



**Station Of Life (PTY) Ltd**

**Enabling People for Excellence**

Reg. No. 2019/179133/07

**POSTAL ADDRESS**

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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT LEARNERSHIPS

You might have heard the phrase “Never stop learning, because life never stops teaching”. Often companies make the mistake of thinking that by offering learnership opportunities, they are doing everyone a favour, but in reality companies can also learn from learners and the opportunities and advantages are so worth it.

This article explains everything you want to know about learnership programmes – whether you are a potential learner or a company looking to invest in the future economy. So here are the frequently asked questions:

It basically is a structured learning programme during which the learner spends some time learning theory and some time learning practical skills in the workplace. A learnership is a work-based learning programme that leads to an NQF registered qualification. Learnerships are directly related to an occupation or field of work, for example, electrical engineering, office management or project management and are managed by Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).

They were introduced by government to help skill learners and to prepare them for the workplace. SETAs oversee learnerships and ensure that they offer qualifications related to a specific occupation or sector of the economy. All 21 SETAs have developed NQF-aligned programmes that will help you gain recognised qualifications while getting on-the-job experience.

Before the programme is implemented, a contract is drawn up by the employer, the learner and an accredited skills development training provider. Each agrees to specific conditions and the contract protects all parties for the duration of the programme.



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The government was looking for ways to transform skills development in South Africa. In the past, education and training and workplace experience did not always provide a direct link between theory and practice.

To address this, the Skills Development Act and the Skills Levies Act were passed by Parliament, and structures and processes to transform skills development in South Africa were put in place.

The primary aim of learnerships is to address the gap between the current education and training provided and the needs of the labour market. In fact, learnerships are seen as central to skills upliftment in South Africa.

Because they aim to address challenges of:

- Decreasing employment;
- Unequal access to education and training, and employment opportunities;
- The effects of race, gender and geographical location on educational advancement;
- and over and above the skills shortages in South Africa.

There are three parties involved in a learnership:

The learner, the employer (offering the practical training component in their business) and the education and training provider (offering the theoretical component of the learnership).

- Learnerships are available for young people who have completed school, college or learning at other training institutions. You must be older than 16 and younger than 35 to be eligible for a learnership.
- Unemployed South Africans can only participate in a learnership if there is an employer prepared to provide the required work experience.
- In fact, a learnership is dependent on a contract that legally binds the learner, the employer and the education and training provider. This contract requires the learner to be employed by the employer only for the duration of the learnership. Once the learnership has been



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completed, the employer can decide on whether to continue to employ the learner or not.

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- They may have better employment opportunities after completing a learnership;
- They have a fixed-term employment contract for the duration of the learnership;
- Learnerships improve on the job performance so they are able to do things relevant to the job;
- They obtain a nationally-recognised qualification that is relevant to the sector;
- They earn a learner allowance for the duration of the learnership.

There is a specified minimum learner allowance that must be paid to unemployed learners in a learnership. This is not a salary but covers expenses like travel and meals.

During the learnership, learners will be required to complete assignments, tasks and practical tests and projects. They will be formally assessed in the classroom and workplace.

If all these assignments are completed successfully, they will be awarded an NQF-registered qualification, which is recognized nationally. They will receive a certificate stating the qualification and the area of skill development.

If they are accepted they will need to sign two legal documents:

1. Learnership Agreement: this is an agreement signed by the learner, the organisation employing the learner, and the education provider offering the theoretical training component of the learnership. This agreement clearly outlines the rights and responsibilities of all three parties.
2. Employment contract: this is a contract they will sign with the employer, which is only valid for the time period of the learnership.



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An employer can terminate the contract of a learnership if:

- The duration specified in the learnership agreement has expired;
- The employer and learner have agreed in writing to terminate the learnership agreement, or if there is no such agreement, the SETA that registered the agreement approves the termination; or
- The learner is fairly dismissed for a reason related to the learner's conduct or capacity as an employee.

