



## **Policy on Accreditation of Assessment Centres**

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## List of Acronyms

AQP	Assessment Quality Partner
DQP	Development Quality Partner
MIS	Management Information System
NAMB	National Artisan Moderation Body
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations

## Glossary of terms

Accreditation	The certification, usually for a particular period, of a person, a body or an institution as having the capacity to fulfil a particular function in the quality assurance system set up by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO).
Assessment	The process of collecting evidence of learner's work to measure and make judgements about the competence or non-competence of specified National Qualifications Framework (NQF) occupational standards or qualifications and part qualifications.
Assessment centre	A centre accredited by the QCTO for the purpose of conducting external integrated summative assessments for specified NQF registered occupational qualifications and part qualifications.
Assessment Quality Partner	A body delegated by the QCTO to develop assessment instruments and manage the external integrated summative assessments of specific NQF registered occupational qualifications and part qualifications.
Assessment site	Any site selected as suitable and approved by the relevant AQP to conduct the external integrated summative assessments for specified registered occupational qualifications and part qualifications, where the specific assessment specifications do not require the use of an accredited assessment centre.
Occupational qualification	A qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession, resulting from work-based learning and consisting of the knowledge, practical skills and work experience standards as defined in the Skills Development Act (Act No. 97 of 1998).

Summative assessment	A component of the assessment process and refers to the culmination of the summative process when learners are subjected to a final sitting at the end of the learning cycle for an integrated externally conducted assessment.
Verification	The process managed by the relevant AQP for externally checking moderation processes and confirming or overturning moderation findings.

## **1. Preamble**

The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) was established in 2010 in terms of section 26G the Skills Development Act of 1998 as a juristic person. It was listed as a public entity in Government Gazette No 33900 of 31 December 2010 effective from 1 April 2010 to establish the sub-Framework for Trades and Occupations. The QCTO is responsible for the development, maintenance and quality assurance of qualifications within its sub-framework.

The QCTO focuses quality assurance of the provision of assessment on the final external integrated summative assessment. The external integrated summative assessment of all QCTO qualifications will be conducted in accredited assessment centres or approved assessment sites to ensure that the required facilities and processes are in place to conduct standardised assessments for determining the required occupational competence to be awarded the qualification.

## **2. Objectives and criteria for assessment**

This policy outlines the criteria applied by the QCTO for the accreditation of assessment centres. It provides guidelines for bodies wishing to apply for accreditation as assessment centres. Accreditation describes the process followed by the QCTO to determine if a body meets the QCTO's minimum specified criteria and has the capacity to conduct secure, reliable and objective external summative assessments.

## **3. Legislative and regulatory framework**

In terms of the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998) the QCTO will accredit assessment centres, including trade test centres to conduct the external summative assessment for specified occupational qualifications, part qualifications or trades recorded on the NLRD but without an associated occupational qualification.

This policy and criteria is based on the QCTO Policy on Delegation of Qualification Assessment to Assessment Quality Partners (AQPs) and the Assessment Policy for Qualifications and Part Qualifications on the OQSF.

## **4. Audience and applicability**

This policy applies to assessment centres seeking accreditation to assess occupational qualifications, part qualifications and trades recorded on the NLRD but without associated occupational qualifications. Assessment centres may include accredited trade test centres, workplaces, providers, education and training institutions (e.g. FET Colleges or Universities of Technology) or professional bodies. These bodies should have the required facilities and meet the requirements specified by the relevant AQP for the related occupational qualification or part qualification.

Bodies seeking accreditation as an assessment centre must apply to the relevant QCTO appointed AQP responsible for recommending the accreditation of assessment centres to the QCTO.

## 5. Responsibilities of an assessment centre

An assessment centre must:

- a) assess the occupational qualification or part qualification in accordance with the standards set by the delegated AQP;
- b) comply with the QCTO and AQP assessment policies and procedures;
- c) conduct integrated external summative assessments in accordance with the AQP requirements;
- d) adhere to standards set by the AQP in order to maintain accreditation;
- e) enter into a formal agreement with the relevant AQP;
- f) if also a training provider, provide an assessment area separate from the training area;
- g) only allow candidates registered for assessment and assessment practitioners conducting the assessment into the assessment area;
- h) ensure that candidates are not assessed or moderated by the facilitator responsible for their training; and
- i) have appropriately qualified human resources to conduct assessments as specified by the AQP.

