

COVID -19 MEMORANDUM 1

TO: ALL QCTO STAKEHOLDERS, QUALITY ASSURANCE PARTNERS, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROVIDERS (SDP) AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

DATE: 04 May 2020

Dear Colleagues,

RE: COVID-19 CRISIS – OPENING UP OF E-LEARNING ON THE OQSF

This Official COVID-19 MEMORANDUM 1 replaces the current version currently being distributed widely in the sector. The QCTO sent out a draft version of the document to its critical stakeholders, the Quality Assurance Partners (SETAs, Professional Bodies) and APPETD for comment. It was the intention of the QCTO to ensure that the Memorandum complies with Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation statement on the measures to phase out the lockdown and phasing in of the PSET strategic functions address before releasing a final document. It is unfortunate that one or more of our trusted partners distributed the draft prior to QCTO finalising and releasing the Memorandum. Suffice to say only minor changes to the draft document have been made to address the issues raised on the draft document.

The COVID-19 crisis has caused enormous disruption to the lives of all South Africans, and this is true also in the Skills Development sector. A challenge that currently faces the sector in this time of social distancing is the need for training associated with a majority of qualifications and trades on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) to be conducted face-to-face.

Numerous qualifications and trades on the OQSF consist of the knowledge/theory and application (practical skills/work experience/simulated work experience) components. Different types of assessments are carried out throughout provision which leads to an admission to External Integrative Summative Assessment (EISA), a Trade Test or a Final Assessment of which successful completion of this will result in a learner being certified for that specific qualification.

The revised OQSF defines an occupational qualification as *“a qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession developed and quality assured under the auspices of the QCTO and consisting of knowledge/theory and application (practical skills/work experience/simulated work experience) components and an external integrated summative assessment”*. It further states, *“Application means the functional combination of the practical component and the workplace component through skills learning or simulated work experience learning”*. With the above in mind, the QCTO believes that there is no fundamental injunction against online learning for qualification on the OQSF.

While current regulations around many qualifications and trades on the OQSF generally forbid online or distance learning, the QCTO recognises the reality that the nation faces an extended period of some form of social distancing for an indefinite period of time. As the custodian of qualifications and trades on the OQSF, the QCTO has taken the decision to relax regulations around the mode of delivery for qualifications on this sub-framework. Such relaxations depends on the “nature” of the qualification, For example more components of qualifications falling into the General, Business and Services sector lend themselves to online and e-learning platforms while qualifications in the Engineering and Agriculture sectors may prove to be more challenging, so a “one size fits all” approach is not possible. The implementation of the workplace component will depend on the lockdown levels and the restrictions attached to each level.

While the relaxation of contact mode of delivery applies to all qualifications on the OQSF, SETAs and Professional Bodies are urged to urgently consider and implement sectoral arrangements around the mode of delivery, assessment and other qualification requirements and these should be urgently communicated with SDPs. Skills Development Providers must take due regard of any other national restrictions that apply to them or their specific qualifications regarding the national lockdown.

All Stakeholders are urged to take note of the following provided the necessary support is given to those learners without access to devices or internet:

1. All knowledge and practical learning for OQSF qualifications and trades may be conducted through online or blended learning – even where the qualification specifies that this is not possible;
2. Formative or ongoing assessments can also be conducted through online channels;
3. Final summative assessments (such as the External Integrated Summative Assessment, Trade Tests or Final Assessments) **may not** at this stage be conducted online and all evidence must be collected as usual;
4. QAPs that have an urgent need to conduct final summative assessments, and have a robust methodology in place, may apply to the QCTO in writing for special permission to conduct final assessments; and ensure the qualification requirements have been complied with, and where deviations are required, permission for such deviations must be sought in writing from the QCTO.

In this time of crisis, the QCTO stands by the QAPs, SDPs and learners in the trade and occupational space, and is committed to finding flexible solutions to ensure that education and training continues without undue interruption. The QCTO will continue to update its stakeholders as the situation develops.

In giving effect all stakeholders are required to heed the call of the Minister:

*“Firstly, whatever we do in the PSET sector, our responsibility is to lower the infection curve. Secondly, we must save the 2020 academic year, but not at the expense of lives. Thirdly, our efforts to save the academic year must avoid worsening the infection curve. Developing and implementing effective multi-modal remote learning systems (digital, analogue and physical delivery of learning materials) to provide a reasonable level of academic support to all our students at all institutions to resume academic learning and teaching support. As we are in an unprecedented emergency, we have to use all available tools to reach our students fully cognizant that it will not substitute the need for contact learning when conditions permit. This we will do making sure that **No student or institution is left behind**”* (MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION STATEMENT ON THE MEASURES TO PHASEOUT

THE LOCKDOWN AND PHASING IN OF PSET STRATEGIC FUNCTIONS 30 April 2020)

This memorandum must be read in conjunction with the “Summary of Guidelines on E-Learning and E- Assessment on the Occupational Qualifications Sub framework (OQSF)” published on the QCTO website.

Regards



Mr. V Naidoo: QCTO CEO

Date: 04 May 2020