

## **SUCCEEDING IN ACCREDITATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE**

*By Mark Orpen, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of The Institute of People Development (IPD)  
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The South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) is responsible for the quality control of education and training quality throughout South Africa, within in National Qualifications Framework (NQF). This task is executed by Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs), which require providers to be registered in terms of certain legislation, and maintain a quality management system that includes policies, procedures and review mechanisms.

According to SAQA definitions, accreditation describes the processes and criteria by which an ETQA will give formal recognition that an institution, body or person is competent to serve a specific purpose, such as assessments, moderations or providing education and training services. An accredited provider is a person or body that has met the SAQA quality assurance criteria and has been formally recognised by SAQA through the relevant ETQA.

Initially, occupationally-directed provider accreditation took on somewhat of a developmental approach in South Africa, depending on the risks associated with the assessment results. Resultantly, a higher scale of quality assurance, including moderation and verification, was imposed. However, both providers and their accrediting bodies were actually working out how the system would be optimised. As such, initial standards and qualifications were often clumsy and only represented the outcomes agreed to by stakeholders, while good facilitators or assessors of outcomes-based learning were few and far between.

Thankfully, after a decade of systemic evolvement, accreditation standards now (generally) better represent workflow processes. Most accrediting bodies have developed 'light-touch' quality assurance practices; the market place is over traded with facilitators and assessors, and many training providers have made substantial investments and reinvestments into physical, technological, educational and human resources as well as the systems for managing these.

According to SAQA, ETQAs play a pivotal role on the quality management system of the NQF system. This level of management is essential if the standards for learning are to be maintained across South Africa. By fostering a culture of quality, SAQA and ETQAs

encourage training providers to undertake quality assurance activities, bolstering their assessment performance.

Despite that large strides have been made in creating better accreditation systems, the process can be daunting – especially with the knowledge that accreditation is not a once off requirement. Application for re-accreditation is usually required six months before the previous accreditation lapses, and while SAQA sets out clear accreditation and re-accreditation conditions, these are often misunderstood.

Through the appointment of experienced L&D professionals that offer quality assurance training and have created and published accreditation guidelines, public and private training providers can take the guesswork out of the accreditation process, allowing them to achieve or maintain accreditation.

Continuous improvement is the name of the game; and customer satisfaction is the measure of success. The faster the systems are streamlined to deliver this, the more effective and sustainable the training provider will be.

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*Boilerplate:*

Founded in 1999, Workplace Skills Solutions t/a The Institute of People Development (IPD) strives to equip, prepare and certify practitioners to serve South Africa's skills development strategy and facilitate the transformation of education and training. Over the years, IPD has become the preferred people development partner to most state owned and private enterprises in Southern Africa. IPD has assisted over 500 public and private training providers across most sectors of the economy to achieve or maintain accreditation through consulting, training and providing published guidelines. For more information, please contact IPD at [trainingenquiries@peopledev.co.za](mailto:trainingenquiries@peopledev.co.za) on (011) 315 2913 or visit [www.peopledevelopment.co.za](http://www.peopledevelopment.co.za)

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