



**For immediate release**

## **Navigating Uncertain Waters: A Collaborative Effort to Address Tourist Guide Sector Concerns**

In an era where the guiding sector is increasingly recognised for its pivotal ambassador role in representing and promoting destination South Africa, our associations find themselves at a crucial juncture. The Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA), along with the National Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (NFTGA), the South African Adventure Industry Association (SA AIA), and SATSA have been navigating through complex challenges that present a potentially high impact threat to the industry.

At the heart of the issue is the expiry of CATHSSETA's skills programmes and unit standards, a development that has thrown the guiding sector into uncertainty. As the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) Policy of 2021 takes effect, the guiding community faces a looming deadline of June 2024, post which the existing accreditation framework will cease to exist. This presents a potential crisis not only for current students and future guides but also for the broader tourism and educational sectors. We also await official confirmation from the Department of Tourism whether historical qualifications will remain as such so that current guides can renew their registration in the future.

Recognising the severity of the situation, we have collectively taken steps to address these challenges head-on. Through a collaborative letter addressed to the Minister of Tourism, the National Department of Tourism and CATHSSETA, we have highlighted the urgency of the matter and requested support in three critical areas:

- **Extension of the Enrolment Deadline:** We are advocating for the extension of the final enrolment date for current guiding qualifications and programmes to June 2027. This extension is crucial for ensuring that there is no disruption in the education and certification of guides, which is vital for the sustainability of the sector.
- **Urgent Development of Replacement Qualifications:** The letter underscores the necessity for CATHSSETA and the QCTO to expedite the process of developing and implementing replacement qualifications. These new qualifications must meet the evolving needs of the industry while aligning with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and QCTO guidelines and standards.
- **Support for a New Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO):** We are also championing the development, mapping, and registration of a new OFO occupation for guiding sectors, including nature, culture, and adventure. This will facilitate easier access for guides to become certified and legally registered, ensuring the integrity and professionalism of our sector.

The collective effort of our associations, along with the engagement of industry experts and stakeholders, underscores our commitment to finding a viable solution to this potential crisis. We understand the impact that this situation has on our members, the industry, and the broader economy. By working together and with the support of the National Department of Tourism, we are confident in our ability to navigate through these challenges and emerge stronger.



As we move forward, we will continue to keep our members informed of any developments and work tirelessly to ensure that the guiding sector remains a vibrant and essential part of our tourism industry. Together, we can overcome this hurdle, grow stronger and continue to showcase the beauty and diversity of South Africa to the world.

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