

SAQA confirms registration of occupational qualification

The South African Quality Authority (SAQA) has announced the registration of the Tax Professional as an occupational qualification, after a five-year gestation which incorporated lengthy deliberations between the South African Revenue Service, industry and academia.



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All industry stakeholders assisted in the development of the occupational qualification, with large professional services firms and universities playing the leading role. "The development of the tax occupational qualification is a landmark qualification for South Africa," comments Cheryl James, CEO of Seta for Finance, Accounting, Management Consulting and Other Financial Services (Fasset), which was responsible for funding the occupational development.

The South African Institute of Tax Professionals (SAIT) was appointed by government to set the standard and ensure compliance with the criteria laid down for the occupation. "In line with SARS' respected international status, South Africa now enjoys an international standard of qualification for the tax profession", says chief executive of SAIT, Stiaan Klue.

Profession in spotlight

The tax profession has been in the spotlight in recent years for non-compliance. Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan, introduced law in 2013 which required all tax practitioners to register with SARS and a recognised controlling body, such as SAIT, by 1 July 2013.

According to SARS reports there are 34,000 tax practitioners in South Africa, of which half do not have a tax qualification.

Minister Gordhan has criticised the wide-spread non-compliance of tax practitioners, alleging that tax advisors owe over R260-million in outstanding taxes, and account for more than 18,000 outstanding income tax returns in their personal capacity.

"One shudders to think that they offer tax advice to the public without formal training. In recent years tax legislation has become very complex, and the non-compliance highlighted by the Minister can be directly linked to their technical ability to

perform the work. The occupational qualification will address the issue of training and certification of tax professionals and ensure South Africa compares with the international standard," says SALT head of education, Ronel de Kock.

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