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Department:
Public Service and Administration
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X916, PRETORIA, 0001. Tel: (012) 336 1000, Fax: (012) 326 7802
Private Bag X9148, CAPE TOWN, 8000. Tel: (021) 467 5120, Fax: (021) 467 5484

Enquiries: Ms M Morena Tel: (012) 336 1165 Email: morongoam@dpsa.gov.za Ref: 14/1/1/P

CIRCULAR 35 OF 2020

TO ALL HEADS OF NATIONAL/ PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS, PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIONS AND GOVERNMENT COMPONENTS

CLARIFICATION ON DEGREES AND DIPLOMAS REGISTERED ON LEVELS 6 AND 7 OF THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (NQF) FOR EMPLOYMENT IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

1. The Minister of Higher Education and Training issued the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act 67 of 2008, effective from 1 June 2009. The introduction of the NQF Act brought about changes to the NQF levels, increasing them from eight (8) to ten (10) levels.
2. In 2006 the DPSA issued a circular attached, providing a conversion table for the RVQ system to the NQF system. The circular was issued to address the need to relate qualifications obtained prior to the introduction of the NQF and which were classified in terms of the RVQ to the NQF. However, SAQA has not provided the detailed transitional measures between the pre-2009 (8-level NQF) and post-2009 (10-level NQF). The implementation of the 10-level NQF also resulted in differences of how the previous RVQ values attached to qualifications, transition between the 8-level NQF and the 10-level NQF.
3. The absence of detailed transitional measures between the two frameworks, has created challenges in the implementation of the framework, particularly in the interpretation of qualifications registered on levels 6 and 7 of the NQF. In the pre-2009 (eight (8)-level NQF), National Diplomas and Bachelor Degrees were classified under one NQF level (i.e. level 6). However, in the post-2009 (ten (10)-level NQF) National Diplomas and Bachelor Degrees are separated into NQF level 6 and 7 respectively.
4. The table below provides clarification to assist in the interpretation of Degrees and Diplomas registered on levels 6 and 7 of the NQF for the purpose of employment practices in the Public Service:

Qualification registered on the 8-level NQF (pre-2009).	Clarification in terms of the current 10-level NQF.
A pre-2009 National Diploma registered at NQF level 6.	This is deemed to be comparable to the two post-2009 Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF) Diploma qualification types at NQF level 6. Both the National Diploma offered by the Universities of Technology (UoTs) and the National "Nated" Diploma offered by Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges are registered at NQF level 6. While both are registered at the same NQF level, they are not necessarily equivalent as each qualification has a specific purpose and exit-level outcomes.
Employees who were appointed based on a National Diploma achieved pre-2009 and employees who achieved the Diploma post-2009.	Those employees would need to complete a relevant Advanced Diploma or a B-TECH registered at the current NQF level 7 to demonstrate competencies comparable to a Bachelor degree at NQF level 7.
The pre-2009 National First Degrees that were registered on the 8-level NQF, or previously allocated an RVQ value of 13.	This is deemed to be comparable to a Bachelor degree at NQF level 7 on the 10-level NQF.
A pre-2009 Bachelor of Technology (BTech) at NQF level 7.	This is deemed to be comparable to a Bachelor degree registered at NQF level 7 on the 10-level NQF. Learners who achieved this qualification can demonstrate comparable competencies prescribed at NQF level 7.
Employees appointed with a BTech qualification registered at NQF level 7.	Those employees would need to complete a relevant Postgraduate Diploma or Honours degree at NQF level 8 to achieve competencies prescribed at NQF level 8 of the 10-level NQF.
Bachelor of Education (BEd) qualification registered at NQF level 7 pre-2009.	This is comparable to a BEd (Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase, Senior and Further Education and Training Phase) registered in post-2009 at NQF level 7 of the 10-level NQF. Learners who achieved these qualifications can demonstrate similar competencies pegged at NQF level 7 of the 10-level NQF.
Professional Bachelor Degrees registered at NQF level 7 pre-2009 or previously allocated an RVQ	They are comparable to professional Bachelor Degrees registered in post-2009 at NQF level 8 of


Qualification registered on the 8-level NQF (pre-2009).	Clarification in terms of the current 10-level NQF.
value of 14.	the 10-level NQF. Learners who achieved these qualifications can demonstrate similar competencies pegged at NQF level 8 of the 10-level NQF.

