



SA AIA Competency Framework: Certified Professional Adventure Tourist Guide (SA)



Member driven association
advocating to become a
registered professional body
for Adventure Tour Guides,
Adventurous Experiential
Learning Facilitators &
related professionals.

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Reg: 2020/514050/08

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1. Professional Body Name

South African Adventure Industry Association (SA AIA)

Registered as a Non-Profit Company (NPC) applying for recognition as a Professional Body with SAQA

2. Purpose of the Designation

This designation recognises individuals who operate as qualified and competent professional adventure tourist guides in South Africa.

A Registered, Professional Adventure Tourist Guide in South Africa is a legally recognised guide who leads commercial clients in outdoor adventure settings, ensuring safety, compliance, and meaningful interpretation, someone who maintains their current competence and strives to grow professionally. The designation confirms technical skill, contextual knowledge, ethical practice, and alignment with South African tourism legislation.

It aims to:

- 2.1 Promote industry professionalism and public trust in adventure tourism services
- 2.2 Support skills development and life-long learning in the adventure tourist guiding sector
- 2.3 Establish a formal career path for adventure tourist guides within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
- 2.4 Encourage safe, ethical, and environmentally responsible adventure tourism practices
- 2.5 Align South African adventure guiding practices with international benchmarks and local legislation

3. Underlying Qualification

3.1 Minimum Qualification Requirement:

- 3.1.1 **Further Education and Training Certificate: Tourist Guiding (SAQA ID 71549, NQF Level 4, 120 Credits) with specific electives of Adventure Guiding Unit Standards.**

3.2 Alternative Entry (RPL):

- 3.2.1 **Generic Adventure Site Guide Skills Programme** with evidence of competence will be eligible for RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) into the designation, assessed against the FETC: Tourist Guiding.

4. Designation Competency Framework

The holder of the *Certified Professional Adventure Tourist Guide (SA)* designation is expected to demonstrate **applied competence** in the following domains:

4.1 **Core Competencies** (aligned with specific Unit Standards from the underlying FETC qualification)

4.1.1 **Client safety and risk management in adventure environments**

4.1.1.1 *Aligned with Unit Standard 335798: Conduct a guided experience*

4.1.1.2 *Aligned with Unit Standard 259597: Apply health, safety and environmental principles and procedures*

4.1.2 **Interpretation and storytelling specific to South African adventure tourism**

4.1.2.1 *Aligned with Unit Standard 335801: Research and design a guided experience*

4.1.2.2 *Aligned with Unit Standard 335802: Present a guided experience*

4.1.3 **Group leadership and facilitation in remote or outdoor environments**

4.1.3.1 *Aligned with Unit Standard 335798: Conduct a guided experience*

4.1.3.2 *Aligned with Unit Standard 114924: Demonstrate leadership in a performance or work environment*

4.1.4 **Navigation, emergency response, and operational planning**

4.1.4.1 *Aligned with Unit Standard 114979: Operate in remote environments*

4.1.4.2 *Aligned with Unit Standard 258925: Apply basic first aid*

4.1.5 **Compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks (e.g., NDT Tourist Guiding, OHSA)**

4.1.5.1 *Aligned with Unit Standard 335800: Apply knowledge of South African tourism*

4.1.5.2 *Aligned with Unit Standard 335799: Apply knowledge of South African heritage, culture and environment*

4.2 **Professional Attributes** (aligned with specific Unit Standards from the underlying FETC qualification)

4.2.1 **Ethical behaviour and decision-making**

4.2.1.1 *Aligned with Unit Standard 252044: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of ethical conduct in a business environment*

4.2.2 **Cultural sensitivity and environmental stewardship**

4.2.2.1 *Aligned with Unit Standard 335799: Apply knowledge of South African heritage, culture and environment*

4.2.3 **Continuous self-improvement and reflective practice**

4.2.3.1 *Aligned with the general objectives of the FETC: Tourist Guiding and the SA AIA CPD Framework*

4.3 **Technical Competence** (aligned with industry standards and published (in process) on the SA AIA website)

4.3.1 Technical competence refers to the guide's ability to safely and effectively lead adventure activities through the application of context-specific knowledge,

physical skills, and risk management practices. It is the foundation upon which professional judgement, client care, and ethical conduct are built.

