



South African Council for Educators

Towards Excellence in Education

SACE Educator Professional Assistance Facility Policy

SACE EDUCATOR PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE FACILITY POLICY

1. Background and Rationale

Section 5 (b) of the SACE Act no.31 of 2000 mandates Council to establish a professional assistance facility for educators. This function has not been realised to its fullest because of the lack of resources and capacity to implement it. For the past few years the office has been inundated with number of educator professional requests and queries that necessitated the establishment of this facility. These requests and queries have been dealt with on an adhoc basis by the Professional Development Division. Because of the high need of professional assistance by educators, SACE has prioritised the establishment of this facility by including its conceptualisation, development, and implementation processes in the 2010 – 2013 strategic plans and the 2010/11 operational plan of the Professional Development Division. Hence the need to develop and implement the facility as soon as it is approved by Council. This facility has a bigger potential of changing the way in which SACE is perceived, by the majority of educators, as an organisation that is there to charge and dismiss educators and not benefit or service them in any way.

It is significant to look at some of the professional requests and queries / enquiries that come to the office on a regular basis from individual educators and schools. Some of the issues that educators need assistance on are not so much in a written form but are drawn from the regular interaction we have with them in our workshops, outreach sessions, conferences, case investigations and hearings we conduct as SACE. Therefore, it need to be understood, throughout the paper, that our source of information on what educators need assistance on will be written requests submitted to SACE by fax, post, e-mail, telephonically, walk-ins, and most importantly our interactions with them as indicated earlier on.

It is important to get the feel and understand the type of issues that educators need assistance on. These needs can be seen as advices, assistance, referrals, information, and support on/for categorised as follows:

- Choosing relevant professional development programmes in relation to the identified needs;
- Available teacher qualifications for upgrading, specialization, re-skilling / re-orientation purposes, and which Higher Education Institutions to enroll with;
- Available professional development opportunities other than qualifications related ones;
- Possible routes to follow in career mobility, and whether to choose education or discipline route in furthering studies;
- Educators who failed their third year or certain third year subjects during the era of the colleges of education. Because of the outstanding subjects or a year these educators are unable to get a full qualification and the college system has been phased out for quite some time now. There is one taking care of them in term of recognizing their prior learning and assisting them to complete their qualifications. Initially they could enroll for NPDE however NPDE is not an IPET qualification and therefore they will be required to enroll for BEd degree or 1st degree plus PGCE / ADT;
- Information on the HEQF and its implications for teacher education qualifications;
- Availability of bursaries for either IPET or CPTD qualifications;
- Accessing the skills development programmes and funds for ongoing development;
- Schools being able to access learnership programmes with a purpose of hosting student teachers;
- Unpaid salaries by the Department of Education;
- SACE related matters;
- Unpaid Pension funds;
- Education conferences, summit, seminar information and resolutions / declarations;

- Forwarding applications for Evaluation of Qualifications for correct placement of REQV levels and remuneration;
- Academic and Research information on postgraduate studies;
- General issues;
- General education information;
- Queries referred to us by the SACE call centre and other SACE Divisions;
- Referrals from the SACE Ethics and Legal Division (for example, rehabilitation programmes, stress related, HIV/AIDS related, and others);
- Educational policy matters;
- Accessing Education Laws and Policies Handbook which was sent to schools by the ELRC. It is also interesting that, although the handbook was sent to schools by the ELRC, schools and individual educators contact SACE when they need additional copies;
- Referrals to the relevant departments and organizations;
- Information on and contacts of educational institutions, such as:
 - i. Department of Basic Education at National, Provincial, and District Levels,
 - ii. Higher Education Institutions and Faculties/School of Education,
 - iii. SAQA,
 - iv. ELRC,
 - v. Quality Councils,
 - vi. ETDP SETA,
 - vii. Private Higher Education Institutions,
 - viii. Government Education Pension Fund,
 - ix. Research Institutions,
 - x. Professional Associations (for example, AMESA, EMASA, SAPA, History Society, SACEE, and others),
 - xi. ECD and ABET Centres,
 - xii. Professional development private providers

The list above is not exhaustive. The list only provides examples of educators' regular assistance needs from SACE. We have also realized that when some individual educators and schools fail to get any assistance or joy from the Department of Education and other organizations on any matter, they send it to SACE with the hope that SACE will do something about it. The Division has also been working closely with the SACE call centre in terms of professional and some general issues they are not able to deal with. The call centre deals largely with day to day SACE related matters, such as,

- Submission of registration application forms and whether it has been received and processed,
- registration status and numbers,
- information on registration processes and procedures,
- Lost certificates,
- Foreign registration,
- Submission of cases,
- Progress and verdict on case submitted,
- Case hearings processes
- Request for Information on SACE,
- Requests for professional development and ethics workshops
- SACE directions, and other SACE general matters

In fact, the SACE Call Center and the Educator Professional Assistance Facility complement each other very well in providing good and much needed service to the educators with different and specialized focus.

We are also aware that the provincial departments of education have Directorates that deals specifically with Educator Assistance / Wellness Programme. The functionality of these directorates and programmes differ from province to province hence we are continuing to have educators with problems around areas that are supposed to be addressed by these directorates. Some of these educators continue to be charged by SACE and the same Department of Education because of lack of assistance and support from these wellness

programmes. Additionally, SACE's scope and focus, as indicated above, will be largely different from the Department of Basic Education's wellness programme. However, there will be wellness areas where SACE and the Department will compliment each other in provinces where the programme is functioning well. In those provinces where there is little or no service from the Department, SACE will be also to assist by referring educators accordingly.