## 6. Responsibilities of the AQP

- 6.1 The relevant AQP will recommend to the QCTO, in the form and manner required by the QCTO:
  - a) the accreditation of assessment centres for all occupational qualifications and part qualifications that require the use of assessment centres for conducting external summative assessments; and
  - b) the de-accreditation of accredited assessment centres where required.
- 6.2 In respect of each occupational qualification or part qualification falling within its scope, and requiring the accreditation of an assessment centre an AQP will:
  - a) ensure standardisation of the external integrated summative assessment through the development of nationally standardised assessment instruments;
  - b) determine criteria for accreditation of assessment centres to be able to conduct the external integrated summative assessment;
  - c) conduct external moderation to ensure that the external integrated summative assessment is conducted in an appropriate manner; and
  - d) make recommendations to QCTO for the issuing of certificates.
- 6.3 In respect of an assessment centre accredited to assess competence against an occupational qualification or part qualification, an AQP will:
  - a) provide criteria, guidelines and procedures for registration for assessment;
  - b) provide criteria and guidelines on security processes required to curb irregularities during the assessment process;
  - c) provide criteria and guidelines for capturing learner achievements according to the QCTO's MIS requirements;
  - d) monitor the performance of the accredited assessment centres;

- e) ensure that candidates are not assessed or moderated by the facilitator responsible for their training; and
  - f) report to the QCTO on the assessment centre's performance in the form and manner required by the QCTO.
- 6.4 In the event of de-accreditation of an assessment centre the AQP must arrange an alternative assessment centre for candidates already enrolled for assessment.
- 6.5 In terms of section 26A of the Skills Development Act, the NAMB will recommend to the QCTO the accreditation of trade test centres.
- 6.6 Trade test centres currently accredited by the SETAs will be deemed accredited by the NAMB for trades recorded on the NLRD for a period of 3 years from the publication date of the Trade Test Regulations during which a recommendation to be accredited by the QCTO must be submitted by NAMB.

## **7. Responsibilities of the QCTO**

- 7.1. The QCTO must consider recommendations from AQPs for assessment centre accreditation.
- 7.2. The QCTO will evaluate and may verify the information on the AQP recommendations for the accreditation of an assessment centre.
- 7.3. The QCTO will make a decision as to whether to accredit the recommended assessment centre within 30 working days of receiving the recommendation.
- 7.4. The QCTO must notify the AQP of its decision in writing and may refer the recommendation back to the AQP for outstanding information or additional information to be provided.
- 7.5. If the QCTO grants accreditation of an assessment centre, it will publish it on its official website the following information –
- a) the relevant details of the accredited assessment centre; and
  - b) the occupational qualifications the assessment centre is accredited to assess.
- 7.6. If accreditation is withdrawn, the QCTO must inform the AQP and assessment centre and remove the assessment centre's details from its official website.

## 8. Criteria for the accreditation of assessment centres

8.1 The QCTO will accredit an entity as an assessment centre for a specified occupational qualification or part qualification if recommended by an AQP and if that entity satisfies the criteria listed below.

The entity must:

- a) be a juristic person registered or established in terms of South African law;
- b) have a valid tax clearance certificate issued by the South African Revenue Service if applicable;
- c) have a suitable and compliant MIS in accordance with QCTO specifications;
- d) be safe, secure and accessible to candidates;
- e) meet the relevant standards for occupational health and safety;
- f) have the required physical resources (e.g. venue; equipment, machinery or protective clothing), specified by the AQP to assess learners' competence regarding the occupational qualification or part qualification;
- g) have appropriately qualified human resources as specified by the AQP; and
- h) make provision for any other requirements specified for the relevant trade, occupational qualification or part qualification.

**NOTE:** Although the QCTO accredits assessment centres and sites, the accredited assessment centre or site remains responsible and accountable for ensuring the safety of the centre staff, students and visitors. The QCTO will not be liable for any loss, damage, expense, costs, delays or other liability whatsoever that the assessment centre or site may incur during its operations.

## 9. Duration of accreditation

9.1 The accreditation of an assessment centre to conduct assessments for the specific occupational qualification or part qualification is valid:

- a) for a period of 5 years from the date the QCTO grants accreditation; or
- b) until de-registration of the qualification; or
- c) until de-accreditation is recommended by the AQP.

