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GENERAL NOTICES • ALGEMENE KENNISGEWINGS

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING**NOTICE 355 OF 2020****DISASTER MANAGEMENT ACT, 2002****DIRECTIONS FOR REOPENING OF INSTITUTIONS OFFERING QUALIFICATIONS REGISTERED ON THE OCCUPATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK (OQSF) AS PART OF A RISK-ADJUSTED STRATEGY FOR A PHASED-IN RETURN OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES, ISSUED IN TERMS OF THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT ACT, 2002 (ACT NO.57 OF 2002)**

I, Dr BE Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, after consultation with the National Skills Authority (NSA), in terms of the COVID-19 Risk Adjusted Strategy Regulations issued in terms of the Disaster Management Act, No. 57 of 2002, hereby publish the Directions regarding the reopening of institutions offering qualifications registered on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF), from 1 June 2020, as set out in the Schedule.

Notwithstanding the date of publication of the Notice in the Government Gazette, these Directions come into effect on 1 June 2020.



DR BE NZIMANDE, MP

MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

DATE:

25/06/2020

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SCHEDULE

DIRECTIONS FOR REOPENING OF INSTITUTIONS OFFERING QUALIFICATIONS REGISTERED ON THE OCCUPATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK (OQSF) AS PART OF A RISK-ADJUSTED STRATEGY FOR A PHASED-IN RETURN

1. Definitions

In these Directions, a word or expression bears the meaning assigned to it in the Disaster Management Act (Act No.57 OF 2002) (the Disaster Management Act) or in the Regulations, and unless the context indicates otherwise.

“Institution” means any training provider accredited by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) or its Quality Assurance Partners (SETAs and Professional Bodies) to offer an occupational qualification or occupational learning programme on the OQSF and includes accredited assessment centres and accredited trade test centres, including sites of learning and approved workplace based training sites.

“Stakeholders” means different branches within the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), the National Artisan Moderation Body (NAMB), Registered Professional Bodies (as delegated by the QCTO to perform quality assurance functions), Skills Development Providers (SDPs), Assessment Centres (ACs), Trade Test Centres (TTCs), Assessment Quality Partners (AQPs), Development Quality Partners (DQPs), Quality Assurance Partners (QAPs), Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), Qualification Development Facilitators (QDFs), Verifiers, Moderators, Facilitators, Mentors and Workplace based training sites, amongst others.

2. Background and principles

- 2.1 The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, declaring a national state of disaster on 15 March 2020 in terms of the Disaster Management Act. Subsequently, the President announced a 21-day national lockdown period, from 26 March 2020 until 16 April 2020, which was further extended until 30 April 2020. All Post School Education and Training (PSET) institutions stopped training and closed their sites of learning including workplace based training sites.

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- 2.2 A risk-adjusted strategy is being implemented to phase-in the return to institutions offering occupational learning programmes and occupational qualifications registered on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF). This is to manage the gradual reopening of institutions for learning, training and assessment, and to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19. An essential aspect of the reopening of institutions offering occupational qualifications and occupational programmes registered on the OQSF, is linked to the need to ensure preparedness of infrastructure and teaching and learning spaces, including workplace based training sites; screening of staff, learners and the general public entering institutions; physical distancing; and the implementation of hygiene protocols as per government regulations and applicable alert levels.
- 2.3 The skills development sector recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic will have a significant impact on our daily lives and workplaces for some time to come. The sector also recognises that it has to put the necessary measures, policies, plans, systems and processes in place in line with the gradual implementation of the risk-adjusted strategy and its alert levels as it prepares to return to normal training, teaching, learning and workplace based training. However, this must be done based with an understanding that institutions, staff and learners must act differently to combat the spread of COVID-19.
- 2.4 Different methodologies will have to be explored to ensure that staff and learners are able to access institutions as safely as possible, that the mitigation of health and safety risks must be built into the daily life and work of all institutions (including teaching and learning, training and work spaces) and that social solidarity must guide all of us in how we conduct ourselves in relation to others and to ensure that we all do whatever we can as a collective to minimise the spread of the virus. In this way, we will be saving lives and saving the academic year.

