Policy on certificate printing and storage of certificate background paper

1 April 2018

APPROVED BY:

(signature)	_(signature)_	_(signature)_
Chief Executive Officer	Chairperson of the Council	Chief Director: Occupational Qualification Management
Name: Mr Vijayen Naidoo	Name: Prof. Peliwe P Lolwana	Name: Mr Thomas Lata
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List of Acronyms

AQP	Assessment Quality Partner
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
NAMB	National Artisan Moderation Body
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QAP	Quality Assurance Partner
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority

Glossary of terms

In this document, any word or expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No 67 of 2008, as amended), and the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act No 97 of 1998), as amended has the same meaning unless the context otherwise indicates.

Assessment Quality Partner (AQP)	A body delegated by the QCTO to develop assessment instruments and manage external integrated summative assessments for occupational qualifications and part qualifications registered on the OQSF.
Certificate	A document issued by the QCTO indicating attainment of an occupational qualification or part qualification registered on the OQSF.
Covert	Layers of hidden security features that are not visible and are known to the authenticating party or end user, only.
Department of Higher Education and Training	Means the National Department responsible for further education and training in colleges, higher education and adult education and training.
Learner	An individual who is participating in a learning programme with the purpose of achieving an occupational qualification or part qualification.
Minister	Means the Minister of Higher Education and Training.
National Artisan Moderation Body (NAMB)	In terms of the OQSF, the body appointed by the QCTO as an AQP for all listed trades.
National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	The comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications and part qualifications. The NQF is a single integrated system comprising three coordinated Qualifications Sub-Frameworks for: General and Further Education and Training; Higher Education; and Trades and Occupations.
NQF Act	Means the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No 67 of 2008), as amended.
NQF Level	One of the series of levels of learning achievement arranged in ascending order from one to ten according to which the NQF is organised and to which qualification types are pegged.
Occupational qualification	A qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession resulting from work-based learning, developed and quality assured under the auspices of the QCTO consisting of knowledge, practical skills and work experience standards and which requires external summative assessment.

Overt	Layers of visible security features that are intended to enable end users to verify the authenticity of a document.
Part qualification	An assessed unit of learning with a clearly defined purpose that is, or will be registered as part of a qualification on the NQF.
Qualification	Means a registered national qualification in the context of the NQF Act, 2008 (Act No 67 of 2008).
Quality Assurance Partner (QAP)	A body to which the QCTO has delegated quality assurance and certification functions according to Section 26 I(2) of the Skills Development Act.
Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA)	A body established in terms of the Skills Development Act to develop and implement sector skills plans and promote learning programmes, including workplace learning. The QCTO has delegated quality assurance powers to the SETAs.

1. Preamble

Printing of occupational and trade certificates, security and storage of certificate background paper in the context of quality assuring standards for qualifications on the sub-framework

1.1   The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) was established in 2010 in terms of Section 26 (G) of the Skills Development Act of 1998, as amended, 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.

1.2   The QCTO is responsible for the development, maintenance and quality assurance of qualifications on the OQSF.

Although the QCTO was established in 2010 the function for the issuing of trade certificates was only taken over by the QCTO in October 2013. This function was previously the responsibility of the then Department of Manpower, thereafter the Department of Labour and most recently, the Department of Higher Education and Training.

In terms of the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act No 97 of 1998), the QCTO has responsibility for the issuing trade certificates and the quality assurance of occupational qualifications, which includes the certification of those qualifications registered on the OQSF.

In its role as a quality assurer, the QCTO is committed to issuing learners with valid and credible certificates. Such a commitment consequently requires that the QCTO ensures that the certified data is valid and reliable and that learner achievements are verifiable. It is therefore also the responsibility of the QCTO to ensure the security in the printing process and storage of certificate paper.

It is vital that the counterfeiting and forgery of occupational and trade certificates are prevented in order to ensure that the public and employers retain their faith in the certification process and to ensure the integrity and value of the award.

2. Purpose

This policy provides the approach of the QCTO in ensuring effective management of the printing and storage of certificate background paper and security in issuing of occupational and trade certificates. The policy further addresses the responsibilities of the different role players in the printing, storage and handling of certificates and certificate background paper.

3. Legislative and regulatory framework

3.1   This policy is based on the QCTO policies and relevant legislation listed below:
- Skills Development Act, 1998, (Act No 97 of 1998), as amended;
- National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, as amended; and
- OQSF policy as published in Government Gazette No 37879 of 31 July 2014.

3.2   This policy must be read in conjunction with the following QCTO policies and documents:
- Policy for the certification of learner achievements for trades and occupational qualifications on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF);
- Directives for certification issued by the QCTO;
- Verification policy;
- Delegation agreement between QCTO and QAPs; and
- Policy on delegation to AQPs.

