification or part-qualification was designed.
 - Associated assessment criteria are written for the qualification or part-qualification to indicate the nature and level of the assessment associated with the qualification or and how the exit level outcomes could be assessed in a combined way. The ELO's are thus more general and the assessment criteria more specific.
 - The criteria can be given as a comprehensive set derived from the level descriptors.
5. Identify modules to include in the programme for the different study years, identified on the correct NQF level (module mapping), in order to achieve the ELO's:
 - Determine the knowledge domain and the main context of the knowledge, skills and applied competencies: "What body of knowledge, skills and applied competencies should learners learn to demonstrate their achievement of the defined outcomes?"
 - List all the potential modules, based on discussion and consensus. Modules should be determined as logical units of the body of knowledge based on required content rather than time. One module may require more time to master the appropriate content than another.
 - Formulate a final list of modules by means of elimination and addition.
 - Allocate a credit value for each foreseen module. SAQA links credits to notional hours. Notional hours describe the total number of hours required to complete the learning, including self-study. A credit is allocated to 10 notional hours of study so a module requiring 40 hours of study should be allocated 4 credits.
6. Formulate the learning outcomes (LO's) and assessment criteria (AC's) for each module.
7. Decide on the study units (topics) to include in each module, in order to achieve the LO's and AC's.
8. Identify the teaching and learning activities likely to lead to the outcomes.
9. Conduct a technical design of the programme, focussing on:
 - Proposed size and shape of each module (indicate credits and whether each module should be offered as a semester or year module):
 - Year module : 30 x weeks
 - Semester module : 15 x weeks
 - Size and shape of instructional time.
 - Size and shape of practical work.
 - Size and shape of potential work-integrated learning (WIL).
10. Formulate the rules of combination of the modules if applicable.
11. Formulate and indicate the coherence between the constituent parts of the qualification in articulation with:
 - The related fields of study as recognised in the Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) manual.
 - The 50% rule of programme design in terms of the utilisation of designators and qualifiers.²

12. Use the FPD Module Descriptor to design and develop each module.
13. Analyse the teaching and learning activities to determine the % learning time for the different learning activities and mode of delivery.
14. Create module assessment plans.
 - [See Policy A7](#)

Accountabilities

The Academic Committee is responsible for review and approval of this policy on an annual basis. The policy is to be distributed to staff via induction and distributed to students and FPD's community via the website and other publications.