

No. 985

19 October 2007

**SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SAQA)**

In accordance with Regulation 24(c) of the National Standards Bodies Regulations of 28 March 1998, the Standards Generating Body (SGB) for

Nursing

registered by Organising Field 09 – Health Sciences and Social Services, publishes the following Qualification for public comment.

This notice contains the titles, fields, sub-fields, NQF levels, credits, and purpose of the Qualification. The full Qualification can be accessed via the SAQA web-site at www.saq.org.za. Copies may also be obtained from the Directorate of Standards Setting and Development at the SAQA offices, SAQA House, 1067 Arcadia Street, Hatfield, Pretoria.

Comment on the Qualification should reach SAQA at the address below and ***no later than 19 November 2007***. All correspondence should be marked **Standards Setting – Nursing** and addressed to

The Director: Standards Setting and Development
SAQA

Attention: Mr. D. Mphuthing

Postnet Suite 248

Private Bag X06

Waterkloof

0145

or faxed to 012 – 431-5144

e-mail: dmphuthing@saqa.org.za

DR. S. BHIKHA

DIRECTOR: STANDARDS SETTING AND DEVELOPMENT



SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

**QUALIFICATION:
Master of Nursing**

SAQA QUAL ID	QUALIFICATION TITLE		
59346	Master of Nursing		
ORIGINATOR		PROVIDER	
SGB Nursing			
QUALIFICATION TYPE	FIELD	SUBFIELD	
Masters Degree	9 - Health Sciences and Social Services	Curative Health	
ABET BAND	MINIMUM CREDITS	NQF LEVEL	QUAL CLASS
Undefined	271	Level 8 and above	Regular-ELOAC

PURPOSE AND RATIONALE OF THE QUALIFICATION**Purpose:**

Learners credited with this qualification are able to function with advanced intellectual and practical competencies in complex and ill-defined specialized areas of nursing practice as leaders, consultants, educators and specialist practitioners in providing evidence-based care together with other team members. In addition, qualifying learners contribute to the continuous development of specific specialized areas of nursing through the development of scientific and professional knowledge for the advancement of nursing practice, research, management and education.

Qualifying learners work as clinical nurse specialists in the health sector. They are independent practitioners in their own right in the area of speciality.

This qualification affords learners access to doctoral studies, further increasing the candidate pool for leadership in nursing and/or midwifery. As qualified specialist practitioners, they have access to more senior positions, and are able to affect areas of policy change, development and implementation. The recently released Health Department Human Resources Plan makes provision for clinical nurse specialist positions, by offering progress and reward, without removing them from clinical practice.

Clinical nurse specialists are the trendsetters in the following areas of specialisation:

- Orthopaedic Nursing.
- Operating Room Nursing.
- Palliative and Oncology Nursing.
- Ophthalmic Nursing.
- Emergency Care Nursing.
- Occupational Health Nursing.
- Nephrology Nursing.
- Paediatric Nursing.
- Critical Care Nursing (Adult).
- Critical Care (Child and Adolescent).
- Psychiatric Nursing.
- Midwifery and Neo-natal Nursing.
- Community Health Nursing.
- Nursing and Health Services Management.
- Nursing Education.

Note: It is possible to complete a research masters, without a clinical component:

- **Nursing Research.**

This involves them in the development of new techniques, strategies and skills. Because of their competence, specialization, and nearness to practice, they have the opportunity to try out and develop new ways of working with people, and in the process of extending the scientific body of knowledge. This provides for them academic career options; the minimum requirement to lecture at university being a masters qualification. Further, internationally, the requirements for advanced practice nursing is a master's degree.

More specifically, the qualification aims to:

- Produce high quality graduates who are able to be competent advanced nursing practitioners in a range of health service settings.
- Provide graduates with a range of skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enable them to set trends, and take leadership roles in a meaningful and sustained contribution to health services.
- Equip graduates with a developed sense of equity, justice and service ethics that will ensure that they work in an accountable manner irrespective of their chosen work place.
- Offer a wide range of transferable skills for application in other professions, disciplines and general life. These include:
 - Capacity to assess and implement health and other policy.
 - An ability to affect areas of policy change, development and implementation.
 - Ability to plan and implement and manage projects of a varied nature.
 - An ability to work independently and as part of a team.

This qualification will be useful for:

- Professional nurses who wish to progress within the field.
- Persons at a commensurate level in Health and Allied Health Sciences who wish to change direction and move into nursing.
- Those wishing to progress towards qualification as a Doctor of Nursing and beyond.

This qualification articulates:

- All competency requirements and outcomes (academic, specialist theory and practical/workplace experience) that are necessary to achieve professional registration.
- The requirements and provisions of the Professional Body for professional registration.
- Designation/s that may be achieved.
- The ongoing requirements (including the Code of Ethics and the requirement for Continuing Professional Development) for retention of registration as stipulated by SANC, and the implications of non-compliance on use of the Professional Designation and right to practice and/or licence to practice.

Scope of practice:

Learners will function within the current scope of practice of the advanced specialist nurse as formulated by the South African Nursing Council, in conjunction with the policies of the institutions of employment.

Professionals carry out their duties:

- As a member, or leader, of a team.
- In accordance with the Professional Code of Ethics for Nurses.
- In accordance with the provisions of the norms and standards for nursing.
- They will take full responsibility for specialist areas in the health sector.