- 4.3.2 This competence is essential not only for the safety of clients and staff, but also for ensuring the guide is legally compliant, environmentally responsible, and capable of adapting to the dynamic and sometimes unpredictable nature of outdoor adventure tourism.
- 4.3.3 **Examples of technical competence include:**
- 4.3.3.1 Leading a white-water rafting trip with proper river reading, client briefing, and emergency response skills.
- 4.3.3.2 Conducting a mountain hike with navigation, terrain assessment, and group management proficiency.
- 4.3.3.3 Facilitating a high ropes course with a sound understanding of safety systems, rescue techniques, and participant engagement.
- 4.3.4 SA AIA recognises around **100 distinct adventure activities** across the sector. Each activity has its own set of minimum technical competencies which designated guide must meet, either through training, certification, experience, or RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning).
- 4.3.5 A detailed list of these activities and their corresponding technical requirements will be maintained and updated on our website: www.saaia.org.za

5. Designation Awarding Process

The designation is awarded based on a combination of qualifications, experience, and adherence to professional standards.

The designation is awarded upon:

- 5.1 Submission of evidence of the minimum qualification (FETC: Tourist Guiding) in context of adventure tourist guiding unit standards and specified activity scope (i.e. hiking) or approved RPL portfolio based on the Generic Adventure Site Guide Skills Programme
- 5.2 Submission of Tourist Guide Registration and / or card with the specific adventure scope and activity (i.e. hiking) reflecting on it – current and not expired
- 5.3 Proof of a minimum of 40 to 50 relevant workplace experience events of practical commercial guiding in adventure settings through a logbook that includes references (refer to Portfolio of Evidence assessment process document) in a specific activity, as a registered adventure tourist guide in that specific scope, as prescribed by the qualification and/or guide card, within 1 – 3 years.
- 5.4 Risk Management and Leadership Evidence
- 5.5 Two risk assessments personally conducted by the applicant.
- 5.5.1 Emergency action plan or briefing checklist

- 5.6 Signed agreement to adhere to the SA AIA Code of Conduct and Ethics.
- 5.7 Registration on the SA AIA Professional Member Database.
- 5.8 Submission of a current and appropriate first aid certificate provided by a QCTO-accredited service provider and/or Health SETA
- 5.9 Submission of evidence that first aid knowledge can be applied in a wilderness setting (wilderness first aid certificates).
- 5.10 Must submit two referenceable letters from employers, senior guides, or clients
- 5.11 Must submit 1 – 2 pages reflective statement on guiding philosophy, professionalism, risk management, and lessons learned.

6. Retention Requirements

To retain the designation, the individual must:

- 6.1 Maintain professional membership in good standing with SA AIA
- 6.2 Adhere to the SA AIA Code of Conduct and Professional Ethics
- 6.3 Complete a minimum of **20 CPD points every 3 years** (e.g., workshops, first aid recertification, mentoring others, etc.)
- 6.4 Proof of a minimum of 30 relevant experience events of practical guiding in diverse adventure settings through a logbook or affidavit in a specific activity as prescribed by the qualification and/or guide card, within 1 – 3 years.
- 6.5 Pay annual professional membership fees
- 6.6 Pay once-off designation administrative fee (only payable on a three-year renewal basis)
- 6.7 Have a valid* and current tourist guide card [*within adventure guiding scope and activity specified (i.e. hiking)] = **1 CPD point**
- 6.8 Submission of a current and appropriate first aid certificate provided by a QCTO-accredited and/or Health SETA service provider. = **minimum 5 points for recertification in terms of requirements of QCTO or Health SETA.**
- 6.9 Submission of evidence that first aid knowledge can be applied in a wilderness setting (wilderness first aid certificates or letters of reference).

7. CPD Requirements:

Professionals must complete a minimum of 20 CPD points every cycle which is 3 years. There are compulsory CPD and there are optional CPD.

