

## 5. What are the key issues in designing unit standards for the NQF?

The writing of unit standards involves the ability to describe the outcomes of education and training, and the evidence that illustrates their achievement – that is, a unit standard describes what a competent individual at a defined level should be able to know, do and show in a field of learning or in a particular sector.

A unit standard is the smallest unit of learning that can be registered on the NQF. It specifies the outcomes, assessment criteria, level, credit value and other key aspects of the learning to be achieved and recognised. Unit standards, as defined by SAQA, include:

- Registered statements of desired education and training outcomes
- Their associated assessment criteria, describing the quality of the expected performance
- Administrative and other information specified in the National Standards Body (NSB) regulations

Writing unit standards for registration on the NQF means meeting the technical style and format required by SAQA, and following the approved procedures. These are set out in the SAQA document *Criteria for the Generation and Evaluation Qualifications and Standards within the NQF* (SAQA, 2005) which you will find in Useful Guidelines below.

Current debates around the unit standards include issues such as the following:

- Is the unit standard format equally valuable across all sectors and types of education and training?
- Why are there such different interpretations by different role players about the function and nature of unit standards?
- Can all forms of knowledge and skills be captured in the form of outcomes and related assessment criteria?

[Answer to FAQ 5 Understanding and Implementing the NQF, the NQF Gateway]