



SCARCE/CRITICAL SKILLS ACCREDITATION POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Scarce and critical skills are defined as the demand either in the current or future workforce landscape for skilled, qualified, and experienced individuals to address specific skills gaps in particular roles, professions, occupations, or areas of specialisation within the labour market. These gaps may arise due to various factors, including technological advancement, economic shifts, policy reforms, or evolving industry requirements.

In the context of risk management and governance, identifying and accrediting scarce and critical skills is essential to ensure that South Africa's professional landscape remains competitive, resilient, and responsive to both local and global challenges. The Institute of Risk Management South Africa (IRMSA), as a leading professional body in the sector, recognises the importance of aligning its accreditation processes with national priorities, such as those outlined by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

This policy provides a framework for IRMSA to identify risk management on the Critical Skills list posted on the Department of Education and Training website.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS:

- 2.1 **Applicant:** Refers to an individual who is a registered IRMSA member applying for recognition or accreditation under the scarce/critical skills accreditation policy.
- 2.2 **Critical Skills:** Skills that are essential for the success and sustainability of the risk management profession, particularly those required to meet current and future sector demands. These skills typically include specialised knowledge areas, qualifications, and competencies that are lacking or in short supply within the profession.
- 2.3 **Designated Scarce/Critical Skill:** A professional or technical competency, occupation, or area of specialisation identified by IRMSA as being in high demand and low supply within the risk management sector.
- 2.4 **Industry Relevance:** Refers to the degree to which a skill, qualification, or competency aligns with current or emerging trends, demands, and risks within the broader risk management landscape in both public and private sectors.
- 2.5 **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** The formal process through which IRMSA evaluates and acknowledges the member's existing competencies, knowledge, and work experience irrespective of how they were acquired for the purpose of recognition under the scarce/Critical Skills framework.
- 2.6 **Scarce Skills:** Refers to qualifications, competencies, or experience areas that are in short supply in the risk management profession, and which are essential for the development and sustainability of organisations across industries. This may include niche risk specialisations, advanced risk analytics, enterprise risk governance, ESG risk integration, and crisis resilience, among others.
- 2.7 **Scarce Skills Recognition:** A formal acknowledgment awarded by IRMSA to a member whose skillset has been confirmed as scarce or critical within the sector, based on clear criteria and assessment.
- 2.8 **Skills Gap:** The difference between the skills currently available within the risk management profession and those that are needed to meet present or anticipated future demands.

- 2.9 **Skills Development Act:** Refers to the skills development act (act no 97 of 1998) as amended.
- 2.10 **Skills Development Levies Act:** Refers to the skills development levies act (act 9 of 1999) as amended.
- 2.11 **Labour Relations Act:** Refers to the labour relations act (act no 66 of 1995) as amended.
- 2.12 **Employment Equity Act:** Refers to the employment equity act (act no 55 of 1998).
- 2.13 **Suitably Qualified Member:** A member who meets the requirements of a designated scarce/critical skill through a combination of formal qualifications, professional experience, demonstrated competence, and the ability to apply specialised knowledge in practical settings.
- 2.14 **Strategic Sector Alignment:** Ensuring that scarce/critical skills identified by IRMSA align with national development priorities, including the National Development Plan (NDP), Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) frameworks.
- 2.15 **Continuous Professional Development (CPD):** Structured learning and development activities that IRMSA members engage in to enhance and maintain their professional competence, particularly in areas recognised as scarce or critical.

3. PURPOSE

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide the Institute of Risk Management South Africa (IRMSA) with a structured framework for the identification, accreditation, and recognition of scarce and critical skills within the risk management profession.
- 3.2 IRMSA is committed to strengthening the professionalisation of the risk management sector by aligning its strategic objectives with national development goals, industry needs, and evolving global risk landscapes.
- 3.3 To ensure that the risk management profession remains relevant, resilient, and responsive, IRMSA recognises the importance of continuously identifying and supporting skills that are in high demand yet limited in supply. These scarce and critical skills are essential for addressing complex risk challenges, enhancing governance, and contributing to sustainable organisational performance across sectors.
- 3.4 While all members contribute meaningfully to the profession, there are individuals who possess highly specialised, technical, or strategic capabilities that are crucial to advancing the profession. This policy serves to support the recognition and development of those individuals whose skills significantly contribute to building capacity and expertise in the risk management ecosystem.
- 3.5 The Scarce/Critical Skills Accreditation Policy provides guidelines for the assessment, accreditation, and ongoing review of designated scarce and critical skills for IRMSA members. It ensures transparency, consistency, and alignment with national, ultimately reinforcing IRMSA's mandate to uphold excellence and professional standards.