### 11.1 Relevance of training to business needs

- Learnerships are developed by the industry for the industry, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, so the learning programme and qualification of the Learners are relevant to the specific occupation
- The outcomes of the learning programme meet the standards for the industry
- Greater credibility of qualifications, as employers have the assurance that the learners can demonstrate the competence reflected in their qualifications

### 11.2 Improved skills and work performance

- A Learnership is a tool for multi-skilling, as it develops the competence of employees in every component of the work processes of an occupation
- The learning route of a Learnership is more effective in promoting the practical application of learning in the workplace than most other routes

### 11.3 As training programmes that combine theory and relevant practical elements, learnerships create skilled people who:

- tends to work more independently, need less supervision and possess enhanced problem solving capabilities;
- is motivated and strive to add value to the business;
- is less likely to leave a company that takes an interest and invests in their personal and professional development.
- entering into learning contracts with unemployed people, contributes to building up the skills pool, from which employers may recruit relevant skills as needed.



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- the more skills gained, the greater the productivity and the more meaningful the individual's contribution to South Africa's global competitiveness and to creating an environment conducive to investment.

### 11.4 Achievement of Employment Equity Objectives

- Progress in meeting Employment Equity targets, since previously disadvantaged employees have opportunities to improve their work-related competence and obtain qualifications
- Your business can improve its competitiveness by earning additional points on the BEE scorecard that are reserved for learnership training.

### 11.5 Appropriately Trained Recruitment Pool of Potential Employees

- Employers will be able to select employees from a wider pool of appropriately qualified workers who have developed skills that are relevant to the company's specific work context.
- Opportunity to collaborate with training providers in customising learning programmes to meet specific workplace needs
- Because employees will be acquiring new knowledge and skills and applying these in the workplace, companies will be raising the skills levels of employees while improving work performance

### 11.6 Increased Return on Investment in Training

- Higher returns from the Skills Levy and investment in training, due to transfer of learning to the job
- Increased grant disbursements from Skills Levy contributions. Many SETAs offer learnership grants ranging from R 4 000 – R 40 000 per learner. However, the grants are subject to availability and are offered on a first come, first serve basis on the condition that the learnership address a scarce skill in the sector, so you will need to plan ahead and get your grant application in to the SETA as early as possible to stand a chance of getting the additional help.
- The details of the tax incentive are contained in Government Gazette No. 23 709 that was published on the 5 August 2002. The entitlement derives from the Taxation Laws Amendment Act, No 30 of 2002. You can find a copy on the SARS website: [www.sars.gov.za](http://www.sars.gov.za) (First select Legislation, then Acts, then Act No 30 of 2002) or on website [www.inseta.org.za](http://www.inseta.org.za) (First select Learnerships, then Legislation Relative to Learnerships, then Amendment to the income Tax Act).

There are 2 levels:



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1. R 30 000 commencement and completion allowances for learnerships and apprenticeships
2. R 50 000 commencement and completion allowances for learners with disabilities

The Principles are straight forward

1. For each year that a learner is registered for a learnership linked to the employer's trade, the employer claims an allowance of R 30 000 for that learnership. This allowance is based on a 12 months' periods, and full periods of a month, so if a learnership starts half way through the employer's year of assessment, half of the allowance is claimed by the employer in the first year and half in the second.
2. If the learner leaves during the year, there is no recoupment. The R 30 000 is merely apportioned for the part of the year, so that if the learner leaves after 4 months, the employer only claims 4/12 of the allowance, i.e. R 10 000. These must be full months, so if the learner leaves after 3 and a half months, the allowance must be claimed for 3 months, i.e. 3/12 X R 30 000 = R 7 500.
3. Similarly, if a learnership spans 3 and half months in the first year of assessment and 8 and a half months in the second year of assessment of a single employer, the employer claims commencement allowance of R 7500 in the first year and R 20 000 in the second year.
5. If the learner goes to another employer while he is still doing his learnership and the learnership is carried on, linked to that employer's trade, the new employer claims the learnership for the rest of the year, i.e. 8/12 X R 30 000 = R 20 000. The new employer will also claim the full completion allowance, even if the learner was not employed by that employer in the earlier years or months of the learnership.
6. If a learner fails his or her learnership and registers for a new learnership, section 12H will not apply to the new learnership if it contains the same education and training component of the learnership that the person failed.
7. These in addition to Learnership discretionary grants, is a substantial amount that is made available to subsidise the training of a learner on a learnership.