9.2 Trade test centres currently accredited by the SETAs will be deemed accredited by the NAMB for trades recorded on the NLRD for a period of 3 years from the publication date of the Trade Test Regulations during which a recommendation to be accredited by the QCTO must be submitted by NAMB.

## **10. Applying for accreditation**

- 10.1 An application for accreditation must be made to the relevant AQP in accordance with the criteria and guidelines of the AQP.
- 10.2 A centre that applies for accreditation to conduct the external integrated summative assessment for a specified occupational qualification or part qualification must provide evidence of:
- a) the required physical resources (e.g. venue; equipment, machinery or protective clothing), specified by the AQP to assess learners' competence with regard to the relevant occupational qualification or part qualification;
  - b) the required technical expertise (qualified personnel) to conduct the integrated external assessment for the relevant occupational qualification or part qualification;
  - c) compliance with the quality assurance requirements needed to conduct that particular assessment; and
  - d) systems to handle complaints and appeals.

## **11. Amendments to the scope of accreditation**

- 11.1 An accredited assessment centre may increase its scope by applying to one or more AQPs for conducting integrated external summative assessments for additional occupational qualifications or part qualifications.
- 11.2 The AQP will recommend the amendment of scope to the QCTO.
- 11.3 The QCTO may amend the scope, if:
- a) the AQP recommends the assessment centre to conduct assessment for one or more additional occupational qualifications. In such a case the generic requirements will be deemed to be met, and the extension of scope application will be restricted to the additional curriculum components; and
  - b) the QCTO determines that an accredited assessment centre no longer has the capacity to conduct the external summative assessments for which it has been accredited.
- 11.4 In all cases of an amendment to scope, the QCTO will inform the AQP and fulfil all its responsibilities as detailed in Section 7 above.

## 12 Withdrawal of accreditation

- 12.1 The QCTO, may on reasonable grounds, withdraw on recommendation from the relevant AQP the accreditation of an assessment centre in respect of all or a specific occupational qualification or part qualification which it is accredited to assess. Reasonable grounds include, but are not limited to:
- a) inability to meet the accreditation criteria;
  - b) assessment irregularities;
  - c) failure or refusal to fulfil accreditation responsibilities;
  - d) failure or refusal to comply with the relevant QCTO policies and procedures; and
  - e) failure to comply with the relevant AQP requirements including but not limited to:
    - i) poor record keeping and reporting on assessments;
    - ii) poor internal moderation; and
    - iii) ineffective reporting to the AQP.
- 12.2 The assessment centre may appeal the de-accreditation recommendation to the QCTO at a cost determined by the QCTO.
- 12.3 If de-accreditation is appealed, the QCTO will convene an appeals committee to consider any representations received, and will notify the AQP and assessment centre of its appeal decision in writing.

## 13 Irregularities

- 13.1 The assessment centre must address irregularities relating to the integrated external summative assessment which include, but are not limited to:
- a) a candidate cheating, copying or accessing assessment instruments in advance;
  - b) a candidate bribing, blackmailing, threatening or harassing an assessor or others involved in the assessment process; and
  - c) any party that falsifies documents or evidence for access before or during an assessment.
- 13.2 The AQP must address irregularities relating to the integrated external summative assessment which include, but are not limited to:
- a) an assessment centre staff member approved by the AQP not declaring a conflict of interest, such as, but not limited to a family or business relationship with a learner;
  - b) an assessment centre staff member approved by the AQP taking bribes or responding to threats, etc. in such a manner that advantages one learner over another;

- c) an assessment centre staff member approved by the AQP demonstrating bias (e.g. in relation to race, class, gender, educational background, ethnicity or religion) that unduly influences assessment or moderation decisions; or
- d) an assessment centre staff member approved by the AQP not making appropriate arrangements for learners with disabilities or language disadvantages (unless the assessment in question is assessing the language in question).

## **14 Complaints and appeals**

- 14.1 Complaints and appeals against irregularities under 13.1 must be referred to the relevant AQP.
- 14.2 Complaints and appeals and appeals against irregularities under 13.2 must be referred to the QCTO.

## **15 Quality assurance and monitoring of policy implementation**

- 15.1 The delegated AQP will monitor the performance of accredited assessment centres.
- 15.2 The QCTO will monitor the performance of the AQP in terms of this policy.
  - 15.2.1 The QCTO will review this Policy on Accreditation of Assessment Centres at least every three years.