4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 Skills Development Act (Act No. 97 of 1998)

- 4.2 Skills Development Levies Act (Act No. 9 of 1999)
- 4.3 National Qualifications Framework Act (Act No. 67 of 2008)
- 4.4 South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Policy on Professional Bodies and Designations
- 4.5 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy (SAQA)
- 4.6 National Skills Development Plan (NSDP)
- 4.7 Critical / Scarcity list as per the Department of Education and Training Website

5. OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 The Scarce/Critical Skills Accreditation Policy aims to:
 - 5.1.1 Identify scarce and critical skills within the risk management profession aligned to national priorities.
 - 5.1.2 Formally declare IRMSA's commitment to recognising, promoting, and accrediting members who possess scarce and critical skills that contribute to the advancement of the profession.
 - 5.1.3 Support the development and retention of risk management professionals with scarce skills through recognition and professional designations.
 - 5.1.4 Strengthen the capacity and impact of the risk management profession by ensuring a pipeline of skilled practitioners equipped to meet emerging and complex risk challenges.

6. DEFINITION OF SCARCE SKILLS

- 6.1 For the purposes of this policy, IRMSA adopts the definition of scarce skills as those competencies, qualifications, or capabilities that are in high demand within the risk management profession but are limited in supply among practitioners.
- 6.2 The Department of Labour defines scarce skills as an absolute or relative demand.
- 6.3 **Absolute scarcity** refers to a situation where there are insufficient qualified and competent risk management professionals available in the labour market to meet current or future demand in specialised areas of the profession.
- 6.4 **Relative scarcity** refers to instances where risk professionals may exist in the labour market, but few meet the full combination of professional, technical, experiential, and behavioural competencies required for effective performance in advanced, strategic, or emerging risk roles.
- 6.5 The key differences between an absolute and relative demand are as follows:

ABSOLUTE SCARCITY	RELATIVE SCARCITY
A new or emerging occupation i.e. there are few if any people in the country with the requisite skills.	High level work experience, for example a project manager for a construction site.
Firms, sectors or even the national economy are unable to implement planned growth strategies because productivity, service delivery, and quality problems are directly attributable to a lack of skilled people.	Geographical location, for example persons are unwilling to work outside of urban areas.
Replacement demand would reflect an absolute scarcity where there are no people enrolled or engaged in the process of acquiring skills that need to be replaced.	Equity considerations, for example there are few if any candidates with the requisite skills from specific groups available to meet the skills requirement of employers.

7. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

7.1 The IRMSA Scarce/Critical Skills Policy is guided by the following fundamental principles:

- 7.1.1 It is the responsibility of IRMSA to determine the strategic and professionalisation needs of the risk management profession in alignment with its mandate.
- 7.1.2 The identification and retention of critical and scarce risk-related skills is an ongoing strategic imperative, interlinked with professional recognition, capacity building, mentorship, CPD, and career progression pathways.
- 7.1.3 The implementation of this policy shall focus on identifying risk-related skill shortages, attracting qualified professionals in these areas, and retaining such professionals within IRMSA's ecosystem.
- 7.1.4 All interventions aimed at addressing scarce and critical skills must address both immediate gaps (short-term) and long-term sustainability of the professional risk skills pipeline.
- 7.1.5 The IRMSA Scarce Skills Policy must be reviewed annually to reflect changing demands, trends, and emerging risks that influence professional competency requirements.

8. STRATEGY FOR ATTRACTING AND RETAINING MEMBERS WITH SCARCE SKILLS

8.1 SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES FOR ATTRACTING AND RETAINING MEMBERS WITH SCARCE SKILLS

- 8.1.1 In cases of critical demand, IRMSA may engage experienced professionals or subject matter experts on a short-term or project-based basis to ensure delivery of strategic initiatives or knowledge transfer.
- 8.1.2 Should an accredited member with scarce skills notify IRMSA of resignation from the accreditation programme or professional membership, a formal

process of engagement may be undertaken to understand their motivation and assess the impact on the profession.

8.1.3 Any proposed recognition must be aligned with IRMSA's values, governance protocols, and financial sustainability.

8.1.4 Additional methods for retention and recognition may be recommended by the Membership Committee, subject to approval by IRMSA's Executive Management or relevant Board structures.

8.2 LONGER-TERM STRATEGIES FOR ATTRACTING AND RETAINING MEMBERS WITH SCARCE SKILLS

8.2.1 IRMSA may identify members and emerging professionals pursuing qualifications in high-demand risk-related disciplines through partnerships with academic institutions and professional networks.