3. Scope

- 3.1 These Directions provide measures that need to be implemented and adhered to by all institutions involved in executing activities related to all qualifications registered on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF).

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3.2 Qualifications registered on the QQSF can be categorized as follows:

- 3.2.1 Occupational Qualifications (including trades);**
- 3.2.2 Historically Registered Qualifications (including legacy unit standard based qualifications); and**
- 3.2.3 Occupational learning programmes and skills programmes.**

3.3 Activities related to QQSF qualifications means activities related to QQSF qualifications include qualifications development; skills programme development; accreditation of Skills Development Providers (SDPs), accreditation of Trade Test Centres (TTC) and Assessment Centres (ACs); approval of Workplaces; classroom, practical and workplace based training sites; Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting; Quality Assurance (QA); Formative Assessments, Summative Assessments, External Integrated Summative Assessments (EISA) (including Trade Testing, Research and Certification.

3.4 The above activities are fulfilled by a range of public and private stakeholders different branches within the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), the National Artisan Moderation Body (NAMB), Registered Professional Bodies (as delegated by the QCTO to perform quality assurance functions), Skills Development Providers (SDPs), Assessment Centres (ACs), Trade Test Centres (TTCs), Assessment Quality Partners (AQPs), Development Quality Partners (DQPs), Quality Assurance Partners (QAPs), Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), Qualification Development Facilitators (QDFs), Verifiers, Moderators, Facilitators, Mentors and Workplace based training sites, amongst others. These Directions are therefore applicable to all these stakeholders in relation to activities involving qualifications registered on the QQSF.

3.5 Institution include all Skills Development Providers (SDPs) accredited to offer qualifications registered on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (QQSF).

3.6 These Directions, therefore covers all Skills Development Providers (SDPs) mentioned above as contemplated in the Skills Development Amendment Act (Act No. 97 of 1998) as amended.

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3.7 Institutions offering occupational learning programmes; accredited Skills Development Providers (SDPs) offering occupational qualifications and accredited Assessment Centres and / or Trade Test Centres conducting assessments and trade testing as well as approved Workplaces offering workplace based training or Institutions or bodies delegated to in terms of the National Qualifications Framework Act (Act No. 67 of 2008), may therefore operate under these Directions as well as any other applicable specific Directives or Guidelines and in full compliance with the Disaster Management Act and relevant Regulations

4. Key factors to consider

4.1 The return of staff and learners to institutions, their sites of learning, contact tuition, and to workplace-based training sites will be phased in as provided for, in terms of the Alert Levels. Institutions must consider, amongst others, the following key factors when developing their plans for the return to their institutions; sites of learning and / or workplace based training sites:

4.1.1 To ensure that learners and staff who are able to work remotely should be encouraged to do so. Learners and staff should only come to sites of learning as prescribed in the Risk Adjusted Strategy Alert Level Regulations.

4.1.2 The social impact of the lockdown requires consideration for learners whose living conditions at home are such that they are not in a position to participate meaningfully in remote teaching and learning.

4.1.3 The institution, site of learning, including the numbers of learners requiring practical training, workplace based learning, and access to workshops and equipment.

4.1.4 The design of learning spaces at the institution, site of learning and workspaces and their conduciveness for physical distancing and social solidarity.

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4.1.5 The readiness of institutions, SDPs, sites of learning and workplaces to practice non-pharmaceutical interventions (such as the wearing of cloth masks, physical distancing, hand hygiene, etc.) to prevent the spread or outbreaks of COVID-19.

4.1.6 Ensure that physical distancing in public areas are maintained.

4.1.7 An assessment of the physical infrastructure of each institution's site of learning and workplaces to ensure that reintegration is managed within the necessary protocols.

4.2 The criteria in these Directions are:

4.2.1 For institutions, SDPs, sites of learning and workplaces for training, to develop specific phased-in plans for the return of learners and staff to institutions, after a risk assessment has been conducted.