5. It should be noted that although qualifications might be registered at the same NQF level, they cannot necessarily be considered to be equivalent as qualifications are designed to meet targeted learning outcomes. The levels, however, indicates similar learning outcomes of the qualification and the expected cognitive ability of the learner after the learning intervention.
6. Departments need to manage the process of recognizing qualifications carefully to prevent the creation of internal disparities/tensions. The high level translation key below can provide further guidance:

Broad Description of Qualification Types	NQF level Generally allocated
Senior Certificate/National Certificate (Vocational)	4
Certificate or Diploma following less than 3 years' study	5
National Certificate or National Diploma following at least 3 years' study	6
Bachelor's Degree following 3 years' study/Bachelor of Technology	7
Bachelor's Degree following 4 years' study (professional)	8
Masters' Degree	9
Doctorate's Degree	10

Note: Additional qualifications obtained will generally add to the NQF level of the base qualification, e.g. obtaining an Honours' degree after a 3 year Bachelor's Degree on NQF level 7 will lead to an NQF level 8. Higher teachers' diplomas with a 4 year study obtained pre-2009 at Colleges of Education should be consulted directly with SAQA against the inherent requirements of the specific post.

Your co-operation in the above regard will be highly appreciated.


Ms Yoliswa Makhasi
Director-General
 Date: 03/12/2020



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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X916, PRETORIA, 0001. Tel: (012) 314 7911, Fax: (012) 323 2386 or (012) 324 5615
Private Bag X9148, Cape Town, 8000. Tel: (021) 467 5120, Fax: (021) 465 5484

Enquiries: Kenny Govender
Tel No: 012 336 1045
Fax No: 012 336 1811 / 086 618 8899
File:

TO HEADS OF ALL DEPARTMENTS AND PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIONS CONVERSION TABLE FOR RVQ TO NQF

For attention: Human Resource Managers

1. Prior to the 1/7/99 the RVQ system was mainly used to define appointment/promotion requirements, salary determination and the calculation of cash rewards granted for obtaining higher qualifications. With the implementation of the PSR, it is expected from departments to define the inherent requirements of a post not only in terms of formal qualifications. Despite this, several departments continue to use the RVQ system when posts are advertised.
2. In 2004, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) conducted research on the extent to which departments utilize the RVQ system. It was found that:

HR functions in some state departments may lack understanding about the role and purpose of the NQF.

- There is still a need to relate qualifications obtained prior to the introduction of the NQF and which were classified in terms of the RVQ system to the NQF.

Employees, who amplified their historical qualifications with relevant short courses, have identified the need to determine the status of their qualifications.

3. To assist Departments and Provincial Administrations to move to the NQF levels and also to promote assimilation of the NQF into the public service, the DPSA, in conjunction with SAQA has developed the attached Conversion Table for RVQ qualifications to NQF levels for use by Departments and Provincial Administrations.
4. Should you have any questions related to the above, please do not hesitate to contact my department.

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DIRECTOR-GENERAL *(Acting)*
DATE: *27/3/06.*



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Conversion Table

Relative Value Coefficient (RVQ) Levels

National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Levels

Version 1
December 2005

Background

The RVQ system utilised in the Public Service was terminated as a result of the implementation of the revised management framework implemented with effect from 1 July 1999. Despite this, several public service departments continue to use RVQs to determine the relative value of tertiary qualifications held by public servants/applicants when vacant posts are advertised and filled. In 2001 the Department of Public Service and Administration advised all Departments to replace RVQ levels with NQF levels (Heads of all Departments/Provincial Administrations Circular 4 of 2001).

Purpose

The purpose of this Conversion Table is to provide generic guidelines for the determination of the equivalence of qualifications rated in terms of the RVQ system (a time-based system) and the corresponding NQF levels (an outcomes-based system).

Review

The Conversion Table will be reviewed and updated on a continuous basis to ensure that it reflects any changes to the education and training system.

In the case of more detailed and/or specific requests the old *Public Service Staff Code* should be consulted.

SAQA can also be contacted (see the contact details below) to verify the NQF level of a particular qualification.

