



**higher education
& training**

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**GUIDELINES: ORGANISING
FRAMEWORK FOR
OCCUPATIONS (OFO) 2015**

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1 WHAT IS THE OFO

In essence, the OFO is a coded occupational classification system. It is the Department of Higher Education and Training's key tool for identifying, reporting and monitoring skills demand and supply in the South African labour market.

The OFO is constructed from the bottom-up by:

- analysing jobs and identifying similarities in terms of a tasks and skills;
- categorising similar jobs into occupations; and
- Classifying these occupations into occupational groups at increasing levels of generality.

The OFO adds value to skills development planning and implementation purposes in that it:

- provides a common language when talking about occupations;
- captures jobs in the form of occupations; and
- Groups occupations into successively broader categories and hierarchical levels based on similarity of tasks, skills and knowledge.

2 BACKGROUND ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND UPDATING OF THE OFO

The South African Standard Classification of Occupations (SASCO) reflected ISCO-88 but while this has proven to be a powerful information tool, it did not provide the detail that South Africa requires for good skills development planning and project intervention.

The debate on what constitutes an occupation has been inviting views from various origins, both local and international. Over time international agreement has been reached on the definition of occupational groupings. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) consolidated these views into what is known as the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO).

Statistics South Africa adapted this classification system for the purposes of conducting its national census data and to track the shifting occupational profile of the country's workforce. It was known as the South African Standard Classification of Occupations (SASCO). SASCO however was outdated and did not define occupations in more detail and could therefore not be used by the Department of Labour for skills planning purposes.

A scan of international developments was initiated to find a more representative framework. In a similar attempt, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Statistics New Zealand, initiated a wide ranging consultative and stakeholder-driven process in

3.1 Job and Occupation

For the purposes of identifying the OFO occupations, the following definitions of ISCO--08 are applied¹ and must be adhered to when identifying new occupational titles:

- A job is a set of tasks and duties carried out or meant to be carried out, by one person for a particular employer, including self employment.
- An occupation is a set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterised by a high degree of similarity (skill specialisation).

The occupations identified in the OFO represent a category that encompasses a number of jobs. For example, the occupation "General Accountant" also covers the specialisation "Debtors Manager".

Note: The output of occupations clustered under the fourth level of the OFO (Unit Group) is described in terms of tasks and a descriptor. Occupations are thus related to the tasks defined at the Unit Group and an occupation descriptor describes what the application of the variety of tasks ultimately produces or delivers in the world of work. An occupation descriptor always either indicate the unique service the occupation renders or the unique product the occupation produces in executing some or all the related tasks in a specific context.

Jobs in the workplace could either be related to occupations or specialisations on the OFO. The association depends on the level of uniqueness of the output of the job on the workplace.

3.2 Skill

Skill is defined as the ability to carry out the tasks and duties of a given job. Two dimensions of skill are used to arrange occupations into groups. These are skill level and skill specialisation.

3.2.1 Skill Level

Skill level is defined as a function of the complexity and range of tasks and duties to be performed in an occupation. Skill level is measured operationally by considering one or more of:

- the nature of the work performed (i.e. the complexity and range of work) in an occupation in relation to the characteristic tasks and duties defined;
- the level of formal education defined in terms of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97)² required for competent performance of the tasks and duties involved; and

¹ International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO - 08) - Conceptual Framework , page 2 of ANNEX 1

² UNESCO, 1997

The eight Major Groups are:

- 1 Managers
- 2 Professionals
- 3 Technicians and Associate Professionals
- 4 Clerical Support Workers
- 5 Service and Sales Workers
- 6 Skilled Agricultural, Forestry, Fishery, Craft and Related Trades Workers
- 7 Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers
- 8 Elementary Occupations

Within each Major Group occupational groups are arranged into Sub Major Groups, Minor Groups and Unit Groups primarily on the basis of aspects of skill specialisation.

Occupations (six digits) are subdivisions of the Unit Groups and are further detailed through specialisation and alternative occupation titles.