Against this background it is imperative that the educator professional assistance facility, as envisaged in the SACE Act, be established in a structured manner (and not on an adhoc basis as an added responsibility), advocated properly to the profession, and service educators effectively and successfully. The scope and focus of the facility will be based on the educator requests and needs list highlighted above. It is however, important to understand that the scope and focus areas will change from time to time depending on the needs of educators. It will also be crucial that its implementation be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis with the view of getting feedback, assessing impact and effectiveness, and making the necessary changes along the way.

2. Overall Aims and Objectives of the Educator Professional Assistance Facility

- To provide ongoing professional advice, assistance and support that is informed by needs to the SACE registered educators;
- To ensure that the facility assist educators with variety of professional matters to an extend that they are able to focus on their core business without being affected about these other issues

3. Structure of the Facility

It is important to start by clarifying that the Educator Professional Assistance Facility will assist educators and schools in various ways on the basis of their written or verbal requests / enquiries and interactions with SACE in various ways. Secondly, be proactive in terms of creating information databases and publications and distribute it through different channels.

This information will be produced on the basis of information and service needs trends coming from educators' requests and what SACE sees as necessary and important for the teachers to know. Thirdly, it will establish networks and partners across the county, in and outside the education sector and the teaching profession, to ensure that educators' referral systems and processes are effective and responsive, and most importantly closer to where educators are.

Its activities will be as follows:

(a) *Dedicated Desk Handling Requests*

Overall, this desk will be responsible for:

- Managing the educator assistance processes and responding to educators' request timeously;
- Developing operational plans, implementing and monitoring them;
- Producing quarterly reports on the effectiveness of the facility, and trends, frequency, and quantity of the incoming requests,
- Developing the required databases, information booklets, and publicity and communication plans in consultation with the Communication Division and research sub-unit,
- Develop a system of tracking submitted requests and turn around time.
- Liasing with the SACE Call Centre on a regular basis
- Establishing and maintain network of referrals in outside the education sector

It will have an administrative person responsible for:

- receiving requests in whatever form they come to the facility and acknowledge them;
- opening electronic files with unique codes or reference numbers,
- classify the requests into different categories;
- refer the categorized requests to the person responsible for assisting educators

- implement a system of tracking the requests and turn around time (from the time they are submitted to SACE to when they receive the necessary assistance on the basis of their submitted requests)

It will also have professional staff member/s responsible for:

- responding to the requests in different ways;
- establishing referral systems;
- writing all the required plans, reports, and required advocacy material;
- ensure that ongoing monitoring and evaluation takes place, and
- monitor the turn around time closely

It is important to note that this document is not requesting any new staff at the moment. The first year of development and initial roll-out (2010/2011) will make use of the existing staff with some possible re-arrangements here and there. We will be able to make an assessment at the end of the financial year (March 2011) whether there is any need for additional staff or not.

(b) Structured Referral Systems and Networks

External Referrals

For the Educator Professional Assistance Facility to have value respond effectively to educators' needs and requests, it is important to have well structured referral systems and networks. SACE will not be able to deal with most of the requests and needs on its own because of its capacity and available resources. Therefore, it becomes imperative that these referral systems and networks be put in place to refer educators anytime of the day. Some of the initial links and networks to be established will be with:

- *Departments of Basic and Higher Education:* in terms of relevant sections that are useful to the kind of needs we want to address. For exam[ple, Programmes and Qualifications Evaluation Unit, CPTD and IPET Directorates; Higher Education – Universities Directorate,

- Higher Education – Private Higher Education Institutions, Curriculum directorates, Labour Relations Directorates, Educator Assistance Programme Directorates, Labour Relation Units, and Human Resource Units)
- *Education Labour Relations Council* : national and provincial structures in terms of information on agreements / resolutions and dispute resolutions processes
 - SAQA – in terms of the Research Unit, Foreign Qualifications Evaluation Unit, and NLRD Unit
 - *Rehabilitation Centres*: for alcoholism, drugs and related matters
 - *Clinics*: dealing with stress and psychological issues
 - *SETAs*: skill development opportunities and learnerships
 - *Higher Education Institutions* : Faculties of Education and programmes offered
 - *Professional Associations* : database, contacts, and focus areas
 - *Quality Councils*: Accredited programmes and qualifications

Internal Referrals

The Division started working relations between the Professional Development and Ethics Divisions with regard to monitoring and supporting educators who have been referred or even recommended for further development and/or rehabilitation after their sanctions have been approved / adopted by Council. This will play a critical role in balancing the watchdog and guardian roles of SACE, and also demystifying the fact that SACE is visible when teachers are punished only.

(c) Information Centre

The Educator Professional Assistance Facility will develop databases and readily available information leaflets that will have readily available information responding to different queries. This will link up with the research section and SACE resource centre.

In addition, the facility will also be proactive in publicizing and advocating information and databases that will assist educators without necessarily contacting SACE. Linkages with the

Communication Division will be imperative to ensure proper and relevant communication and advocacy strategies.

(d) SACE Website

The SACE website will have a dedicated tab / page on the Educator Assistance Facility.

(e) Monitoring and Evaluation Process

It is important that Council receive ongoing feedback on the proposed Educator Professional Assistance Facility on a regular basis. This will be done through ongoing monitoring and evaluation process which will also be able to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the unit.