Description of qualifications found on RVQ levels ¹	RVQ level	NQF level (and sub-level)
Junior Certificate (formerly Standard 8 high school certificate), or equivalent	RVQ 8	NQF 2
Matriculation or equivalent Certificate	RVQ 10	NQF 4
Certificate or Diploma issued after successful completion of a one-year course subsequent to the acquisition of a Matriculation Certificate	RVQ 11	NQF 5
Certificate or Diploma issued after successful completion of a two-year course subsequent to the acquisition of a Matriculation Certificate	RVQ 12	
Certificate, Diploma or Bachelor's Degree requiring a minimum period of study of three years	RVQ 13	NQF 6
A Bachelor's Degree requiring a minimum period of study of four years; An Honours Degree or equivalent Postgraduate Certificate acquired subsequent to a qualification with a value of RVQ 13	RVQ 14	NQF 7
A Bachelor's Degree requiring a minimum period of study of five years; An Honours Degree or Postgraduate Certificate acquired subsequent to a qualification with a value of RVQ 14	RVQ 15	
A one-year Masters Degree or equivalent qualification following a qualification with a value of RVQ 13	RVQ 15	NQF 8
A one-year Master's Degree following a Bachelor's or Honours Degree with a value of RVQ 15; A two-year Master's Degree or an equivalent qualification acquired subsequent to a qualification with a value of RVQ 14	RVQ 16	
A two-year Master's Degree or an equivalent qualification subsequent to a qualification with a value of RVQ 15; A Doctor's Degree or equivalent following a Master's Degree or a qualification with a value of RVQ 15	RVQ 17	
A Doctor's Degree or an equivalent following a Master's Degree with a value of RVQ 16	RVQ 18	NQF 8+ ²
A Doctor's Degree or an equivalent following a Master's Degree with a value of RVQ 17	RVQ 19	

¹ Please note that there are also occupational qualifications (e.g. for artisans) included on levels 2 to 4 of the NQF.

² Levels 1 and 8 of the NQF are open ended. It was therefore agreed that doctor's degrees would be distinguished from other NQF Level 8 qualifications by placing them on Sub-level 8+. There is however no separate level descriptor for NQF Level 8+.

NQF level (and sub-level)	Description of NQF level ³	
	Applied competence	Autonomy of learning
NQF 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a basic operational knowledge of one or more areas or fields of study⁴, in addition to the fundamental areas of study b. an understanding of the environment within which the learner operates in a wider context c. an ability to use a variety of common tools and instruments⁵; the ability to apply literacy and numeracy skills to a range of different but familiar contexts d. an ability to use their knowledge to select and apply known solutions to well-defined routine problems e. a basic ability to collect, organise and report information clearly and accurately f. an ability to express an opinion on given information clearly in spoken and written form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a capacity to work and learn in a disciplined manner in a well-structured and supervised environment b. an ability to manage their time effectively c. an ability to develop sound working relationships and an ability to work effectively as part of a group

³ Level descriptors for NQF Levels 1 to 4 have been approved, while NQF levels 5 to 8 are in draft format.

⁴ The purpose of the qualification will determine whether one or more fields are covered.

⁵ Common tools and instruments cover not only hand and cleaning tools but can include keyboards, various computer packages, writing instruments and communication devices such as telephones.

NQF level (and sub-level)	Description of NQF level ³	
	Applied competence	Autonomy of learning
NQF 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a basic understanding of one or more fields' or disciplines' key concepts and knowledge⁶, in addition to the fundamental areas of study b. an understanding of the organisation or operating environment as a system c. application of skills in measuring the environment using key instruments and equipment⁷; operational literacy and numeracy skills⁸ d. an ability to use basic procedures and operations to complete complex tasks e. an ability to use their knowledge to select appropriate procedures to solve problems within given parameters f. a basic ability to summarise and interpret information relevant to the context from a range of sources g. an ability to take a position on available information, discuss the issues and reach a resolution; produce a coherent presentation and report, providing explanations for positions taken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a capacity to operate within clearly defined contexts b. an ability to work and learn within a managed environment c. a capacity to actively contribute to team effectiveness

⁶ The purpose of the qualification will determine whether one or more fields are covered.

⁷ The process of converting conditions into data, quantifying events and phenomena.

⁸ Operational literacy = reading of symbols and representations related to the field or discipline, e.g. music notation, engineering drawings, building plans, circuit diagrams, flow diagrams, maps.

NQF level (and sub-level)	Description of NQF level ³	
	Applied competence	Autonomy of learning
NQF 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a fundamental knowledge base of the most important areas of one or more fields or disciplines⁹, in addition to the fundamental areas of study; an informed understanding of the key terms, rules, concepts, established principles and theories in one or more fields or disciplines b. an understanding of the organisation or operating environment as a system within a wider context c. an ability to apply essential methods, procedures and techniques of the field or discipline; an ability to apply and carry out actions by interpreting information from text¹⁰ and operational symbols or representations d. an ability to use their knowledge to solve common problems within a familiar context; an ability to adjust an application of a common solution within relevant parameters to meet the needs of small changes in the problem or operating context; an ability to motivate the change using relevant evidence¹¹ e. a basic ability in gathering relevant information, analysis and evaluation skills f. an ability to communicate and present information reliably and accurately in writing and verbally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a capacity to take responsibility for their own learning within a supervised environment b. a capacity to take decisions about and responsibility for actions c. a capacity to evaluate their own performance against given criteria d. a capacity to take the initiative to address any shortcomings they find

⁹ The purpose of the qualification will determine whether one or more fields are covered.