4. Audience and applicability

4.1   This policy provides direction to the QCTO and outlines the responsibilities of all parties for the printing, storage, handling of certificates and security in the certification process.

4.2   Printing of certificate content is done in-house, whereas printing of secured certificate background paper is outsourced to an approved certified and registered printing company, which uses secured printing methods.

4.3   The Quality Assurance Partner (QAP) to which the QCTO has delegated certification responsibilities for sector based and historically registered qualifications on the OQSF, the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), must adhere to the principles in this policy in managing the printing of certificates.

5. Managing the printing and storage of certificate background paper and security in terms of approved standards for qualifications on the sub-framework

In ensuring security in the printing of certificates, it is important that the QCTO takes note of the covert and overt security features which are explained in this section.

5.1 Overt features

5.1.1 Overt features are intended to enable end users to verify the authenticity of a document. Such features will normally be prominently visible and difficult or expensive to reproduce. These features represent an attempt to put authentication into the hands of the general public.

However, to be effective they demand public education and awareness, which is especially difficult in developing markets.

5.1.2 It should be noted that overt features can add significant costs, may restrict supply availability and require education of end users to be effective.

5.1.3 The more widely used overt security technology becomes, the more attractive it is for counterfeiters to attempt to defeat it.

Experience has shown that counterfeiters will use a simple copy, which mimics the genuine article/certificate sufficiently well to confuse the general public.

5.1.4

Advantages	Disadvantages
User verifiable	Require user education – not always widely understood
Can add decorative appeal	May add significant cost
Can be limiting to counterfeiters	May rely on covert features for authentication
	May be re-used
	May give false assurance

5.2 Covert (hidden) features

5.2.1 The purpose of a covert feature is to enable the brand owner to identify counterfeited products. The general public will not be aware of its presence nor have the means to verify it. A covert feature should not be easy to detect or copy without specialist knowledge and their details must be controlled on a "need to know" basis. If compromised or publicised, most covert features will lose some if not all of their security value. For this reason such techniques will not be disclosed in this policy.

5.2.2

Advantages	Disadvantages
Can be simple and low cost to implement	Need strict secrecy – "need to know"
Needs no regulatory approval	If widely known or used, may be easy to copy
Can be easily added to or modified	More secure options add supply complexity and cost

Can be applied in-house or via secured printing technology	Greater risk of compromise if applied at printing company

5.2.3   Covert features are a very valuable tool, but a counterfeiter will be able to copy many of the simpler features unless they are skilfully applied and their details are kept secret.

5.2.4   In-house application has the advantage of limiting third party suppliers who may not be trustworthy. The QCTO prints in-house and ensures through its procedures that the process is secured.

Only the most secure covert features can safely be used in an overt context, and these are generally only detectable through forensic processes.

6.   Minimum Requirements for the appointment of the printing company to print certificate background paper

6.1.   The company must be registered and accredited as a printing company by the relevant authorities, which are PrintSecure and Cheque and MICR Standards Authority.

6.2.   The printing company must be capable of printing using a minimum of six colours.

6.3.   The printing company must be capable of implementing all of the covert and overt security features mentioned in this policy document.

7.   Security of certificate Background paper

In ensuring that certificate background paper is managed in a secured way, it is important to note the following principles:

7.1.   All staff working with printing, packing and storage of certificate background paper must be vetted and agree to the confidentiality as required for a registered printing company;

7.2.   The handling of security forms, such as certificate base stock must be in the presence of a minimum of two persons. No exclusions should be permitted;

7.3.   All stages in the handling of certificate background paper before and after printing must be recorded by the persons involved; clearly indicating the date and time;

7.4.   Wherever certificate background paper is located, security must be enforced;

7.5.   In the printing process, spoiled stock must be recorded and shredded immediately; and

7.6.   Spoiled in-house printed certificates must be recorded, after which they must be shredded immediately. A register in this regard must be maintained

8.   Minimum security requirements with regard to certificates for qualifications registered on the OQSF

8.1.   In ensuring that certificate background paper is managed in a secured way, it is important to note the following principles:

8.1.1.   It is important to secure the complete life cycle of the document to ensure total protection. This includes the production of the document itself, its secure storage and distribution, unique personalisation with details, a security features, secure database and final reconciliation on the record of certificates printed and stock used.

A powerful combination of overt, covert and forensic security features create a secure certificate that can be authenticated and verified as genuine.

Security features are carefully selected for their suitability to the QCTO requirements and are combined and built up in layers to provide the best possible protection.

