



SABPP

SA BOARD FOR
PEOPLE PRACTICES

Setting HR standards

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HR PROFESSIONALS REGISTERED WITH THE SABPP WILL NOW CARRY OFFICIAL STATUS AS A PROFESSIONAL, ALONGSIDE OTHER TRADITIONAL PROFESSIONS.

In June 2012, a historic event occurred, when the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) recognized the SABPP as a professional body and set in motion the process to register SABPP's HR professionals' qualifications on the National Learner's Record Database.

30 years after the SABPP was founded, one of the original objectives of the SABPP has been achieved – namely official recognition of HR professionals.

"I trust that the SABPP's recognition and the registration of your designations will be to the benefit of the human resources sector as a whole, to the SABPP itself, and to the NQF and will contribute to the development of skills and professional service delivery in our country."

*Jody Cedras
Director: Registration and
Recognition, SAQA*

Illustrating the wide range of this exercise, the 8 professional bodies now recognized are:

SA Board for People Practices
Health Professionals Council of South Africa
Engineering Council of South Africa
Federal Bar Council of South Africa
The South African Institute for Chartered Accountants

South African Institute of the Interior Design Professions
South African Chef's Association
The Institute of Risk Management (South Africa)

BACKGROUND TO THE RECOGNITION OF PROFESSIONAL BODIES

The registration of professional bodies in South Africa and registering professional designations is an exercise embarked on by SAQA during 2011, when professional bodies were invited to apply



for recognition. The latest version of the Draft Policy on Recognition of Professional Bodies was issued in April 2012, and in June 2012, the first 8 bodies were recognized by the Board of SAQA.

The purpose of recognizing professional bodies is, according to this Draft Policy, to:

- Promote public understanding of, and trust in, professions
- Encourage social responsibility and accountability within the professions
- Promote pride in association for all professions, including traditional trades and occupations
- Promote the protection of the public by professional bodies from malpractice
- Encourage international leading practice and the raising of esteem for all professions in South Africa
- Facilitate access to data related to professions
- Support the development of a national career advice system
- Encourage the development and implementation of continuing professional development (CPD).

In tandem with launching this initiative with professional bodies, SAQA has also set up the process to implement the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO's). This works alongside the quality councils for basic and higher education, to manage the NQF for all trades and occupations. Occupational Qualifications (higher level) and Awards (lower level) are developed through a consultative process, initiated when a person or an organization approaches the QCTO to do so. Hence, for the professions, one of the functions that a professional body can perform is to help with this process of designing Qualifications and Awards and carrying out quality assurance. The QCTO is a new body and is in the early stages of developing its modus operandi.

“An occupational qualification is defined in the law as a qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession resulting from work-based learning and consisting of three components, one for knowledge, one for practical skills and one for work experience.”

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The Policy on professional bodies is careful to note that recognition of one professional body does not mean that no other body will be recognized within the same community of practice, because freedom of association is important and competition is healthy. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), through SAQA, states, however, that “proliferation of professional bodies will be discouraged”. It hopes to achieve this through broad consultation and



ascertaining how distinctive each body is. A professional body may be de-recognised after due process.

The criteria that each professional body must meet to be recognized include:

- Incorporation as a legal entity, with the human and financial resources to fulfill its mandate set out in statute, charter or a constitution, and showing good governance practices
- Protection of public interest in relation to professional services and associated risks
- Have a set of rules to govern its designations
- Have a CPD process and be able to monitor CPD
- Publish a code of conduct and be able to investigate complaints against members.

Therefore, other associations or bodies may exist in a profession, but may not be recognized by SAQA, nor their designations be recognized, unless all these criteria are met to the satisfaction of SAQA.

REGISTRATION OF PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS

The Policy requires all professional bodies to register its professional designations on the NQF. A particular designation may only be registered by one professional body. The designations are registered separately from qualifications, and can be revoked according to rules set by the professional body. The professional body must deal with verification queries relating to its own qualifications. A professional designation will be re-registered if the professional body itself is de-recognised.

All professional designations must be part of a progression pathway and may require an underlying qualification, but must include in its requirements experiential learning, recognition of prior learning and/or practical experience. The professional body is free to change its designations or introduce new ones, for example, new specialisations.



“The National Learners’ Record Database (NLRD) is the management information system of the NQF. The NLRD holds records of all NQF information, including Professional Bodies and their Designations. It provides decision-makers with comprehensive aggregated information, especially in the fields of labour market trends; education and training; and career advice.”

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All professional designations from recognized professional bodies will be loaded onto a searchable database of the NLRD. Details of all professionals who have been awarded those designations will also be loaded, but this database will not be searchable by the public. Any queries on an individual will have to be directed to the professional body concerned.

