

# SASOHN news

## Nursing qualifications – changes are on the way!



### BACKGROUND

Nursing qualifications are being reconstructed, as are all other qualifications in South Africa as they are aligned to the revised 10-Level National Qualification Framework (NQF) (the previous framework had nine levels). The higher education sector has a sub-framework referred to as the Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework (HEQSF) in which all nursing qualifications are embedded.

Until 1996, the only qualification in occupational health nursing (OHN) was the South African Nursing Council (SANC) Regulation 238, a six-month certificate in OHN. The R238 was considered a short course in OHN and not a qualification on its own; it is listed against a nurse's name on the SANC register and appears on the Annual Practice Certificate (APC) issued by SANC. There were a variety of occupational health subjects integrated into the then Community Health Nursing course, however this qualification did not constitute a specialist qualification in OHN. The R238 was replaced in the mid-1990s with the SANC Regulation 212 – Clinical Nursing Science which leads to the registration of an additional qualification. There are a number of specialisations recorded under this R212 qualification, of which OHN is one. Candidates who completed the R212 qualification may have completed a diploma or a degree, depending on the institution at which they studied and at what academic level the training was presented.

### NEW QUALIFICATIONS IN NURSING

All nursing qualifications are to be aligned to the new 10-level qualification framework and will be recognised as indicated in Table 1.

From Table 1, you will notice that all nursing qualifications are within the HEQSF as all are level 5 and above, and must therefore be offered in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) registered with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET). In order to progress through the qualifications, nurses will, in future,



NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK



move from one level to the next. So, by way of example, if someone completes the 3-year diploma in nursing (NQF Level 6), in order to do a postgraduate diploma in Occupational Health Nursing (NQF Level 8), he or she will first have to do an Advanced Diploma in Midwifery (NQF Level 7).

The current status of the new postgraduate specialist nursing qualifications is that the HEIs are currently writing a curriculum for the postgraduate diplomas, but they await the regulations from the SANC. The competencies for an OHN, which can be found on the SANC website ([www.sanc.co.za](http://www.sanc.co.za)), are being used to frame the new curriculum in the interim. The current variety of post-basic qualifications (Bachelor of Technology and various diplomas) will be phased out with the last offering in December 2019, with a 'teach out' period of two years. If anyone has an 'unfinished' Bachelor of Technology then they are urged to approach their HEI with a view to completing the qualification as, after 2019, they will not be allowed to finish this qualification.

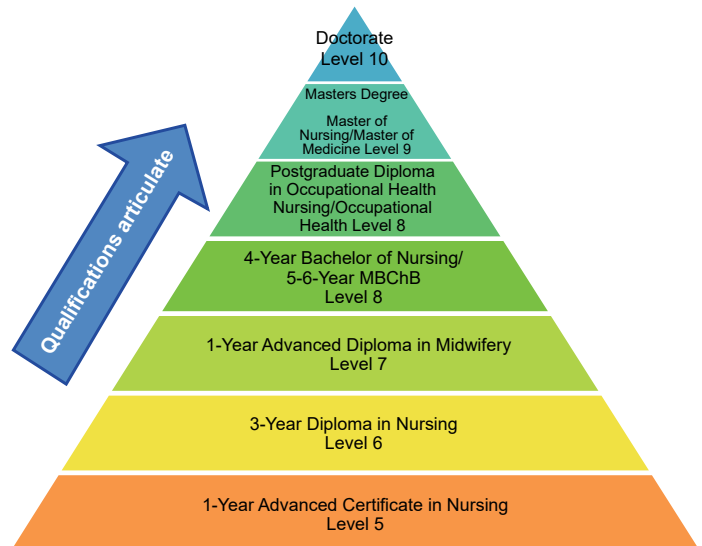
**Table 1. Nursing qualifications and the NQF Level**

Title	Qualification	NQF Level	Type of qualification
Auxiliary Nurse	1-year advanced certificate in Nursing	5	Advanced Certificate
Staff Nurse	3-year diploma in Nursing	6	Diploma
Midwifery for the Staff Nurse	1-year advanced diploma in Midwifery	7	Advanced Diploma
Professional Nurse	4-year professional degree in Nursing & Midwifery	8	Bachelor Degree
Specialist Nurse, e.g. Occupational Health Nurse	1-year postgraduate diploma in OHN	8	Postgraduate Diploma

## THE WAY FORWARD

So how does this affect you? If you have the R238 and it is listed against your name on the SANC register and appears on your APC, then you do not need to do anything (at the moment). If you have an R212 qualification and the additional qualification is registered and appears on your APC, then you do not have to do anything. If you are working as an OHNP and intend to continue doing so and do not have any OHN qualification appearing on your APC, then you need to register for a R212 course in OHN.

Contact your local university nursing department to enquire whether they offer the R212 qualification. You can ask about recognition of prior learning (RPL) and perhaps get some credits for your OH experience, short courses completed and any other relevant knowledge. From 2020, the specialist OHN qualification will be a postgraduate (PG) diploma in Occupational Health Nursing and you will need either a Bachelor degree NQF Level 7 or 8 to access a PG diploma or a 3-year diploma with a 1-year advanced diploma in midwifery in order to access the PG diploma.



**Figure 1. The nursing qualifications on the HEQSF with examples from nursing and medicine to illustrate the levels**

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