

3. What is integrated assessment, and why is it emphasized in the NQF?

An integrated assessment combines a number of different elements. It demands that the candidate brings together different sets of outcomes of learning into a demonstration of applied competence. For example, technicians might be expected to show that they can combine technical, business and environmental insights in the solution of a complex problem.

Integrated assessment is emphasized because it links to the notion of applied competence, a central concern of the NQF. Applied competence is the ability to combine theoretical and practical learning effectively in a relevant task and context. According to one definition, *knowing* and *doing* can be referred to as applied competence. Applied competence is achieved by combining three types of ability in context, namely:

- the ability to *do* (practical competence)
- the ability to *know* (foundational competence) and
- the ability to *apply* knowledge and skills to new situations and to solve problems (reflective competence)

Integrated assessment is recommended at two levels:

- at the level of the qualification (i.e. when all credits have been accumulated but before the qualification is awarded); and
- at the level of unit standards or clusters of unit standards.

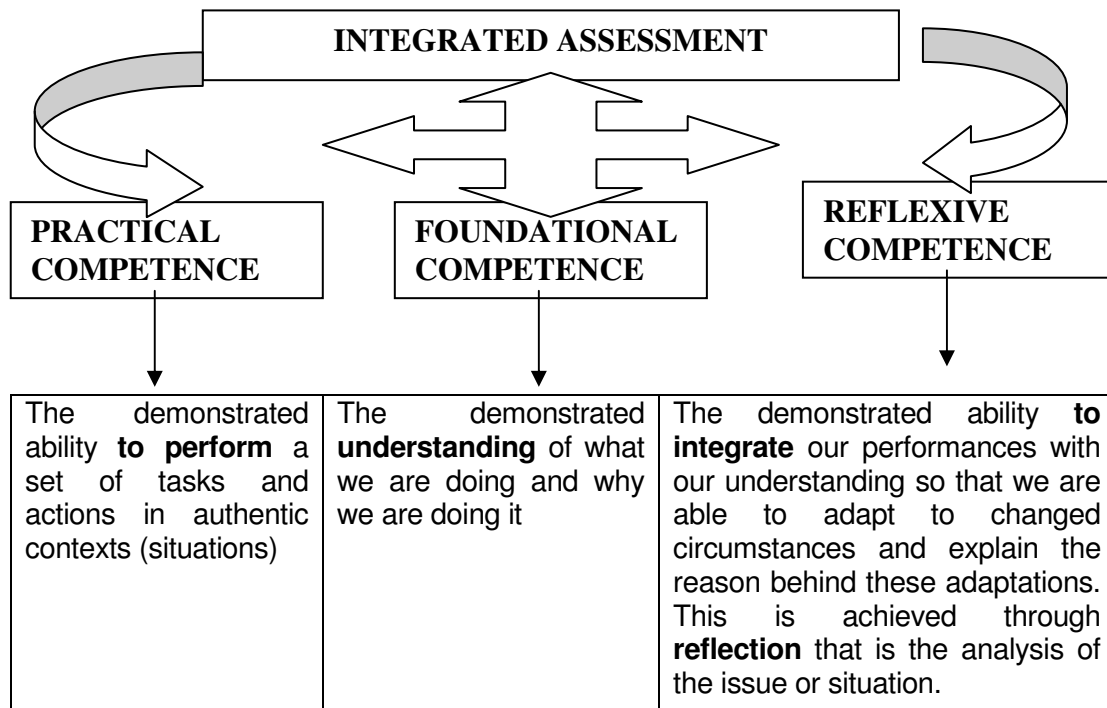
Some unit standards or even specific outcomes may be assessed separately. Integration should not be forced. But the result of assessing each outcome (or worse, each assessment criterion) separately is hundreds of little fragmented meaningless assessments of the check-list type, taking up valuable learner and educator time without anything of value being learnt. As SAQA points out in *'Criteria and Guidelines for the Assessment of NQF Registered Unit standards and Qualifications'* (2001, pp. 10-11), even at unit standard level it is usually possible to assess more than one specific outcome and/or to cover at least one CCFO and/or some essential embedded knowledge with a single assessment task.

An integrated assessment task at qualification level is a SAQA requirement. A person may have accumulated the required credits over a long period, through, for example, short courses and skills programmes. The integrated assessment at qualification level can be used to ensure that the learner can combine the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired piecemeal over time in a performance context linked to the purpose of the qualification. Such assessments require a demonstration of applied competence in a real or realistic work environment.

Integrated assessment brings together outcomes in a context, and brings together theory and practice. This means that assessment should address both the knowledge component and the application component. Put simply, learners should not be assessed only on recall of isolated bits of knowledge or facts, but must show that they understand how and why knowledge is applied.

Integrated assessment, therefore, is a larger task or activity that could draw on evidence already generated (e.g. a written knowledge-based test; a project that has included practical demonstration) in order to bring together skills and knowledge in an application.

SAQA formulates integrated assessment as follows (SAQA 2001):



Refer to SAQA's document Guidelines for Integrated Assessment (2005) which you will find in the Useful Guidelines section.

[Answer to FAQ 3, The NQF and Assessment, the NQF Gateway]