

Tourism industry associations collaborate to tackle guide sector challenges

Representatives from key tourism associations have banded together to confront the uncertainties looming over South Africa's tourist guide sector. The Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA), in conjunction with the National Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (NFTGA), the South African Adventure Industry Association (SAAIA), and the Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (Satsa), have been navigating through complex challenges that present a potentially high impact threat to the industry.



Source: Supplied | TJ Charingira and Lucas Mathonsi | Credit: Louise Pavid | Photos taken at the Safari Guide of the Year competition in 2022

Central to the association's concerns 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, after which the existing accreditation framework will cease to exist.

This presents a potential crisis, the associations said, 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 gravity of the situation, the associations have united to confront these challenges head-on. A joint letter addressed to the Minister of Tourism, the National Department of Tourism, and CATHSSETA emphasises the urgency of the matter and outlines **three key areas requiring immediate attention**:

- **Extension of Enrollment Deadline:** Advocacy efforts are underway to extend the final enrollment date for current guiding qualifications and programs until June 2027. This extension aims to prevent disruptions in guide education and certification, crucial for the sector's sustainability.
- **Urgent Development of Replacement Qualifications:** The letter stresses the need for expedited development and implementation of replacement qualifications by CATHSSETA and the QCTO. These qualifications must meet industry needs while aligning with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and QCTO standards.
- **Support for a New Organizing Framework for Occupations (OFO):** The associations are advocating for the development, mapping, and registration of a new OFO occupation for the guiding sectors. This framework will streamline certification and registration processes, ensuring sector integrity and professionalism.



Source: Supplied | Solomon Indlovu | Credit: Armadillo Media | Photos taken at the Safari Guide of the Year competition in 2022

The collaborative efforts of the associations, alongside industry experts and stakeholders, underscore a commitment to finding viable solutions. “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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