

MEDIA STATEMENT

ECOSA Outlines the Importance of Professional Registration even for International Engineers

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In light of the recent reports in the media on the deployment of international engineers into the country, the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECOSA) as the regulator of the engineering profession in South Africa seeks to highlight the importance of professional registration even for international counterparts.

ECOSA is mandated by the Engineering Profession Act (EPA), 46 of 2000, to perform the core functions, which include the accreditation of engineering programmes, registration of persons as professionals in specified categories, and the regulation of the practice of Registered Persons.

According to the Act there are policies and prescripts that the Council subscribes to, to ensure that all engineering practitioners who apply to be professionally registered with ECOSA meet all the outlined requirements to be recognised as professional engineers in a specific category.

While the Engineering Profession Act has not made registration mandatory in South Africa, operating as a non-registered person limits the scope of engineering work an engineering professional may perform. These restrictions include not being able to sign off on engineering projects and having to work under supervision of a professionally registered engineer across all professional categories (Pr Eng, Pr Tech Eng, Pr Techni Eng, Pr Cert Eng). These boundaries of scope of work apply to both local and international engineers who come to South Africa for work purposes.

International engineers who come to South Africa for employment for a brief period may apply for professional registration with ECOSA, as there are policies that make provision for professional registration. However, these applications must be assessed to determine if they meet the ECOSA criteria for registration and the first step would be to consult with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to evaluate the qualifications, and issue an outcome founded on an academic evaluation of qualifications as provided for in the NQF Act.

The evaluation by SAQA will form part of the ECOSA education evaluation process. The Council conducts education evaluation according to Policy E-17-P (found on the ECOSA website) in order to determine if the application is substantially equivalent to the base qualifications according to the ECOSA qualification standards.

This process is particularly important for countries who are not signatories of the International Engineering Alliance (IEA), which ECOSA representing South Africa is a member and a signatory of three accords namely the Sydney, Dublin and Washington Accord that govern the recognition of engineering educational qualifications and professional competence. Being a member of the IEA places ECOSA and South Africa on par with its international counterparts in terms of the quality assurance of engineering education, registration and professional practice. It is for this reason that the recognition of engineers from other countries is not automatic.

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It is therefore incumbent upon any institution performing engineering work to make use of quality assured engineers in the interest of public safety. ECSA is mandated to regulate and account for work done by registered persons and if required, can hold registered engineers accountable for unsound engineering work through the Code of Conduct and Practice.

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