4.2.2 Phase-in plans must be readily available for verification or inspection; and

4.2.3 Phase-in plans must be communicated to staff and learners and implemented at the institutions, sites of learning or workplace based training site.

5. Institutional readiness and preparation

5.1 All institutions must ensure that their infrastructure and facilities meet the requirements for the return of staff and learners as prescribed in terms of the Disaster Management Regulations.

5.2 No learner or staff member should return to the institution, site of learning or workplace until they have received communication from their institution that they are able to do so. Once the institution has confirmed that it is ready for their return, and they have agreed to the necessary code of conduct, then the individuals recalled may do so. They must also ensure that they are in possession of the relevant permit for return before traveling to the institution, site of learning or workplace under the relevant lockdown alert level.

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- 5.3 All institutions must have readiness plans in place, which meet the requirements of the various Occupational Health and Safety Directives, including but not limited to the Direction published by the Department of Employment and Labour on 4 June 2020 (Government Gazette No. 43400) to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 5.4 Higher Health has also published guidelines, which include amongst others : Guidelines for Post School Education and Training (PSET) Skills Development Provider (SDP)s for management of and response to the COVID-19 outbreak (30 April 2020) to assist PSET institutions to put relevant protocols in place and these should be adhered to at the institution.
- 5.5 All institutions and workplaces must identify isolation quarantine facilities, develop, and publicise protocols for any staff or learners who present with symptoms or test positive.
- 5.6 Provision must be made for: sanitisation, screening of staff, learners and the public entering the premises of the institution, site of learning and / or workplace, and the provision of masks and other appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- 5.7 Guidelines for staff and learners regarding age vulnerabilities and the prevalence of co-morbidities must be in place. Institutions or workplace Health Clinics, where in place, should be, amongst others, guided by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) protocols and the National Department of Health (NDOH) guidelines as well as online resource and news portal SAcoronavirus.co.za to handle cases for referral if they arise and public SDPs will be supported by Higher Health with the necessary training and advice.
- 5.8 All institutions must have a COVID-19 Response Task Team in place, in line with regulations, to ensure responsiveness to ongoing issues

6. Return to the institution for contact classes

- 6.1 Daily screening of all staff and learners entering the site of learning must be put in place.

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- 6.2 Hand sanitisers must be available at the entrance of every facility in use. Ongoing cleaning and sanitising of all surfaces must be undertaken at regular intervals in line with the applicable regulations.
- 6.3 High-risk areas, for example the workshops and equipment in use, must be identified and regularly sanitized.
- 6.4 Each institution must utilise the national criteria and develop their own phase-in plan for each alert level of the risk-adjusted strategy.
- 6.5 Control over the return to the institution will be through the issuing of permits at institutional level as per the Disaster Management Regulations. Institutions should put measures in place to prevent fraudulent permits being issued. Each institution will communicate directly with its own learners and staff to inform them of the phase-in plan.
- 6.6 Each institution must implement its teaching and learning plan to ensure that physical distancing and other health protocols are observed at all times. This implies the implementation of blended learning methodologies and contact teaching, where necessary, must adhere to physical distancing.

7. Risk-adjusted strategy for the return of learners to the institution

- 7.1 At all alert levels and at all times, screening, the wearing of masks, hand washing and sanitising and physical distancing is required for all staff and learners.
- 7.2 Based on their risk-adjusted plan for each alert level, institutions will make arrangements for the learners identified to return to the institution according to the criteria for that alert level. Institutions will have two weeks from the date of the implementation of the level to ensure that all preparations have been done in terms of the health and safety protocols and those institutions are ready to receive learners. This will also enable staff and learners to make safe travel arrangements.

8. Risk-Adjusted Strategy: Alert Level 4

- 8.1 No physical activities as every person is confined to his or her place of residence.

