

## Paper Number: 24

### **Professionalism in the Geosciences as practised in South Africa**

Swindell Edward.P.W.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Vice President professional Affairs, Geological Society of South Africa, PO Box 61809 Marshalltown, 2107, South Africa, [edswindell@telkomsa.net](mailto:edswindell@telkomsa.net),

---

Professionalism in the Geosciences as practised in South Africa is an internationally normalised practice involving 2 separate but closely related organisations, namely the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP) and the Geological Society of South Africa (GSSA). The latter is a statutory organisation brought into being and governed by an Act of Parliament (the Natural Scientific Professions Act 27 (2003) (repealing the 1993 Act)) while the latter is a voluntary membership based organisation. The GSSA is a 121 year old society steeped in the traditions and practices of a learned society which took on the mantle of a Professional society as the role of the Geoscientist in Society evolved. It is governed by a Constitution and a set of By Laws. The two organisations are interrelated through a relationship whereby the GSSA is formally recognised as a "Voluntary Association" of the SACNASP. While SACNASP have a seat on the Council of the GSSA and geoscientists identified by the GSSA are appointed to the SACNASP Board by the Minister for Science and Technology. Geoscientists represent one of the largest body of registered scientists within the SACNASP.

Professionalism in the Geosciences in South Africa rests upon 3 pillars namely; Registration, Professional Norms and Behaviour and Continuing Professional Development.

Registration is in essence a process whereby the qualifications of an applicant are confirmed to be true, valid and relevant to the field of practice specified. SACNASP registers all Natural Science practitioners within South Africa. It is illegal to practice as a geologist within South Africa unless registered with SACNASP. Fundamental to this registration is a process of registration in terms of the Natural Scientific Professions Act whereby qualifications and experience are evaluated. Registration as either a Candidate or Professional Natural Scientist (Pr. Sci. Nat) arises. Geoscientists are registered within the Fields of Practice of Geological Science or Earth Science. The public are able to confirm the registration and Field of Practice of a scientist by means of accessing the SACNASP website. <http://www.sacnasp.org.za/>. There is no professional practice examination currently required for registration purposes in South Africa

Professional norms and behaviour are measured against a Code of Ethics by the GSSA and by a Code of Conduct by SACNASP. Each organisation has a Complaints and Disciplinary System (sub-committees) which investigate and rule on complaints brought to them by the public at large and by fellow professionals. These processes allow for confidentiality, separation and independence of investigative and ethics ruling stages, as well as appeal processes. The GSSA process requires that severe breaches of ethics be referred to SACNASP for ultimate sanction. Sanctions range from simple admonishment to de-registration and the possible loss of the right to practice.

Both organisations manage a Continuing Professional Development system and promote career long development as an imperative. This aspect is the least mature part of the system but is steadily evolving

Professional Registration with SACNASP and membership of the GSSA is recognised by International organisations such as CRIRSCO, JORC, CSA etc. as professional registration for purposes of Competency as regards Resource and Reserve Reporting. This currently represents the most common and successful application of the Professionalism regime in South Africa.

