



Registration of Natural Scientists with SACNASP

The South African Council of the Natural Scientific Professions is the registration and regulation authority for natural science professions in South Africa. This includes practicing scientists in fields such as chemistry, physics, mathematics, biology, food sciences, zoology, and geology but to name a few. The SACNASP Council is comprised of experts in their specific fields (scientific and non-scientific) and they are appointed by the Minister of Science and Technology. They are responsible for the overall running of the Council. The Natural Scientific Professions Act, (Act no. 27 of 2003) has made it compulsory for scientists practicing in the fields of practice of natural science to register with SACNASP irrespective of the nature of their employment be it academia, industry, commerce or consulting. However it is only a scientist that is registered in the category of registration of Professional Scientist that is allowed to approve and sign off work. There are three levels of registration from Candidate, Certificated and Professional with a scientist being registered in a category based on their qualifications and level of relevant experience. SACNASP has 21 fields of practice and representing this are 42 voluntary associations (VAs) who represent the various fields of practice. The registration committee assesses all applications from scientists, each application is evaluated by the Professional Advisory Committee that is made up of experts from each field. The Council ratifies the decision of the registration committee. As indicated, the key role of SACNASP is as a registration body for natural scientists and in so doing, provide protection to the public and the profession. SACNASP is increasingly being contacted by Government Departments and Entities enquiring about the registration of the natural science professional working for or contracted to them. This is increasing evidence that the employment sector is placing more emphasis on the “professionalisation” of natural science in South Africa.

The Council, also in its endeavour to be more effective in its functioning, decided to focus on other areas that are expected of them as indicated in the SACNASP act. SACNASP wishes to be an enabler to the registered natural scientists associated with us. The idea of enabling is to assess where SACNASP can assist natural scientists in their careers from student to retirement. SACNASP has developed three programmes. One is the continuous professional development programme (CPD), the second is the candidate mentoring programme (CMP) and the free “administrative” student enrolment. The CPD programme allows scientists to record their annual field specific activities on the SACNASP website. This information will be used by SACNASP to assess whether the scientist is still actively practicing in their field. The CMP is a programme where potential professional scientists are coupled with a mentor who will guide them from Candidate to Professional. The free enrolment of students is also critical for SACNASP to get all natural scientists onto the SACNASP database and in doing so SACNASP can make field specific and general courses available to these students to assist them in their studies.

The Council is also focusing on providing information and advice to the Minister and Department of Science and Technology as appropriate with regard to the Natural Sciences in South Africa. This will assist in entrenching SACNASP as a key stakeholder in the National System of innovation. If you require any further information please go to our website www.sacnasp.org.za or contact us on 012 748 6500.