

Report on the viability of registration as a non-statutory professional body with SAQA

April 2025

This report is compiled for the AAA Board to make recommendations to the AGM whether it is viable to pursue the voluntary registration of the AAA as a non-statutory professional body according to SAQA's policies and criteria.

A. Role of SAQA

Section 13(1)(i) of the NQF Act requires SAQA to:

- i.) develop and implement policy and criteria for recognising a professional body and registering a professional designation for the purposes of this Act, after consultation with **statutory and non-statutory bodies** of expert practitioners in occupational fields and with the Quality Councils (QCs); and
- ii.) recognise a professional body and register **its professional designation** if the criteria contemplated in subparagraph (i) have been met.

Non-statutory bodies are considered 'voluntary', as professionals are not required to be registered with the professional body in order to practice their profession. A **Non-statutory body is not** constituted through an Act of Parliament, but in response to a need identified by a collective of practitioners. **No law compels anyone to be a member of a non-statutory professional body**. Recognition from SAQA as mandated by the NQF Act, does not give the professional body statutory status.

SAQA must emphasise that:

- Non-statutory professional bodies have no statutory authority to regulate any trade, occupation or profession;
- A non-statutory professional body exercises professional authority **by virtue of its constitution / founding document which binds its members only**; and
- **Membership / registration concerning a non-statutory professional body is voluntary.**

Source: <https://www.saqa.org.za/saqa-recognition-does-not-give-statutory-powers-to-non-statutory-professional-bodies/>

B. Purpose of SAQA with the registration of professional bodies:

This Policies & Criteria for professional bodies demonstrates the critical role of professional bodies in quality assurance and standards development in the NQF environment. The recognition of professional bodies, and the registration of their designations, will contribute to strengthening social responsiveness and accountability within professions and promoting pride in association for all professions and occupations.

Redress is also a key imperative in the South African policy and regulatory environment. It is critical that perceptions of exclusionary practices be addressed upfront and that professions do not apply unjust policies and practices regarding who gains access to a profession.

7. In terms of Sections 28, 29, 30 and 31, read with paragraphs 13(1)(i)(i), 13(1)(i)(ii) and 13(1)(l) of the NQF Act, and notwithstanding the provisions of any other Act, a statutory or non-statutory body of expert practitioners will:

- a. when recognised as a professional body, co-operate with the relevant QC(s) in respect of qualifications and quality assurance in its occupational field;
- b. apply, in the manner prescribed by SAQA, to be recognised as a professional body in terms of the NQF Act; and
- c. applies, **in the manner prescribed by SAQA, to register a professional designation.**

Source: <https://www.saqa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Professional-Body-Policy-and-Criteria-2023-final.pdf>

A professional body is recognised **for the purpose of the NQF.**

This means that irrespective of what the professional body is doing, it must advance the objectives of the NQF, which are access, mobility and progression.

Professional bodies are also recognised to promote public understanding of and trust in professionals, setting standards (where this relates to the underlying qualification required for the professional designation), and encourage social responsibility and accountability.

C. SAQA requirements that the AAA need to adhere to which could be problematic in terms of recognition and capacity:

Criteria for Awarding a Professional Designation

- Must be submitted to SAQA **by a recognised professional body.**
- Must be developed, awarded, monitored and may be revoked in terms of the policy of the professional body.
- **Be part of a progression pathway within or across registered designations.**
- Be linked to **a validated database** of the names of individuals who have been awarded the professional designation.
- A professional body must ensure that foreign qualifications are evaluated by SAQA.

Source: Presentation used at the SAQA compulsory workshops for prospective professional bodies held online on 20 March 2024:

POLICY AND CRITERIA FOR RECOGNISING A PROFESSIONAL BODY AND REGISTERING A PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK ACT, ACT 67 OF 2008 (2023)

D. Costs to be incurred to register with SAQA:

1. A non-refundable deposit of R4 900.00 on submission of the application and supporting documents.
2. The Professional Bodies Committee recommended the implementation of a nominal levy of R7,00 per designated member registered on the **National Qualifications Framework Management Information**

System to be charged annually with effect from 1 April 2023. The levy will apply to both statutory and non-statutory professional bodies.

The number of individual associate members recorded on the AAA membership register as of end 2022 was 562. At R7.00 per member the annual fees will amount to R3 934.00. Take into consideration the first-time attendees of the 2023 and 2024 conferences must still be recorded in the register, which will increase the mentioned number close to 600.

