

3. What is the difference between an apprenticeship and a learnership?

The apprenticeship system in South Africa was regulated by the various Industry Training Boards, and was the means by which the artisan skills base was developed. An apprenticeship is an agreement between an apprentice and an employer for a set period of time during which the apprentice works and receives training in the workplace. The Skills Development Act of 1998 replaced the apprenticeship model with that of the learnership model. Learnerships are learning programmes that require learning on the job supported by structured or institutional learning. They are generally designed in the SETAs, approved by the Department of Labour, funded from the Skills Levy and must lead to a qualification on the NQF.

A comparison is given in the table below.

Comparison between Learnerships and Apprenticeships		
	Learnerships	Apprenticeships
Relevance to occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate in any occupations in all economic sectors in which work-based learning paths are viable. - It is specific to an occupation but also develops employability across a wide spectrum of work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tended to be restricted to blue collar trades. - Many trades are relevant in a wide variety of sectors, e.g. electricians and machine operators.
Target group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learners in most occupational fields. - Can be employed, unemployed or pre-employed at the time of entering the LS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mostly in the traditional trades. - Apprentices are employed for the duration of the Apprenticeship.
NQF level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The qualifications that LSs lead to can span across all eight NQF levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The qualification is not higher than the trade level, i.e. equivalent of NQF level 4.
Age of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No age restriction on learners entering LSs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Usually entry-level employees.
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Duration is determined by the minimum of 120 credits, so LSs are usually 12 or 18 months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three to four years.
Contract with learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal LS Agreement is signed by the learner, employer and training provider. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contract is signed between the apprentice and a single employer for the duration of the Apprenticeship.
Qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designed to meet legally specified criteria for NQF-alignment, e.g. it is portable and serves as a building block for further learning. - SAQA-registered and nationally recognised by employers and training institutions. - Builds occupational-specific skills and develops generic (critical cross-field) competencies, which are relevant in all work contexts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The certificate issued is trade-specific, making portability difficult. - Qualifications enjoyed wide national and international recognition in respect of the specific trade. - The qualification is not necessarily recognised by training institutions as a stepping-stone towards further learning.
Credit for outcomes achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learners are awarded credits for the outcomes successfully achieved, even if they do not complete the LS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No formal recognition for learning outcomes achieved if apprentices don't complete the Apprenticeship.
Curriculum and learning programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jointly planned by relevant stakeholders. - The interrelationship between and integration of workplace and institutional learning is formally structured into the learning programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration and interrelationship between institutional and workplace learning is not formally structured, and the integration does not always happen.
Institutional learning component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivered by a wide spectrum of training institutions; and contextualised to the needs of the occupation for which the LS is designed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivered by colleges. - Customised to the needs of the specific trade.
Work-based learning component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learner gains a broader spectrum of work experience that is not only limited to the work they are doing with one employer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learner's work-based experience is restricted to the work context of a single employer.
Purpose of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotes access to employment, as well as further education and training opportunities in the field of the LS, as well as in other fields. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aimed at developing trade-specific skills and consolidating the worker's ability in that trade.
Role of the learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primarily that of a learner for the duration of the LS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primary role is that of an apprentice, who is in employment.
Approval/ registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must be approved by the relevant SETA, which submits it for registration to the DoL. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approved under the Manpower Training Act of 1981.
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final judgement of competence by workplace and training providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learners' competence is assessed through trade tests conducted by institutions accredited under the Manpower Training Act, such as COTT.
Employment after concluding the LS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment is not guaranteed, but the LS also prepares the learners for employability outside full-time employment with an employer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment is not guaranteed, although employers take on apprentices with a view to keeping them as permanent employees after successful completion of the Apprenticeship.
<p>(ADDITIONAL READING: For more information refer to the DoL document, dated July 1999, <i>A framework for establishing learnerships and the quality assurance functions of SETAs (draft discussion document)</i>, par. 5 "What is the relationship between learnerships and apprenticeships?")</p>		

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