

South African riding instruction qualifications on par with the best

by Izak Hofmeyr

It is believed that South Africa boasts the second oldest formal riding instructors qualification in the world, according to Di Pieterse, director of the SANEF National Instructors Plan and chairman of the National Instructors Committee of the SA National Equestrian Federation (SANEF).

The National Instructors Committee is one of eight SANEF committees. The others are Showjumping, Dressage, Equitation, Eventing, Showing, Driving and Vaulting. The National Instructors Committee, however, differs from these discipline committees in the sense that it is self-funded and the committee members are appointed, and not elected. It is regarded as the educational arm of SANEF.

“Our focus at the National Instructors Committee is not only the examination of sport coaches, but also includes the testing of instructors for recreational riding, beginner riders, and anybody who wants a career in horses”.

The representatives in the various SANEF regions are Noeleen Meiring in Gauteng, North West, Limpopo and Mpumalanga, Kate Hurst in the Western and Northern Cape, Sue Webb in the Eastern Cape (including George) and Jackie Bridel in KwaZulu-Natal. Currently there is no representative in the Free State.

The National Instructors Plan was started by Charlotte Stubbs, who in 1976 was asked by SANEF to set up an instructor qualification system for South Africa. At the time, the only instructor's qualification available was offered by the British Horse Society (BHS). Although Charlotte retired as the Director in April 2003, her legacy in establishing a respected institution continues and her contribution of 27 years undeniably laid the foundation for the growth the Instructors Plan has experienced in recent years.

Initially the SANEF Instructor's Plan offered three levels of instructors' exams, the first level being the preliminary instructor qualification, followed by the standard qualification and then the advanced qualification.



The quality of riding instruction in South Africa should be of an acceptable minimum standard



As far as the Instructors Plan is concerned, explains Di, the focus up to 1997 was exclusively on instructor examinations. There was, however, a huge demand for a larger range of qualifications. This led to the inception of the Certificate for Horsemastership. This is essentially a stable yard management qualification.

Next came the qualification for professional grooms in 2000. This proved to be a tremendously popular qualification. So much so, that a quarter of all the candidates taking an exam since the start of the Plan in 1976, are grooms. In the meanwhile an advanced grooms qualification has been added. These two qualifications are called Certificate of Stable Yard Skills 1 and Certificate of Stable Yard Skills 2.

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A next breakthrough initiative for the Plan, relates Di, was the formation of the Standards Generating Body (SGB) for Equine Management and Equestrian Instruction. This implies that for the first time in history, everyone involved with equine/equestrian training sit around a table and work together towards the common goal of improving standards in the industry. The SGB has already generated 23 unit standards for the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the body entrusted by the Government to implement the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

With all the qualifications offered by the National Instructors Plan in line with the standards of the South African Qualifications authority, the Plan introduced an additional qualification, the Coaches Discipline Register. This register seeks to recognise top level competition coaches in the country who have not gone through the official qualifications system. In accordance with the Government’s Recognition of Prior Learning Process, these instructors are pro-

cessed for the Register of Discipline Coaches.

A significant shift in how the National Instructors Plan is perceived in the country, says Di, is the amount of interest that is shown from those parts of the industry that are not necessarily closely connected to the traditional disciplines of showjumping, dressage and eventing.

“A while back there was an element of “us” and “them” between the “English” riding styles and other applications. I took it upon myself to try and achieve a countrywide education standard. It thrills me immensely that we have effectively broken the back of that old divide and that we have the entire equine industry represented on the SGB. We have also made ourselves accessible to people in the platteland. If you look at a recent list of candidates taking the exams, a healthy number of them stem from the country districts.”

In 1997, the Committee was invited by the International Group for Equestrian Qualifications (IGEQ) to establish whether the South African qualifications would align favourably to the IGEQ – matrix. This matrix allows for the comparison of various countries’ instructor’s qualifications.

“The upshot was that I embarked on researching the various qualifications available world wide to establish where South Africa

The qualifications that one can currently achieve through the SANEF Instructors Plan are:

- Certificate of Stable Yard Skills – Module 1
- Certificate of Stable Yard Skills – Module 2
- Certificate of Horsemastership – Module 3
- Certificate of Horsemastership and Preliminary Riding Instruction – Module 4
- Certificate of Horsemastership and Riding Instruction Level 1 – Module 5
- Certificate of Horsemastership, Horsemanship and Riding Instruction Level 2 – Module 6
- Certificate of Horsemastership, Horsemanship and Riding Instruction Level 3 – Module 7
- Coaches’ Register – RPL + Assessment = SANEF NIP Discipline Coach

How does one achieve a qualification from the SANEF's National Instructors Plan?

The best is to contact the regional representative in your area. You may, however, take the exam in the region of your choice. It is not compulsory to take the exam in any specific region.

There is a prescribed list of study material. When you feel you are ready to take the exam, contact your representative for a list of exam dates, application form and the relevant literature. Here is a list of phone numbers of the respective regional representatives:

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would fit in. What I established was that the SA prelim and standard qualifications compared favourably, although there was a discrepancy in the Advanced qualification due to the weight the IGEQ placed on advanced personal riding skills."

South Africa subsequently became a member of the IGEQ. The Group currently has 33 member countries that are divided into eight regions. An International Equestrian Passport

is available to SANEF Instructors' at Levels 1,2 and 3. The qualifications of instructors' who are holders of these passports are recognised in any of the IGEQ member countries.

Di was elected to the Executive Committee in 2002 as representative for member countries Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Malawi, South Africa as well as the rest of Africa.

Recently she was also nominated as Press Officer for the IGEQ. SAH