If the initial registration with SAQA succeeds, the professional body is subject to a bi-annual monitoring and a re-recognition application every 4 years.

E. Membership data required to be submitted on application for registration and annually thereafter:

*** NQF ACT**

31. Information

A professional body must, in consultation with the SAQA-

(a) maintain a database for the purposes of this Act;

(b) submit such data in a format determined in consultation with the SAQA **for recording on the national learners' records database** contemplated in section 13(1)

*** Resources that will be provided by SAQA (1)**

- Comprehensive Load Specifications
- Minimum Standard for data transmission
- Data Testing Utility (Edu.Dex) –performs validations and gives feedback at source

Source: Presentation used at the SAQA compulsory workshops for prospective professional bodies held on-line on 20 March 2024:

F. The application form to be submitted to SAQA:

Herewith some **relevant extracts** from the application form and supporting documents with remarks on how it could impact on the AAA's current operations.

- Submit a signed covering letter to Mr JHA Nel, Senior Manager: Registration and Recognition of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and include the following documents on an accompanying USB flash drive: (1) Completed application form; and (2) Supporting documents.
- SAQA will not consider non-compliant applications including incomplete applications with missing supporting documents. If you do not submit the relevant supporting information (**as indicated in the checklist**) with the application for recognition and does not meet the requirements of the *P&C for professional bodies*, then the Registration and Recognition Unit of SAQA will close the application.

Remark: Referring to the checklist mentioned, there are elements of the checklist that do not exist or to which the AAA cannot comply, which could lead to the closing of the application and forfeit the application fee of R4 900.00

3. Transformation

3.1 Does the professional body have a transformation policy that guides the constitution of the board, staff and members? Yes No

3.2 Indicate the activities that support transformation and ensure representation of the country's demographics.

3.3 If there is no transformation, please provide an explanation, and plans to address this.

Remark: As the membership to the association is automatically granted once a delegate of an institutional member attended the annual conference and AGM, the Board of Directors of the NPC is not in a position to apply a transformation policy, which does not exist at the moment.

As the Board members are elected by a democratic process at the AGM, the question is how will the AAA be in a position to apply or enforce a transformation target?

5. Premises

5.1 Does the professional body have access to **adequate premises and facilities** to undertake its functions?

5.2 Describe the premises and available facilities.

Attach the lease agreement or other relevant documentation, or proof of ownership of the premises.

Remark: In 2021 the registered address of the AAA changed from Adapt IT'S address in Midrand to the current home office address at the residence of the contracted GM of the AAA at 180 Walnut St. Moreleta Park, Pretoria. It is merely a shared room (or study) in the residence with one dedicated workstation with wi-fi and a printer / scanner. There are no lease agreement nor proof of ownership for the AAA.

The question is if SAQA will deem this as "adequate premises and facilities" for a professional body.

7. Awarding of professional designations

7.1 Does the professional body have a policy and criteria to **develop**, award, monitor and revoke its professional designations in terms of its own rules, legislation and/or international conventions? Yes **No**

7.2 Does the professional body communicate the professional designation awarding criteria to members? **Yes** No (**Note:** In the web published constitution and the rules and procedures thereto)

7.3 How does the PB communicate the criteria to applicants?

Attach the policy and criteria to develop, award, monitor and revoke professional designations in terms of own rules, legislation and/or international conventions.

7.4 Is there a policy or policy statement for dealing with foreign qualifications? Yes **No**

7.5 Give a summary of the policy or state the policy statement.

Attach the following:

- Foreign qualifications policy or policy statement; and
- Evidence of foreign qualifications policy/statement implementation or referrals of foreign evaluations to SAQA.

7.6 Does the professional body apply fair and non-exclusionary practices in the awarding of professional designations?

7.7 Elaborate on your answer.

7.8 Provide the total number of rejected applications, the reasons, and the demographics of the applicants.

Attach a minimum of three copies of rejected applications and the feedback to the applicants.

Remark: Of all the above required documents to be attached to the application, the AAA does not currently have any and to develop and formulate these will depend on the capacity available. It will also not be prudent to merely fabricate these documents only for the sake of registering the PB.

It must also be remembered that in terms of our current constitution the awarding of the designation “associate member” is merely due to the first attendance of the annual conference and AGM.

8. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

8.1 Does the professional body have a policy and criteria on RPL to award designations for members who do not have the required underlying qualifications? Yes **No**

8.2 Explain the RPL criteria for awarding a professional designation.

Attach the following:

- *Approved RPL Policy and Criteria to award designations for members who do not have the required underlying qualifications; and*
- *Evidence of RPL implementation.*

G. Data uploads requirements by SAQA for the NLRD

The data requirements and formats of files required from professional bodies are specified in a document named “*Specifications for Professional Bodies’ Load Files for the National Learners’ Records Database*” (NLRD Version 2.0). Refer: <https://nlrdpbinfo.octoplus.co.za/>

Herewith just an extract from this document:

Person Designation (File 36 / Format Identifier 36)

This file format is designed to transmit the linkages between people and their professional designations.

File Layout

Note	Field Name	Type	Size	Position	Require	Source
1, 2	National_Id	NUMBER	15	1	C	
1, 2	Person_Alternate_Id	TEXT	20	16	C	
1, 2	Alternative_Id_Type	NUMBER	3	36	Y	L
7, 2	Designation_Id	NUMBER	5	39	Y	T
7	Designation_Registration_Number	TEXT	20	44	Y	
3	Designation_Prof_body_Id	NUMBER	10	64	Y	T
4, 8	Designation_Start_Date	DATE	8	74	C	
5, 8	Designation_End_Date	DATE	8	82	C	
8	Designation_Structure_Status_Id	NUMBER	10	90	Y	L
	Prof_Body_Decision_Number	TEXT	20	100	N	
6	Filler01	TEXT	20	120	MBB	
6	Filler02	TEXT	10	140	MBB	
	Date_Stamp	DATE	8	150	Y	

1. The combination National_ID, Person_Alternate_Id and Alternative_Id_Type must exist in the Person Information file.

National IDs must be 13 characters long (the provision of 15 spaces in the table is due to the probable national need for this, in the future). National IDs not of 13-character length generate a fatal error. Invalid IDs (even if 13 characters in length) are not accepted. The first 10 digits of the National ID are considered the unique identifier. *If the National ID is unknown, please make it blank rather than zeroes.*

2. The combination of National_ID, Person_Alternate_Id, Alternative_Id_Type and Designation_ID must be unique.

Remark: The AAA does not have the data elements required above on the associate members currently recorded in the AAA membership register. These data requirements and formats of data uploads to be supplied by the AAA to register as a PB, is a “show stopper” to registration, unless the Board deems registration with SAQA to the best benefit of the AAA. In such a case it will require a major increase in capacity and expertise.

H. Registered qualification required for members of a professional body

8. In meeting the policy and criteria for the recognition of professional bodies, a recognised professional body may according to Section 32 of the NQF Act, on delegation of the relevant QC:

- e. develop and/or quality assure qualification/s required for the awarding of professional designations.

Remark: The AAA has since inception been involved with a task team of Universities South Africa (Usaf) to register an appropriate qualification on the NQF for academic administrators. The task team had several meetings and made submissions to the QCTO on the curriculum of a proposed qualification for registration on the NQF. Eventually, after numerous enquiries, the feedback from the QCTO was that the proposed qualification was too generic in comparison with already registered other qualifications on the NQF in the fields of secretarial and administration subject fields. The interpretation of the above extract from the Act, the AAA’s registration as a professional body without a qualification that is registered on the NQF, could potentially be a reason why SAQA will reject the application for registration.

Conclusions and recommendations to the Board

From the above investigations, sources and remarks stated the following conclusions can be made:

1. The AAA does not nearly have the required data elements and annual returns that are required for registration as a professional body with SAQA, and to obtain these will require a substantial effort and extension of administrative capacity.
2. Registered professional bodies’ registration is subject to a bi-annual evaluation by SAQA which might result in a de-registration if their requirements are not met.
3. The direct and indirect costs to be incurred cannot justify the value to be registered as a non-statutory professional body, with the only recognition to be received is a listing of the AAA on SAQA’s website as a registered professional body.
4. The AAA can operate as a non-statutory professional body in terms of its constitution, as registration with SAQA is completely on a voluntary basis. The AAA’s constitution is in principle aligned to the constitutions of other non-statutory registered professional bodies.
5. With reference above to the required transformation policy, it is clear the AAA Board has no control over the racial composition of the association’s membership. Once again this might result in the disqualification of an application to be registered.

It is therefore proposed that the AAA Board recommends to the 2025 AGM that the intention that was proposed to register the AAA as a non-statutory professional body with SAQA should be withdrawn, and that the AAA continues to define itself as a non-statutory professional body in terms of its constitution.

Compiled by:

Peet du Plessis
General Manager