7.1 Compulsory CPD:

- 7.1.1 Wilderness First Aid certification or re-certification: 3 – 5 points; QCTO or Health SETA-accredited and 3 days minimum; 1 per cycle (3 year cycle)
- 7.1.2 Portfolio of Evidence: Logbook that is up to date and current: 1 point per 5 days logged; 6 – 10 points per cycle; 1 day = minimum of 6 hours

- 7.1.3 Skills Refreshers: 1 – 3 day technical refresher or workshop; 1 – 3 points; 1 per cycle; example is navigation or rope systems, etc.
- 7.1.4 Professional must have a valid and current tourist guide card or proof of registration with their provincial registrar as an adventure tourist guide in a specific adventure activity scope: 1 point per cycle

7.2 Optional CPD:

- 7.2.1 Scope extension (e.g. adding a scope like rock climbing or paddling): 5 points; 1 per cycle; must be accredited training and provide proof of assessment; can also be a SA AIA-approved professional development partner (PDP)/industry training
- 7.2.2 Short accredited course (e.g. technical skills or facilitation): 1-3 points; 1 per cycle; must be a minimum of 8 hours for 1 point
- 7.2.3 Internal staff training recognised by SA AIA: 1 – 3 points; 3 points max per cycle; must be recognised by the professional body
- 7.2.4 Attending live CPD webinars (1-2 hours); 0.5 points; 3 points max per cycle; Must be through a PDP or through the professional body and must have reflection or quiz
- 7.2.5 Attend seminar or conference (minimum 1 full day – 8 hours): 1 point per event; 2 events max per cycle; recognised with SA AIA
- 7.2.6 Present at a workshop or conference: 3 points; 2 presentations per cycle; must provide session description, paper, and slides
- 7.2.7 Write or publish an article, video or blog within the professional body: 1 point; 1 per cycle; must relate to guiding
- 7.2.8 Facilitate a CPD session for others: 2 points, 1 per cycle, include agenda, feedback or sign-in sheet
- 7.2.9 Mentor a trainee (min 20 hours, signed log): 3 points, max 2 mentees; signed off by trainee and SA AIA reviewer
- 7.2.10 Volunteer project (e.g. community hike, trail clean-up), 1 point per event, 3 points max per cycle; submit short report and photos

7.3 Designations and CPD Scope (Primary vs. Secondary):

- 7.3.1 Where professional holds more than one designation or scope (e.g., across different technical activities), CPD expectations are adjusted accordingly.
 - 7.3.1.1 The **Primary Designation** (the main guiding activity) requires full compliance with the CPD minimum of **20 points per 3-year cycle**, including all compulsory components.
 - 7.3.1.2 A **Secondary Designation** (e.g., an additional activity scope or cross-sector designation) requires a reduced CPD submission of **10 points per cycle**, focused on activity-specific updates, refresher training, or contextual professional development.

8. Database and Tracking

8.1 SA AIA will maintain a validated, regularly updated database of designation holders, with the following information:

- 8.1.1 Full name, ID, and contact details
- 8.1.2 Qualification or RPL status
- 8.1.3 Employment role and operational area
- 8.1.4 Designation date and status (active/lapsed)
- 8.1.5 CPD record and membership standing
- 8.1.6 Ethics and disciplinary history (if applicable)

8.2 Compliant with SAQA expectations:

- 8.2.1 Secure, auditable system
- 8.2.2 Annual review process
- 8.2.3 Retention and removal policies

9. Ethics and Revocation

SA AIA reserves the right to suspend or revoke the designation if the individual:

- 9.1 Violates SA AIA's Code of Professional Conduct
- 9.2 Fails to meet CPD or renewal requirements
- 9.3 Provides fraudulent documentation or misrepresents competence

Individuals may make reference to our Disciplinary and Appeals process if a designation or membership is revoked or suspended.

10. Designation Progression Pathway

This designation forms part of a broader pathway in the adventure tourism sector.

Progression may include:

- 10.1 **Aspiring Adventure Tourist Guide (SA AIA designation)**
- 10.2 **Certified Adventure Site Guide (SA AIA designation)**
- 10.3 **Professional Adventure Tourist Guide (SAQA designation)**
- 10.4 **Adventure-Based Learning Practitioner (future designation)**
- 10.5 **Adventure Operations Manager (future designation)**

Future designations will articulate from this entry-level designation, ensuring vertical and horizontal mobility within the NQF and other sectors across culture and nature guiding. This is limited to the future qualification and current legislation.