8.2.2 These individuals may be considered for sponsored memberships with a commitment to participate in IRMSA's professionalisation pathways for a defined period post-qualification.

8.2.3 IRMSA will seek to establish and grow a dedicated Scarce and Critical Skills Development Fund to support the advancement of future-fit risk professionals through professional development.

8.2.4 Should beneficiaries exit IRMSA's support programme prematurely, a proportional repayment clause may be enforced, with recovered funds reinvested in future applicants within the scarce skills pipeline.

8.2.5 Where applicable, IRMSA will partner with relevant Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) to access discretionary grants and implement accredited internships, graduate development, or mentorship programmes.

8.2.6 Interns and young professionals in identified scarce skills areas will be supported through structured development plans and recognised exposure to industry projects, networks, and professional experiences.

8.2.7 All beneficiaries of development programmes will be assigned professional mentors through IRMSA's mentorship framework to support skills transfer, leadership growth, and career progression.

8.2.8 IRMSA will prioritise members who have participated in its professional development programmes for future accreditation, strategic projects, or leadership roles in the risk profession.

8.2.9 IRMSA may explore funding opportunities from public and private sector partnerships, SETAs, and corporate sponsorships to sustain the pipeline of talent in scarce risk-related skills.

8.2.10 Skills transfer will be a fundamental requirement in all scarce skills development interventions, supported by structured mentoring and knowledge-sharing platforms.

8.2.11 The implementation and monitoring of mentoring programmes shall be coordinated by IRMSA's Professionalisation and Development Department.

9. MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENT FOR SCARCE SKILLS ACCREDITATION

9.1 All applicants approved for scarce/critical skills accreditation will be required to commit to a **three-year** IRMSA professional membership, with the full membership fee payable **upfront** as part of the accreditation process.

9.2 The above membership fee is non-refundable.

10 REVIEW OF SCARCE SKILLS RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT

10.1 The recognition and classification of scarce and critical skills shall be reviewed annually by IRMSA to ensure alignment with evolving industry demands, national priorities, and risk landscape trends.

10.2 Where a previously recognised skill is no longer classified as scarce, such classification shall not apply to new applications or recognitions going forward. Existing recognitions may be reviewed for relevance and alignment.

10.3 IRMSA reserves the right to reassess a member's continued recognition under the scarce skills framework based on ongoing professional development, active contribution to the field, and adherence to professional standards and ethics.

11 TRANSFER OF SKILLS

11.1 Accredited members who possess scarce or critical skills are encouraged to contribute to the professionalisation and capacity building of the risk management profession by actively participating in skills transfer initiatives.

11.2 Such skills transfer may include mentoring, coaching, training, knowledge sharing, or contributing to IRMSA-led development programmes aimed at equipping other members or emerging practitioners with identified scarce and critical competencies.

12 REVIEW OF THE SCARCE SKILLS POLICY

12.1 The Scarce Skills Policy will be reviewed every 2nd year to ensure that it aligns with the Department of Higher Education and Training's requirements for the risk professionals.

13 NATIONAL SCARCE SKILLS LIST

13.1 Refer to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Website. Additionally, the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) maintains a Critical Skills List, which is a similar list identifying in-demand occupations for visa purposes.

14 DISPUTES

14.1 Any disputes pertaining to this policy should be referred to the Complaints and Grievance Committee for resolution.

15 WHAT IS RISK MANAGEMENT?

15.1 Risk Management is the continuous process of identifying, assessing, monitoring, prioritising, and managing potential risks, followed by the coordinated application of resources to minimize the negative impact they may have on an organisation or business.

16 APPLICATION CRITERIA

16.1 All applicants will be liable for 3-years' membership fees, payable upfront.

16.2 Individuals in the associate member class and higher (certified designations) who are in good standing with the Institute are eligible to apply for the scarce/critical skills letter.

16.3 The following documents are required when making an application:

- a. Certified copy of a valid Passport (certified stamp not older than 3-months)
- b. Certified copies of Tertiary Qualifications (certified stamp not older than 3-months)
- c. Qualifications obtained outside South Africa need to be accompanied by a valid South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) evaluation certificate.
- d. Detailed Curriculum Vitae with traceable references, clearly stipulating risk management experience – [click here](#) for the full checklist.
- e. Proof of employment in the form of a letter on a company letterhead with a traceable reference confirming your role & start date of employment
- f. Character reference from an active IRMSA Associate/Certified member – [click here](#) for the letter template.

N.B) Following the review of your application by our evaluation committee, you may also be required to undergo an assessment.

17 POLICY SIGN OFF AND OWNERSHIP DETAILS

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CEO Approval Signature

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