SAQA will produce statistics on professional designations and on how these form part of overall pathways to learning and work in those areas.

Each professional body may set its own rules about the award of a designation, or the suspension or revocation of that designation, for example, for non-payment of professional fees.

Although the actual upload of professionals to the NLRD will only be done twice a year (with the first one in August 2012), the professional body itself is responsible to answer queries on the status of its professionals. Therefore, if someone registers or is upgraded in between these uploads, this does not affect their professional status with the professional body. So, for example, if an employer requires a specific designation for promotion into a particular job, that upgrade can be confirmed immediately by the professional body.

IMPLICATIONS OF SABPP RECOGNITION FOR THE INDUSTRY

It is early days yet with the SAQA process, so all the professional bodies, and SAQA itself, through the QCTO, will no doubt learn as they go along. The Institute of Directors has taken the initiative to set up a network of professional bodies, so that mutual support and learning can happen. The SABPP will be an enthusiastic member of this network.

Professionalism

We believe that the enhancement of the status of professional bodies, with the emphasis that has been placed on the importance of ethics, recognition of prior learning and continuing professional development, is an extremely important development, leading to ever increasing standards of



professionalism in all professions, to the benefit of society as a whole. In this regard, the current SABPP project to formulate minimum standards for HR work (the HR Standards project) will certainly contribute significantly to the standard of professional work done in HR departments.

Career development

It is also important to give clarity on career pathways. Professional designations give visibility to advancement opportunities and encourage personal career development. We believe that the SABPP “ladder” of designations is a leader in this area, with clear guidelines on how to improve within the profession. The launch of our Competency Model in May 2012, and the further development of that model, will greatly strengthen career development within HR.

HR professionals in specialist areas have the opportunity today not only to gain higher degrees in specialist areas such as labour law, OD and coaching but also to gain additional qualifications through several non-university organisations, for example:

- In the recruitment sector, the Federation of African Professional Staff Associations (APSO) has an entrance examination to become a member of the Institute of Staffing Professionals.
- In the remuneration field, the South African Reward Association offers the World at Work Society certification as a Global Remuneration Professional and also offers internships.

In addition, many HR professionals are also qualified Industrial/Occupations Psychologists, registered with the Health Professions Council.

The SABPP professional designations serve to give these specialist qualifications an overarching framework within the context of the total HR profession.

HR VOICE

One important implication of recognition is that it supports the SABPP strategy, adopted in 2011, to take a more prominent position with external stakeholders to give the HR profession a voice (our HR VOICE strategy).



A significant barrier to the HR profession making the impact that it should is the often lamented “fragmentation” in the industry. However, a proper analysis has not been done of the extent, nature and scope of fragmentation in the HR market. In addition to the associations catering to all HR people such as the IPM, there are many special interest group associations in the industry, but we all have the same or similar aims, and more and more we are coming together in alliances and groupings to improve our impact. Some such special interest groups include:

SA OD Network (SAODN); Industrial Relations Association (IRASA); South African Rewards Association (SARA); SA Payroll Association (SAPA); Association of Change Management Professionals (ACMP); Association for Skills Development (ASDSA); SA Graduate Recruitment Association (SAGRA); South African Society for Labour Law (SASLAW); American Society for Training and Development (ASTD); Human Capital Institute (HCI); International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI); Association of Mine HR Practitioners (AMHRP); Institute of Municipal Personnel Practitioners (IMPPSA).

The SABPP is in a formal alliance with many of these associations (see our website for the full list of existing alliances) and is in discussions with a view to forming alliances with the others. Through such alliances, appropriate groupings of generalist and specialist organisations can combine to give inputs to public policy formulation and in other important societal forums.

FURTHER PLANS

We would like to work towards further strengthening our professional status. We envisage possibilities such as a requirement that only a Chartered or Master HR Professional may sign off an organization’s Workplace Skills Plan or Employment Equity Report. Alongside this, however, it continues to be critical to inform Boards, CEOs and all levels of line managers of the benefits that good HR practice can bring to the organization and to themselves as directors, executives and managers.

CONCLUSION

This recognition by SAQA does not imply that HR is now a statutory profession. HR work may still be done by unregistered professionals. However, it does mean that HR is recognized as an important stakeholder in the skills development and professional service sectors. We hope that this significant milestone will encourage many more HR professionals to seek registration through



SABPP, thereby enabling us to build a critical mass to make a difference in our profession, and through that, in the human capital of South Africa.

But no amount of professional status can ensure that HR professionals:

- a) lead by example on ethics and
- b) establish themselves as credible partners for line management.

Each professional has a responsibility to him or herself and to the profession as a whole to be an exemplary professional, earning and building the respect of others in the workplace.