Rationale:

Note: The rationale for the Master's Degree is similar to that of the Master's Certificate, with the added dimension of significant research, which is the essential difference between the two.

There is rarely any exposure of pre-registration nurses to the complex, and dynamic context of specialized nursing practice. The changing context of health care practice with a growth in debilitating health conditions demands a cadre of clinical nurse specialists who are able to provide nursing care to patients in need of specialized nursing care.

The ongoing complexity of technology and the increasing acuity levels of the patients being cared for demand a capacity to self-evaluate, to exercise personal responsibility and initiative and indicate a depth of knowledge and a high level of skill and competence in specialized health care units.

High levels of trauma and critical illness in the country lead to complex demands on nurses to utilize rapid meta-cognitive problem solving skills in the resolution of concrete and abstract critical issues.

A significant report by Pick, Nevhutalu, Cornwall, and Masuku (2001, July) on the current situation of human resources in health in South Africa outlines a background of extreme economic and health inequalities of the past, and describes the current landscape still characterised by complex distortions of supply, production, distribution, and development of health personnel.

Pick et al (2001) found that some of the professional categories (doctors, professional nurses, and therapists) were not available at all points of Primary Health Care delivery. Furthermore, 80% of midwifery and neonatal services in the country are delivered by midwives and in view of the high peri-natal and maternal mortality and morbidity rates, it is essential to have an advanced practitioner able to build the knowledge base and improve practice in midwifery and neonatal nursing. Advanced nurse practitioners will frequently function independently within their specialised scope of practice. Concerns around the inability to hold professionals accountable for their actions can be addressed by building a hierarchy of skills in which, as professionals advance up the hierarchy, they fulfil their roles at the highest level but are not excluded from assisting in roles at lower levels.

In practice, supply falls short of demand, and the gap is growing. According to the statistics published by the South African Nursing Council, in 1996, 2 259 learners graduated as professional nurses, with the qualification: Nursing Science (General, Community and Psychiatry) and Midwifery. In 2005, the number had dropped to 1 533.

The decline of learners entering the nursing profession has been a matter of great concern to the South African Nursing Council and to the Ministry of Health. The problem is discussed in the Human Resources Plan for Health, which the Minister of Health launched in April 2006 and emphasis is given to recruitment of more learners into professional nursing.

The need for the continued supply of nurse researchers to lead knowledge production in an area of health sciences that is continuously changing and growing as new disease patterns emerge and raise new and unexpected questions, which can only be answered through scientific analysis cannot be overly emphasized.

The registration of a Masters Degree: Nursing is seen as important in providing extended learning pathways, and promoting the uptake of graduate and postgraduate qualifications.

RECOGNIZE PREVIOUS LEARNING?

Y

LEARNING ASSUMED IN PLACE

Competence must include achievement of requirements for a professional nurse:

- Developing, implementing and evaluating population based health care.
- Planning, implementing and evaluating nursing care for individuals and groups based on thorough assessment.
- Delivering nursing care to sick or disabled individuals and groups.
- Promoting rehabilitation in individual and groups with disabilities.
- Diagnosing and treating minor and common ailments.
- Maintaining professional nursing in practice.
- Managing a health care unit.
- Delivering safe midwifery care.
- Understanding of research principles, methodologies and approaches.
- Integration and application of knowledge of biomedical sciences, including body and functioning, microbiology and pharmacology as well as socio-psychology in the provision of nursing care within a comprehensive health care system.

Recognition of Prior Learning:

Learners may provide evidence of prior learning for which they may receive credit towards the qualification by means of portfolios, other forms of appropriate evidence and/or challenge examinations, as agreed to between the relevant provider and relevant ETQA or ETQA that has a Memorandum of Understanding in place with the relevant ETQA.

RPL is particularly important, as there are people in the profession with a variety of qualifications of differing quality and scope. It is important that an RPL process be available to assist in making sense of existing qualifications, and helping to standardise qualifications around a common standard. A related issue is that the nursing profession is facing a new scope of practice, based on international standards. It is essential that existing qualifications and all new provision is aligned to the new scope of practice, and the vision for health care in South Africa.

A further consideration is that there is a big change in the needs of the community that nurses have to serve; this partly explains the 'migration' amongst practitioners to other qualifications. Nurses are finding that their existing qualifications do not meet emerging needs or requirements, and they move to another to meet those needs.

Existing registered nurses, as well as professional nurses qualified under the new Professional Degree may wish to obtain this qualification. Specialist Nurses who have already achieved the Masters Certificate: Nursing, may be given recognition of their learning, and required to do the research component to achieve the Masters Degree: Nursing.

There are gaps between old qualifications and the requirements of the new scope of practice, and a consequent need to upgrade qualifications. RPL is seen as vitally important in every case to give recognition to learning already in place, make sense of the plethora of different levels and standards in the field, and provide a means for all to gain access to, and progress within, a common learning pathway for the profession.

There is a strong need to bring about alignment to the profession, with one nationally recognized qualification providing for the comprehensive approach. The focus is on the integration of the various components of nursing, to ensure that these are allied in an integrated manner to provide comprehensive care. Professional Nurses are the managers of health care in all settings for health care delivery. They are independent practitioners, exercising judgement and make decisions around nursing care, and there is a strong need for critical and analytical thinkers to build the scientific knowledge base of nursing.