



higher education  
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Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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# SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- NSFAS under the administrator has been working on their IT system and cleaning up their database.
- It was found that NSFAS never had a proper database of approved qualifications against which they could approve funding to students.
- During the cleaning process it was found that students had been funded that should never have been funded as they were occasional students, or they were registered for post graduate qualifications such as Honours and Masters degrees.
- This has serious consequences for universities who submitted these applications and for students as the rules have always been undergraduate students are funded not postgraduate.

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- During the Department's visits to the HDIs a session has been dedicated to an engagement with students and they have all raised issues on NSFAS, one of them being not funded where last year they were funded on a particular qualification and now they are not.
- The Department has had to explain that it was stated in the announcement regarding free education that it was "fee free education for the poor". In addition it was explained that it has always been for undergraduate study.
- It should be noted that even where the B Tech and PCGE has been funded it linked to Professional Body requirements and furthermore these are undergraduate qualifications.
- The only PG qualification approved for NSFAS funding is the SAICA qualification

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- During the registration period this year the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) determined that they need a way of verifying which students should be funded.
- They therefore decided that they would verify against the SAQA ID for a qualification when approving funding for a student.
- If they could not find a SAQA ID for a qualification they would then refer the applications back to the university indicating that the student/s would not be funded.
- The University then needed to appeal this decision and the agreement was that NSFAS would then approach the Department to check if the qualification was on the PQM.

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- It was during this process that delays arose as some universities did not go back to NSFAS with an appeal but complained to the DHET that NSFAS was using the SAQA ID to determine whether students should be funded and that there are issues with the SAQA ID.
- The Department then explained the procedure to the universities.
- Once NSFAS received the appeal they would then refer the list of qualifications to the Department to check against the PQMs.
- The colleagues in the Directorate: Academic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation would then check the PQMs and indicate to NSFAS that the qualification was on the PQM and could be funded.

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- If the colleagues in the Directorate: Academic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation could not find the qualification on the PQM they would indicate to NSFAS that the qualification was not on the PQM and therefore the students could not be funded.
- In addition they would indicate to NSFAS if the qualification was a postgraduate qualification and that it should not be funded..
- If the university came back with a further appeal insisting it was an approved qualification the staff in the HEMIS directorate would then extract from the HEMIS database the approved qualification name and the Institutional name.
- This further assisted in determining if a qualification was on the PQM and therefore students could be funded.

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- It was during this verification procession between NSFAS and the Department where it was found that some universities were submitting old extended curriculum programmes (ECP) to NSFAS that had not been approved.
- Eventually these were given approval with a letter having to go to the university indicating that either they had conditions outstanding on the ECP and therefore should not be offering these programmes until these had been met or HEMIS credits had to be fixed.
- During this process the Department has realised that in many instances universities were submitting the lists of their students against the institutional name.

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- In addition some very strange names were submitted for the approved qualification names, such as bridging, augmented, etc.
- Universities will need to clean up their academic structures and ensure that the names of the qualifications are as accredited and registered on the NQF.
- It is noted that universities, particularly where they have a generic qualification, e.g B Comm often create an institutional programme name.
- If NSFAS are going to continue with this method of verification there will probably be a need for decision for 2020 on how universities need to submit their lists of students to NSFAS.

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- The verification is going to be against the SAQA ID or the approved qualification name.
- Universities will have to extract from their database the students linked through the institutional name to the approved qualification name and provide NSFAS with a list where students have the approved qualification name.
- The Department will continue to work closely with NSFAS on this issue until such time as they have a database of approved qualifications against which they can make their funding decisions.

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- However, new qualifications are regularly being approved and accredited and registered on the NQF. This will require them to constantly update this database.
- In addition the Central Applications Service (CAS) will link to NSFAS so they too will require a database of approved qualifications. There will therefore be a need to ensure that all these databases are consistent and accurate.
- HEMIS has now introduced an element for the SAQA ID so all institutions are required to complete this field. It should be noted that in the PQM letter to the universities the Department indicates that no students should be enrolled until the qualification is registered on the NQF.

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- If a student/s are registered for a qualification that does not have a SAQA ID then graduate before the qualification is registered on the NQF the student/s would find it difficult to obtain employment as employers check against the NQF to see if the qualification is a registered qualification.
- HEMIS still provides data to NSFAS for mapping to their dataset but this will not resolve the approved qualification issue as HEMIS data are historical.
- The HEMIS data enables NSFAS to monitor the completion status of students and in doing so determine the N + 2 criteria. In certain instances where NSFAS indicated that they would not fund students it was a result of the N + 2 test not because of the qualification

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- **MEETING WITH SAQA 5 AUGUST 2019**
- The HEMIS directorate has until October to finish verifying the data in the final audited submissions. However, it was agreed to provide the NLRD with an extract at the end of August.
- The SAQA colleagues will use this extract to test the SAQA IDs and see if they can link them to previous submissions.
- SAQA has in the meantime done an exercise to see how they can match the qualifications in previous submissions to what they have currently on the NQF.
- They have compiled a list of qualifications unique per institution and will link these with the registered Qual ID.

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- They have a list of 3828 qualifications where they could not match to a registered qualification. However, these were ratified by the board for registration. SAQA will come back to us if they have any queries.
- We will discuss with Praxis a way forward where there may be a need to provide SAQA with as spreadsheet containing information on an old qualification that may need to get a Qual ID.
- The type of information that would be required would be year, institution, qual code, qual name, NQF level and NQF credits.
- Once SAQA has this information they will then be able to give these qualifications a Qual ID and will look at the date stamp to determine when they should be registered.

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- In addition SAQA has picked up that do have some qualifications where they cannot determine if they are 3 or 4 year qualifications and will work with us to resolve this issue.
- They have also indicated that in their clean up where they found a record has come through from HEMIS with an “strange” name or an abbreviation they have corrected it. There may be a need to check all of these.
- Going forward once the issue with the registration of qualifications on the NQF has been finalised any record that is submitted to the NLRD without have a Qual ID it will not be loaded into the NLRD.
- This has serious consequences for students because their qualifications will not be able to be verified by employers.

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## SAQA IDs AND NSFAS

- How are the academic structures maintained – centrally, by faculty, by Department? HEMIS officers are advised that before 2020 they carefully check their academic structures against their PQMs and ensure the approved qualification is as per the PQM.
- If universities find discrepancies between their accredited qualification name and the PQM, they should contact the Directorate: Academic Planning Monitoring and Evaluation at the Department.
- Have all SAQA IDs have been recorded on the academic structure.

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