- Major Groups (1 digit) (e.g. 3. Technicians and Associate Professionals) are:
 - The broadest level of the classification
 - Distinguished from each other on the basis of skill level and the broadest concept of skill specialisation
- Sub-Major Groups (2 digits) - e.g. 31 Science and Engineering Associate Professionals are:
 - Sub-divisions of Major Groups
 - Distinguished from other Sub Major groups in the same Major Group on the basis of broadly stated skill specialisation
- Minor Groups (3 digits) - e.g. 312. Mining, Manufacturing and Construction Supervisors are:
 - Sub-divisions of Sub Major Groups
 - Distinguished from other Minor groups in the same Sub Major Group on the basis of less broadly stated skill specialisation
- Unit Groups (4 digits) - e.g. 3121 Mining Production / Operations Supervisors are:
 - Sub-divisions of the Minor Groups
 - Distinguished from other Unit Groups in the same Minor Group on the basis of a finer degree of skill specialisation
- Occupations (6 digits) - e.g. 312101 Production / Operations Supervisor (Mining) are:
 - Not identified as part of structure, but listed as sub-divisions of the Unit Groups through a consultation process, based on its relevance to the specific descriptor and tasks of the Unit Group
 - Distinguished from other occupations in the same unit group on the basis of uniqueness of the output, usually due to specific application of skills and knowledge in a specific context.
 - Relates to a cluster of jobs which involve the performance of a common set of tasks.

Occupational descriptors are provided for every occupational grouping, including occupations (6th digit level). A list of the associated tasks is also provided for every occupational grouping (up to 4th digit level).

Figure 2 below provides an indicative comparison between the skill level of occupational groups to the National Qualifications Framework as well as with the entry, intermediate and advanced levels referred to in the National Skills Development Strategy.

| NSDS | NQF Level | Skill Level | OFO Major Groups |
|-------|--------------|-------------|---|
| HIGH | 10 ↑ 7 | 4 | 2 Professionals |
| | INTERMEDIATE | 6 | 3 |
| 5 | | 2 | 4 Clerical Support Workers |
| 4 | | | 5 Service and Sales Workers |
| 3 | | | 6 Skilled Agricultural, Forestry, Fishery, Craft & Related Trades Workers |
| ENTRY | 2 | 1 | 7 Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers |
| | 1 | | 8 Elementary Occupations |
| | | | 1 Managers |

4 ALIGNING THE OFO TO ISCO - 08


4.1 Basic Principles and Processes

An attempt was made to keep the OFO version 2009 structure and simply ensure that all Unit groups of ISCO - 08 are reflected. This however was not possible because of the mismatch of the descriptors and tasks at Major, Sub Major and Minor Groups of the OFO version 9 with the Unit Group descriptors and tasks of ISCO - 08.

It was then decided to use the ISCO-08 structure at Sub Major, Minor and Unit Group levels and allocate the OFO version 9 occupations to the related new Unit Groups but to keep to 8 Major Groups (as per the OFO version 9) instead of 10 (as per ISCO - 08) as to not affect the IT database structures of users of the OFO.

In order to achieve the above, Major Groups 6 (Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers) and 7 (Craft and Related Trades Workers) of ISCO - 08 were combined and one

The starting point in identifying the green occupations was the work done in America based on the American Standard Classification of Occupations and reflected on O*NET. Ninety three 93 occupations were identified as “green” of which 14 were additional occupations that had to be added Green occupations can be recognised by the

 symbol on the OFO.

During the 2013 updating process one (1) additional occupation and two (2) specialisations were added to the list of “green occupations”, bringing the total to 96.

5.2 Occupations Requiring Additional “Critical Green Skills”

During the 2013 updating process attention was given to the identification of occupations that do not meet the requirements as “green occupations”, but nevertheless requires additional or changed skills sets to maintain its relevance in a green economy.

Based on the national and international research the following definition was applied to identify and reflect occupations requiring additional “Critical Green Skills” on the OFO 2013:

Occupations requiring additional “Critical Green Skills” are those that require a shift in its focus to contribute to processes, systems and activities related to the :

- *Development and adoption of renewable sources of energy*
- *Reduction of consumption of energy, fossil fuels and raw materials*
- *Enhancing energy and resource efficiency*
- *Reducing greenhouse gas emissions*
- *Decreasing of waste and pollution*
- *Recycling of materials*
- *Preventing the loss of biodiversity and restore ecosystems*

It must be highlighted that people in most occupations would require a certain amount of “green mindedness” to enhance a green economy. This however does not necessarily affect the attributes or construction of the occupation itself and can therefore not be reflected on the OFO as occupations with Critical Green Skills. The focus on a green economy might result in a demand for occupations that do not fit the Green Occupation definition, nor the criteria for requiring Critical Green Skills. For example more Train Drivers might be required because of the upgrading of the railway system to save overall fuel consumption, but the occupation Train Driver is neither a “Green Occupation”, nor do they require Critical Green Skills. These occupations are not reflected on the OFO as requiring “Critical Green Skills”.

The starting point in identifying occupations with Critical Green Skills was the work done in America based on the American Standard Classification of Occupations and reflected on O*NET. As a result of the research 51 occupations and 17 specialisations were identified as requiring “Critical Green Skills” and can be recognised by the

 symbol on the OFO.