¹⁰ Text will include operation manuals, written instructions, etc.

¹¹ This could include health and safety requirements, operation procedures, etc.

NQF level (and sub-level)	Description of NQF level ³	
	Applied competence	Autonomy of learning
NQF 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a fundamental knowledge base of the main areas of one or more fields or disciplines¹²; an informed understanding of the important terms, rules, concepts, principles and theories in one or more fields or disciplines b. an understanding of the organisation or operating environment as a system within a wider context and in relation to the society c. an ability to effectively apply essential methods, procedures and techniques of the field or discipline; an ability to interpret, convert and evaluate text¹³ and operational symbols or representations d. an ability to use their knowledge to solve well-defined problems both routine and unfamiliar within a familiar context; an ability to adjust an application of a solution within relevant parameters to meet the needs of changes in the problem or operating context; an ability to evaluate the change using relevant evidence¹⁴ e. efficient information-gathering, analysis and synthesis, and evaluation skills f. presentation skills using appropriate technological skills; an ability to communicate information coherently using basic conventions of an academic / professional¹⁵ discourse reliably in writing and verbally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a capacity to take responsibility for their own learning within a supervised environment b. take decisions about and responsibility for actions c. evaluate their own performance against given criteria

¹² The purpose of the qualification will determine whether one or more fields is covered

¹³ Text will include operation manuals, written instructions etc.

¹⁴ This could include health and safety requirements, operation procedures etc.

¹⁵ Professional incorporates what has traditionally been known as vocational

NQF level (and sub-level)	Description of NQF level ³	
	Applied competence	Autonomy of learning
NQF 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a solid knowledge base in at least one discipline/field b. a sound understanding of one or more discipline/field's key terms, rules, concepts, established principles and theories; some awareness of how the discipline/field relates to cognate areas c. effective selection and application of the central procedures operations and techniques of a discipline/field d. an ability to solve well-defined but unfamiliar problems using correct procedures and appropriate evidence e. a critical analysis and synthesis of information; presentation of information using basic information technology f. an ability to present and communicate information reliably and coherently, using academic/professional discourse conventions and formats appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a capacity to evaluate their own learning and identify their learning needs within a structured learning environment a. a capacity to take the initiative to address these needs b. a capacity to assist others with identifying learning needs
NQF 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a well-rounded and systematic knowledge base in one or more disciplines/fields and a detailed knowledge of some specialist areas b. a coherent and critical understanding of one or more discipline/ field's terms, rules, concepts, principles and theories; an ability to map new knowledge onto a given body of theory; an acceptance of a multiplicity of 'right' answers c. effective selection and application of the essential procedures, operations and techniques of a discipline/ field; an understanding of the central methods of enquiry and research in a discipline/ field; a knowledge of at least one other discipline/ field's mode of enquiry d. an ability to deal with unfamiliar concrete and abstract problems and issues using evidence-based solutions and theory-driven arguments e. well-developed information retrieval skills; critical analysis and synthesis of quantitative and/ or qualitative data; presentation skills following prescribed formats, using IT skills appropriately f. an ability to present and communicate information and their own ideas and opinions in well-structured arguments, showing an awareness of audience and using academic/ professional discourse appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a capacity to operate in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts, requiring responsibility and initiative b. a capacity to accurately self-evaluate and identify and address own learning needs c. an ability to interact effectively in a learning group

NQF level (and sub-level)	Description of NQF level ³	
	Applied competence	Autonomy of learning
NQF 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a comprehensive and systematic knowledge of one or more disciplines/fields with depth, specialisation and up-to-date knowledge in some areas b. an informed and critical understanding of the theory and research methodology of one or more disciplines/fields and an understanding of how these relate to research problems in the field; an ability to relate theory to practice and <i>vice versa</i> and an ability to think epistemologically c. an ability to select and apply research methods effectively and to undertake a research project in an area of specialisation d. an ability to deal with complex problems using the intellectual, research and technological resources and tools provided by a discipline/ profession e. effective information retrieval and processing skills; an ability to critically engage with current research and scholarship in an area of specialisation f. an ability to present and communicate academic/professional work effectively, using the full resources of an academic/professional discourse appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a capacity to operate in complex, unfamiliar contexts, requiring personal responsibility and initiative b. a capacity to accurately self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing professional/ academic development c. a capacity to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically d. a capacity to critically evaluate own and others' work with justification.