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- 8.2 All learners within the QQSF, where applicable, are supported through remote multimodal teaching, learning and assessment until they can return to the institution.
- 8.3 All supporting and other mandatory activities, where applicable, will be conducted remotely by the QCTO, SETAs, DHET and other stakeholders.

9. Risk-Adjusted Strategy: Alert Level 3

- 9.1 Unless otherwise directed by the circumstances or as the sector permits, a maximum of 33%, of the learner population will be allowed to return to the institution on condition that they comply with the applicable specific regulations.
- 9.2 A two weeks waiting period should be allowed after the announcement of an alert level, in order to allow for readiness, learners' travel and disinfection of the premises.
- 9.3 Institutions will issue permits and certificates to their staff and Identified learners in accordance with the Disaster Management Regulations.
- 9.4 Supporting and other mandatory activities will be conducted remotely and / or physically by the QCTO, SETAs, DHET and other stakeholders.

10. Risk-Adjusted Strategy: Alert Level 2

- 10.1 Unless otherwise directed by the circumstances or as the sector permits, a maximum of 66%, of the learner population will be allowed to return to the institution on condition that they comply with the applicable specific regulations.
- 10.2 A two weeks waiting period should be allowed after the announcement of an alert level, in order to allow for readiness, learners' travel and disinfection of the premises.
- 10.3 Institutions will issue permits and certificates to their staff and identified learners in accordance with the Disaster Management Regulations.

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10.4 Supporting and other mandatory activities will be conducted remotely and / or physically by the QCTO, SETAs, DHET and other stakeholders.

11. Risk-Adjusted Strategy: Alert Level 1

11.1 Unless otherwise directed by the environment or as the sector permits, a maximum of 100%, of the learner population will be allowed to return to the institution on condition that they comply with the applicable specific regulations.

11.2 A two weeks waiting period should be allowed after the announcement of an alert level, in order to allow for readiness, learners' travel and disinfection of the premises.

11.3 Institutions will issue permits and certificates to their staff and identified learners in accordance with according with the Disaster Management Regulations.

11.4 Supporting and other mandatory activities will be conducted remotely and / or physically by the QCTO, SETAs, DHET and other stakeholders.

12. Learner Orientation

12.1 All learners who report to the institution for example, the accredited Skills Development Provider (SDP), trade test centre, assessment centre or workplace based learning site, must first be orientated on the COVID-19 safety measures as well as the contents of this guideline or guidelines issued by the institution and / or bodies delegated by the QCTO or DHET, before the commencement of any training or testing activity.

12.2 Evidence of learner orientation must be made available as and when required.

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13. Trade Test Centre or Assessment Centre Specific Measures

- 13.1** No candidate will be allowed in the Trade Test Centre or Assessment Centre without the required PPE.
- 13.2** EISA and Trade Tests will continue to be conducted as per the Trade Test Regulations whilst ensuring the minimum physical/ social distancing of 1.5m between individuals (candidates/assessor) is adhered to at all times as per the Disaster Management Act.
- 13.3** TTCs and Assessment Centres must continue sending Trade Test Schedules the same way they have been doing before the implementation of the lockdown.
- 13.4** Additional effort and measures must be in place to ensure that shared equipment and tools are cleaned/sanitized between each task and at the end of each day.
- 13.5** Assessors, Moderators and staff should also wear applicable PPE to further protect themselves and others as they might need to get closer to a candidate during a trade test or assessment.
- 13.6** All Trade Test Centres and Assessment Centres may be required to submit regular reports on COVID-19 to the National Artisan Moderation Body (NAMB) and / or the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) as and when required.
- 13.7** Due to the travel restriction, during specific alert levels, all Trade Test Centres and Assessment Centres are expected to conduct internal Moderations as per QCTO and NAMB criteria and guidelines.
- 13.8** Specific trade test related guidelines on trade test areas and equipment usage, may be issued by NAMB.

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14. Short title

14.1 Directions for reopening of institutions offering qualifications registered on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) as part of a risk-adjusted strategy for a phased-in return of skills development activities.

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