8.1.2.   The QCTO has embedded, for example, some of the following overt security in its certificates:

   i.   complicated guilloche and numismatic security designs;
   ii.   micro-text printing – very small text that requires a magnifying glass to read;
   iii. standard security watermarks (embedded in the paper);
   iv.   embedded fibres and threads within the paper; and
   v.   unique and perforated serial number.

8.1.3.   Certificate printing includes both personal and qualification information, which is vulnerable to attempts to counterfeit and/or fraudulent alteration for all gains; including workplaces and financial gain. A secured database of certificates issued is maintained.

8.1.4.   QAPs with delegated certification responsibilities must ensure that covert and overt features are implemented on the certificates they issue.

8.1.5.   The QCTO logo may be used jointly with the logo of the QAP in the printing of certificates for qualifications registered on the OQSF by the QAP, only once such approval has been granted by the QCTO.

9. Design, printing, delivery and storage of certificate background paper at the printing company

9.1 The setting and design processes should take place within a secured area at the registered printing company. The printer must register the design and ensure the back-up of data in a secured environment.

9.2 The printing shall take place within the designated working area, also referred to as the "secure area", with limited access.

9.3 Access doors/gates to the secure area where certificate background paper is stored and printed must be locked at all times, and be access controlled.

9.4 Where numbering is applied to certificates, it is of the utmost importance that duplication or skipping of numbers does not occur. This will ensure that all sheets printed are accounted for.

9.5 Record must be kept of each batch as well as the serial number allocated to the certificate background paper of each batch.

9.6 Printing, numbering and packing of certificate paper must be done in accordance with QCTO requirements set out in the order/tender.

9.7 All material not used in the printing process must be recorded and destroyed/shredded at the end of the printing process.

9.8 The QCTO will conduct site visits to the printing company to ensure that the certificate background paper is of the QCTO standard set out in the purchase order or tender.

9.9 The printing company must take responsibility for certificate background paper in transit to the QCTO premises or a location agreed upon until it arrives.

9.10 The printing company must hand over the certificate background paper to the designated person, identified by the QCTO, upon arrival.

9.11 The QCTO official or appointed person must inspect the boxes to ensure that they are still sealed and there are no signs of tampering.

9.12 The responsible person must complete the 'acknowledgment of receipt of certificate background paper' form indicating the condition in which the certificate background paper was received and the box numbers.

9.13 The sealed boxes containing the certificate background paper must be stored in a secured area. Access to the area shall be reserved for designated persons.

9.14 All persons who enter the secured area, other than the person responsible for this area, shall be caused to sign an access register and indicate the reason(s) for entering the area.

10. Printing and packing of certificates at the printing company

10.1 Printing and packing of certificates must be done in a secured environment which is access controlled. Access may only be granted to persons with clearance to enter this section.

10.2 At regular intervals during printing, copies must be checked to ensure that the quality of the prints is of an acceptable standard.

10.3 All spoilt copies must be handled securely by completing the register and shredding of the certificate.

10.4 Certification staff must ensure that certificates printed match the request and are packed as agreed with the Assessment Quality Partner (AQP).

11. Security and access to the certificate printing premises of the printing company

11.1 Security gates/doors to the secured area shall be locked at all times.

11.2 Authorised persons entering the secured area shall be caused to sign the register in the certification office on entering and exiting, and shall comply with stipulated security procedures.

11.3 Visitors entering the secured area must be accompanied by the person responsible for printing of certificate background paper or certificates. Access by visitors should be limited as far as possible.

11.4 In cases where there is a need for technical assistance, all technicians needing access to the secured area must be accompanied by a designated person at all times.

11.5 An alarm system should be installed to monitor the entire secured area.

11.6 The alarm code shall be changed on a monthly basis by the designated person be responsible for the secured area.

11.7   Surveillance cameras shall be installed to monitor access in the secured printing area.

12.   Roles and Responsibilities

12.1.   **QCTO responsibilities**

12.1.1.   The QCTO will ensure that the printing company appointed meets the relevant criteria.

12.1.2.   The QCTO must ensure that the design of the certificate meets their requirements, which will be determined in consultation with the printing company.

12.1.3.   The QCTO will monitor the printing of each batch of certificate background paper.

12.1.4.   The QCTO will sign-off on each batch of certificate background paper to ensure that it meets their standards.

12.2.   **Printing company responsibilities**

12.2.1.   The printing company must adhere to all security measures determined by the QCTO.

12.2.2.   The printing company must advise the QCTO in the event of any changes to its premises and/or security arrangements which may in any way jeopardise the integrity of the certificate background paper.

12.2.3.   The printing company shall deliver the certificate background paper to the QCTO as whatever address determined by the QCTO by secure means.

