



**Samuel Isaacs**  
*Executive Officer*

This year marked the tenth anniversary of the SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995) under which SAQA was mandated to oversee the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). It has been a time of reflection and debate as perceptions and realities of the NQF have been examined by stakeholders and policy makers alike. In the midst of such debates, discussions and resulting tensions, the oversight role of SAQA in ensuring systems' coherence has been significant. Although a number of questions regarding the future shape of the NQF remain to be answered, what has been pleasing to note and important for the transformation agenda of our government, is the firm commitment of all stakeholders to the achievement of the NQF objectives. Access, redress, development, portability and quality, the very essence of the NQF, are recognised as key components of a South African education and training system for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Resolution to the ongoing debate and uncertainty is necessary to consolidate the transformation gains made and to ensure delivery of the NQF benefits to our learners. As leaders in education and training transformation the needs of our country and our learners must always remain paramount in our thinking and decision-making. The theme of this year's Annual Report - Building A Learning Nation - is therefore both a public reaffirmation and a reflection of SAQA's commitment to ensuring, through effective partnerships and fostering of communities of trust, the evolution of an enhanced NQF that will ensure a nation of learners.

While undoubtedly challenged during what at times has been a difficult year, SAQA remained focused and committed to the delivery of an integrated NQF. A number of advancements were made which significantly contribute to quality education and training in South Africa:

- SAQA successfully utilised Joint Implementation Plans (JIPs), instigated during the previous financial year, as a cost effective and efficient delivery strategy in the area of standards and qualifications generation. A development which will be of considerable social and economic benefit is the JIP entered into with the SAPS and the POSLEC SETA which will result in the generation of qualifications and standards to ensure a truly professional police service for South Africa.
- The goal of quality education and training was supported through the auditing of 20 ETQAs and the findings of the audit reports point to substantial improvements nationally in quality management systems. SAQA sees provider accreditation as a key component in the quality cycle and undertook a successful and much appreciated intervention in four provinces (Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Free State), which assisted interested providers in understanding the benefits of accreditation for both themselves and learners.
- Two reports of national importance were published during the year, the findings of which will contribute to both NQF development and to the Human Resource Development Strategy:

During the year under review, SAQA launched a report entitled *Trends in Public Higher Education in South Africa 1992 to 2001* drawn from the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD). An important statistic noted was that in the period 1992-2001 the total number of people in South Africa with qualifications from public higher education institutions had almost doubled. Progress towards a learning nation has indeed been made and with the learning achievements of over 5 million learners now available on the NLRD, this vast databank offers exciting possibilities for future analyses.



*S Isaacs and M Nkomo  
at the  
Second Authority farewell*

The *NQF Impact Study Report Cycle 1: Establishing Criteria against which to measure the progress of the NQF* – was released in September 2004. The NQF Impact Study Report is a landmark study nationally and internationally as it is the first time in the world that an open-ended and transparent rolling plan for the review of a national qualifications system has been developed at a national level. While the focus of the study was to establish criteria for future application, much positive feedback was received from participants both with respect to the NQF and its objectives and with regard to the value of on-going measurement of impact. Overall, the findings emanating from piloting of the Impact Indicators suggest that the NQF has been successful in developing a strong base of policies and systems. The *NQF Impact Study Report Cycle 2* is due to be released during June 2005.

SAQA has always viewed advocacy and communications as being crucial to the development of understanding and commitment to the NQF amongst the broader stakeholder community. The strategy adopted included the establishment of regional offices starting with the office in the Western Cape. After very careful consideration of our options in line with Ministerial direction, a decision was made to change our strategy from regional offices to regional NQF Forums supported by a very strong electronic communication model. This means that the regional office in Cape Town closed on 31 March 2005 in line with Ministerial direction. SAQA would like to express its heartfelt thanks and appreciation for the contribution of the National Access Consortium of the Western Cape to SAQA's work through its generous provision for the regional office.

Supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), we are embarking on an NQF implementation initiative - the *NQF Support Link* - which will roll out in 2005. This initiative is based on three delivery modes: print, CD Rom and on-line (portal and e-Learning Management System), and together with the NQF Forums that we will establish in all main centres in the coming year, will ensure that we continue to promote, build understanding of, and embed the NQF across South Africa and beyond in a very cost effective manner.

On 31 March 2005 the term of office of the 2nd cycle of the National Standards Bodies (NSBs) expired and the Authority has decided, with the recommendations of the NQF Review Report and the Consultative Document in mind, that nominations for membership to the NSBs will not be sought at this stage. Instead an interim strategy (1 April 2005 – 31 December 2005) for the generation and registration of standards and qualifications has been developed. SAQA will continue to manage the standards setting function until such time as the decision of the Ministers of Education and Labour is made known but will do so without formally constituting the NSBs. Instead SAQA will develop a database of experienced sectoral and stakeholder experts drawn from outgoing NSB membership and reflecting appropriate sectoral and education interests who will meet whenever necessary to evaluate specific qualifications with respect to technical, quality and legitimacy aspects. It is anticipated that the above strategy



**Anne Oberholzer**  
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will have a positive impact on service delivery as well as signalling SAQA's willingness to reflect on, examine and improve the systemic impact of its processes.

The considerable financial support available to SAQA from the European Community since 1999 will come to an end on 30 June 2005. This and other donor support has been invaluable to SAQA in establishing the necessary structures and systems for NQF implementation. SAQA's sustainability beyond this donor support has been an on-going concern for the organisation for a number of years. A fully funded budget for the 2005-2006 financial year has been achieved and I am confident that while change is inevitable, the commitment of the Ministers to the NQF is manifest and will continue and strengthen into the future. The theme for this Annual Report, Building a Learning Nation, is an expression of our on-going commitment to the national education and training vision.



*Seated: J Samuels, B Urban, M Mabatha, S Isaacs, D Mphuthing, and H Williams*  
*Standing: Y Shapiro, J Arneson, R Vania, C Lambert, C Basson and T Douglas*