



23 July 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Answering the accreditation question

Skills development levies and grants claims

Converg is often asked if we are accredited training providers. We have found that the primary reason for clients posing this question is that they want to know if they can claim the training costs for SDL grant purposes. The simple answer is Converg has chosen not to become an accredited training provider, but the *cost of all training undertaken through Converg can be claimed for SDL grant purposes.*

There is a general misconception amongst levy paying employers that they can only claim their SDL levies back if they use an accredited training provider. The Skills Development Levies Act clearly provides for recovery of levies based on submission of the following documents to the relevant SETA:

- A Workplace Skills Plan (WSP)
- A Workplace Skills Implementation Plan (WSIP)
- The name of the skills development facilitator (SDF)

Payment of grants therefore relies on the extent to which an employer implements the Workplace Skills Plan and the extent to which this is in line with the Sector Skills Plan. It is not based on the use of accredited training providers.

In summary, if any of the short courses presented by Converg are identified in the WSP and the training intervention is subsequently implemented, a levy grant can be claimed for that training, subject to the specific terms and conditions of the relevant SETA the employer is registered with.

The following is a detailed explanation of the reasoning behind Converg choosing not to become an accredited training provider.

Reference is made to the “Criteria and guidelines for short courses and skills programmes” published by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). An electronic version of this document can be downloaded from the following site:

http://www.fasset.org.za/downloads/cg_shortcourses.pdf

The Converge philosophy

Converge is committed to providing relevant training interventions that are designed from an understanding of our clients' specific training requirements. The focus is on making further education learning opportunities accessible to individuals at any stage in their life for the purposes of up-skilling, re-training and personal enrichment.

Specific training interventions are designed by Converge from the following perspectives:

- Occupational based learning that provides individuals with knowledge, principles and concepts that they can apply in their job function resulting in a positive impact on the organisation and its operations as a whole as well as personal enrichment to the individual. A formal qualification is not required.
- Practical learning that supports and is part of a full qualification that is being pursued through other accredited training providers such as Universities, e.g. audit training to trainee accountants.
- Refresher and update courses and workshops addressing new developments for professionals, e.g. legislation updates to tax practitioners. A formal qualification has already been obtained.

Criteria and guidelines for short courses and skills programmes adopted by FASSET on 13 August 2003 provide the following information relevant to Converge training interventions.

Non-credit-bearing short courses

The need for registration and accreditation stems from the need to award credits for learning. All courses developed and offered by Converge are considered to be non-credit-bearing short courses for the following reasons;

- Research shows that to achieve 1 credit towards a unit standard or qualification, it will take an average person 10 hours to master the embedded knowledge, skills and understanding required. For a full qualification to be awarded, a minimum of 120 credits demanding approximately 1200 hours will be required. The duration of Converge courses does not exceed 40 hours each and are therefore considered short courses.
- The purpose of the short course does not lend itself to the award of credits, it is designed for the expressed purpose of addressing a specific workplace need or providing personal enrichment where learners are not formally assessed.
- Non-credit-bearing short courses are presented in any of the formats below:
 - Seminars
 - Workshops
 - Programmes where less than 1 unit standard or credit can be awarded
 - Continuing professional development
 - Refresher programmes
 - Product / equipment specific training

In terms of the criteria and guidelines, non-credit-bearing short courses *“do not fall within the ambit of the mandate of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Regulation, and therefore “accreditation” of providers offering non-NQF aligned short learning programmes is not necessary”*.

The relevance and importance of short course training

The National Skills Development Strategy and the Human Resources Development Strategy have set the following objectives in terms of skills development:

- To develop a culture of quality lifelong learning
- To foster skills development in the formal economy for productivity and employability
- To stimulate and support skills development in small businesses
- To promote skills development for employability and sustainable livelihoods through social development initiatives
- To assist new entrants into employment

The Guidelines fully support, acknowledge and express the need for and importance of short courses as a vital factor in reaching the above objectives. It also describes short learning courses as being integral to effective workplace practice and is an effective means of making it possible for employers to train their workforce in a resource efficient manner. Short courses allow for cost-effective and flexible training interventions for an actively employed workforce that cannot be removed from the workplace for extended periods of time.

Converg agrees with and supports this view of the role short courses play in developing and increasing the skills base of the South African workforce which will ultimately result in a highly competitive economy that can compete on a global scale.

The Converg quality commitment

The nature of short courses is such that there is no regulatory standard or quality control benchmark set by industry. It is up to the client to assess the quality and effectiveness of the training provider they select for these types of courses.

Converg has, through a combination of systems that include feedback from all clients on material and presentation of every course, implemented a stringent quality control system that sets the standard and maintains the quality of all training material and presentations.

Quality is a core value at Converg. It is reflected in a passionate approach to training, attention to detail and a commitment to continuing improvement.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further queries in this regard.

Yours faithfully,



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