

Understanding how compliance training and the QCTO apply to your workplace



In South Africa, navigating the rapidly changing landscape of workplace training can feel overwhelming. We are in the midst of a momentous transition to the Occupational Qualification Sub-Framework (OQSF) overseen by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) and this shift is surrounded by much uncertainty. To provide clarity in the transition, it is essential that companies understand two critical aspects: compliance training, and how this fits into the QCTO. By understanding how they work together, businesses and practitioners can start the conversation on how best to foster a culture of safety, standardisation, and sustained growth.

The bedrock of workplace safety and efficiency

Compliance training serves as the foundation for a safe and productive work environment. It equips employees with the knowledge and skills they need to adhere to industry regulations and established safety standards. Unlike a one-size-fits-all approach, specific compliance needs vary across industries. For example, a construction company might prioritise training on working at heights, while a financial services firm might emphasise anti-money laundering protocols.

Regardless of the sector, compliance training offers a multitude of benefits. Employee safety is paramount and proper training goes a long way in minimising workplace accidents and injuries. This not only protects the well-being of employees but also reduces associated costs for businesses. Additionally, regulatory adherence is essential and compliance training ensures businesses operate within the legal framework, safeguarding them from hefty fines and potential shutdowns. A well-trained workforce operates more efficiently, and improved efficiency leads to success. By minimising errors and maximising productivity, compliance training ultimately contributes to a company's bottom line.

Overseeing Occupational Qualifications

Established in 2010, the QCTO plays a central role in overseeing the design, assessment, and certification of occupational qualifications in South Africa. These qualifications outline the specific skills and knowledge required for various occupations. The QCTO aims to contribute to a skilled workforce by standardising qualifications to ensure consistency across industries and make it easier for employees to demonstrate their competencies.

The QCTO is mandated to perform a quality assurance role, with rigorous assessment processes that guarantee training providers deliver high-quality programmes that meet industry standards. It is also intended to improve South Africa's human capital development and by focusing on relevant skills, the OQSF will nurture a more qualified and competitive workforce.

Bridging the gap by aligning training with QCTO Qualifications

South Africa's qualification authority, SAQA, is in the process of extending the enrolment deadline for certain pre-2009 qualifications, while reviewing 275 qualifications to see if they need updates before being offered again. There are currently 375 qualifications being registered with the QCTO, with many more to come. All of which indicates that there is a lot of work to be done, and here, training providers and businesses that consume training programmes need to align with prescribed QCTO qualifications to adequately equip individuals with the necessary knowledge, practical skills, and workplace experience. To achieve this alignment, both training providers and companies need to focus on practicality. This means that compliance training should go beyond theory, incorporating practical components that simulate real-world scenarios while allowing for better knowledge retention and application. Workplace integration must be carefully considered as ideally, training should incorporate a workplace component where employees can apply their learned skills under supervision. This reinforces learning and ensures its relevance to the job. In this pursuit, collaboration will be key. Effective alignment requires joint effort between businesses, training providers, and the QCTO. Businesses can provide valuable insights into their specific compliance needs, while training providers must ensure programmes meet the QCTO standards.

Challenges and the road ahead

The recent transition to the QCTO model from the system overseen by SETAs comes with multiple challenges. A key concern is the availability of resources and trained assessors to handle the new qualifications. Additionally, integrating workplace assessments into training programmes can be challenging for unemployed learners. Overcoming these challenges requires a collaborative effort between government, industry stakeholders, and training providers. Increased industry involvement is essential, and businesses must actively participate in designing and refining occupational qualifications. This collaboration will guarantee the qualifications are practical and directly address industry needs. Second, the government needs to allocate sufficient resources to the QCTO to facilitate a smooth

transition to the new framework and ensure its effective implementation. Additionally, collaboration between government and industry can create financial incentives which would encourage more businesses to participate in workplace-based training programmes, further strengthening the overall system and contributing at a larger scale to the development of a skilled, compliant workforce.