13.   Storage of certificate background paper

13.1   Storage of certificate background paper at the QCTO

13.1.1   All certificate background paper must be received in sealed boxes from the printing company.

13.1.2   Upon receipt of the background paper, verification must be completed that all boxes are sealed, after which the quality of the printed product must be verified before receipt is signed for the paper.

13.1.3   The certificate background paper must be stored in an access controlled strong room on the QCTO premises.

13.1.4   A limited number of employees must have access to the strong room.

13.1.5   The boxes must remain sealed until such time as the stock in the box is required.

13.1.6   A register must be available on certificate stock available.

13.2   Storage of certificate background paper for printing of legacy qualification registered on the OQSF at the QAP

13.2.1.   All certificate background paper must be received in sealed boxes from the printing company.

13.2.   Upon receipt of the background paper, verification must be completed that all boxes are sealed, after which the quality of the printed product must be verified before receipt is signed for the paper.

13.3.   The certificate background paper must be stored in an access controlled strong room on the QAP or printing company premises.

13.4.   A limited number of employees must have access to the strong room.

13.5.   The boxes must remain sealed until such time as the stock in the box is required.

13.6   A register must be available on certificate stock available.

14.   Printing of the certificate at QCTO

14.1   Printing of the certificate at QCTO

14.1.1   Officials will request background paper from the accountable employee to print certificates.

14.1.2   Only the number of certificate background paper required will be distributed to the employee.

14.1.3   Register will be kept of all background paper dispatched for printing – such record will include the number of certificates requested, the employee to whom the stock is dispatched and date dispatched.

14.1.4   The employee responsible for printing of the certificates, will sign for receipt of certificate background paper.

14.1.5   A record shall be kept of all certificate background paper in office and cancelled sheets, including the reason for cancellation of the certificate stock.

14.2 Printing of the certificate at the QAP

14.2.1 Register will be kept of all background paper dispatched for printing – such record will include the number of certificates requested, the employee to whom the stock is dispatched and date dispatched.

14.2.2 The employee responsible for printing of the certificates, will sign for receipt of certificate background paper.

14.2.3 A record shall be kept of all certificate background paper in office and cancelled sheets, including the reason for cancellation of the certificate stock.

15. Storage of printed certificates

15.1. All printed certificates must be stored in a secured environment in a lockable safe or strong room, which is access controlled.

16. Distribution of certificates

The QCTO distributes certificates to the AQP. The AQP is required to sign a register of certificates received. The AQP is responsible to make arrangements for the collection of the certificates from the QCTO, which can be by way of courier service or collection from the office.

16.1. The distribution chain of printed certificates from the QCTO to the AQP must be as short as possible. Long chains increase the security risk of certificates being lost.

16.2. On receipt of printed certificates, the AQP must control and sign 'acknowledgment of receipt of certificates'. A copy of this receipt will be kept by the QCTO for its records.

16.3. Clear records must be kept to track the dissemination of the certificates from the AQP/QAP to the learner.

16.4. In distributing certificates to learners, the AQP/QAP or other designated parties (test centre etc.) must ensure that all measures are taken to ensure that the certificate holder is the recipient.

16.5. The AQP/QAP or other designated parties must take care that all certificates are distributed to certificate holders through a secured process.

16.6.   Certificates must be stored within a secured environment on the premises of the AQP/QAP or other designated parties until such time as they are distributed to the learners.

16.7.   Certificates distributed directly by the AQP/QAP to learners, should be done through registered or certified post or collected by the designated party. Each envelope must have a return address, so that unclaimed certificates can be returned to the AQP/QAP.

16.8.   A register or record of each certificate distributed must be kept by the AQP/QAP or other designated parties for a period of at least 3 years.

16.9.   Unclaimed certificates must be recorded by the AQP/QAP or assessment centre. Such certificates must be stored for a period of 3 years; after which they can be destroyed by the AQP/QAP. The learner must then apply for a replacement of his/her certificate at the AQP.

16.10.   A register of all unclaimed certificates destroyed (shredded) must be kept at the AQP/QAP.

16.11.   As part of the quality assurance process, the QCTO may request AQPs/QAPs to submit a report on the handling of certificates to the QCTO on an annual basis.

16.12.   AQPs/QAPs must put a policy in place, based on the requirements indicated here, to manage the storage, distribution and destruction of certificates.

17. Complaints

The QCTO will investigate complaints about design, printing, packing, distribution and personalisation of certificates against the requirements and criteria determined in this policy.

18. Quality assurance and monitoring of policy implementation

The QCTO will monitor the printing and handling of secured certificate background paper in terms of this policy.