

# Professional Designations



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# Professional Designations for Office Professionals in South Africa

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## 1. Introduction

OPSA is a SAQA approved professional body (SAQA professional body ID 1027) for the secretarial and administrative industry. OPSA's mission is to promote and develop performance standards and roles for administrative professionals and is committed to:

- Providing guidance and advice for continued personal and professional growth
- Recognising members' achievements through the annual Awards and other ad-hoc competitions
- Providing members with opportunities for mentoring and networking
- Building the administrative and secretarial profession by attracting the best talent to office occupations
- Helping employers understand the true value administrative staff bring to their organisation

## 2. What is CPD?

The CPD approach emphasises the elements of:

- **Continuing** - since professional learning must represent lifelong learning regardless of factors such as qualifications already acquired, age or length of service within the profession;
- **Professional** - as the learning focusses on professional competence and a professional role within a professional economic sector; and
- **Development** – where the goal should be not only to improve personal performance but also to enhance professional career progression.

## 3. How will CPD help me?

Participating in CPD helps you to reflect, review and document your learning and assists you in developing and updating your professional knowledge and skills. It will give your employer the assurance that you have the skills required for the job as well as show your commitment to lifelong learning and professional development.

#### 4. What is a professional designation?

A professional designation is earned by a person in a field by meeting certain requirements, and successfully completing an assessment to show competence in performing a certain job or task. It is an official endorsement from a professional body of your skills and experience.

An OPSA professional designation is valid for 2 years. To keep the designation valid, a total of 20 CPD points (see below) must be earned in the 2-year period to show commitment to lifelong learning and to ensure that you have kept yourself up to date with the skills and knowledge required in the workplace.

#### 5. OPSA Professional Designations

In line with global practice, OPSA has introduced three Professional Designations (registered with SAQA) for our members:

1. Certified Office Professional (COP) – SAQA designation ID: 792
2. Certified Managerial Office Professional (CMOP) – SAQA designation ID: 793
3. Certified Office Manager (COM) – SAQA designation ID: 794

These professional designations give employers an indication of the levels of competence of the members who qualify for them. Designations are awarded based on an assessment against a set of eligibility criteria. OPSA Professional Designations are internationally benchmarked and are registered with SAQA (South African Qualifications Authority). Successful applicants will be registered on the National Learner Database.

#### 6. How do I get a designation?

To be considered for a designation, you are required to submit your CV with supporting documentation i.e. a copy of your highest qualification and ID document, showing that you meet the minimum qualification and experience requirements. You are then required to successfully complete an industry related assessment (Portfolio of Evidence).

#### 7. What are the minimum qualification and experience requirements?

##### **Certified Office Professional (COP)**

- A SAQA recognized NQF Level 3 Business Administration or Public Administration qualification
- Two to four years' practical work experience in an administrative role

- The successful completion of an industry related portfolio of evidence to determine the level of your skills

### **Certified Managerial Administrator (CMOP)**

- Matric and/ or a SAQA recognized NQF Level 4 Business Administration or Public Administration qualification or higher
- Five to nine years' practical experience in an administrative role
- The successful completion of an industry related portfolio of evidence to determine the level of your skills

### **Certified Office Manager (COM)**

- A SAQA recognized NQF Level 5 Business Administration or Public Administration qualification or higher
- Ten or more years' practical experience in an administrative role
- The successful completion of an industry related portfolio of evidence to determine the level of your skills

## 8. What are the costs involved?

### ***Doing it on your own:***

If your application is approved, a **registration fee of R1000.00** is payable. On receipt of payment the Portfolio of Evidence is sent to you to complete. When you have completed and submitted the Portfolio of Evidence to OPSA, it is sent to a registered assessor. When you have been found competent, you begin your professional membership and an annual **professional membership fee of R700.00** is due.

### **Professional Designation Masterclass**

#### ***Classroom***

You can attend a 5-day Professional Designation Master Class for **R11750.00 which includes your registration fee, 2-year professional membership fee, a workbook, and the master class.**

#### ***Online***

You can complete an 8-week online programme during which you will complete your Portfolio of Evidence. The cost of the online programme is **R4800.00 which includes the registration fee, 2-year professional membership fee and a workbook.**

9. How do I apply for a designation?

Applicants are required to submit the application form with supporting documentation (as indicated on the application form), showing they meet the minimum qualification and experience requirements. Once the applicant has been approved, they will be sent a Portfolio of Evidence (PoE) to complete. This must be completed within 3 (three) months. If you cannot complete the PoE within the stipulated time, you may apply in writing to the OPSA Director: Learning and Development for an extension.

Once the completed PoE has been assessed, you will be notified of the outcome.

If you wish to apply for a professional designation, download, complete and submit the form to [cpd@opsa.org.za](mailto:cpd@opsa.org.za). You will be contacted by a member of the CPD Division and the journey will begin! (The application form can be downloaded from the website [www.opsa.org.za](http://www.opsa.org.za)).

10. Once I have been awarded the professional designation, how do I earn CPD points?

The designation is valid for a period of 2 years. Once you have been awarded the designation, you have made a commitment to continuous learning and are required to achieve 20 CPD points within the 2-year period.

The 20 CPD Points can be earned in the following categories:

CATEGORY	POINTS
<p><b><u>Professional Development (PD)</u></b> All education submitted under this category must align with your job as an administrative professional. You can earn all 20 CPD points in this category</p>	20 points
<p><b><u>Leadership (optional) (LE)</u></b> Leadership positions within an association or committee – office bearer (minimum of 12 months) on committees and boards</p>	Max 5 points
<p><b><u>Industry specific professional development (optional) (IS)</u></b> Education is specific to an industry and transferable within that industry and relevant to the duties of the administrative professional in the office environment.</p>	Max 5 points

Activity	Points allocated	Evidence required
<p><b>Category PD</b> OPSA endorsed short courses (1-12 months to complete)</p>	Points determined based on evidence and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your certificates of attendance and/or competence</li> <li>The dates you attended training or conferencing</li> <li>The duration of the training and the name of the training provider</li> </ul>

	actual education time	
<b>Category PD</b> OPSA endorsed conferences / workshops / seminars (5 days or less)	1 point per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your certificates of attendance and/or competence</li> <li>The dates you attended training or conferencing</li> <li>The duration of the training and the name of the training provider</li> </ul>
<b>Category PD</b> OPSA endorsed online learning programmes (maximum of 10 points) e.g. <a href="http://www.alison.com">www.alison.com</a> , in-house e-learning programmes, OPSA online portal, Udemy	2 points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A certificate of completion</li> <li>Learning record from provider showing hours spent and completion of programmes</li> </ul>

Activity	Points allocated	Evidence required
<b>Category PD</b> Coaching and mentoring (minimum of 10 hours)	2 points	A brief report co-signed by both the mentor and mentee. Full contact details of both parties must be provided so that the sessions can be verified.
<b>Category PD</b> Attendance of industry related webinars and podcasts	1 point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verification of attendance of completion (usually sent via email)</li> <li>Session or course title and description</li> <li>Date and length</li> </ul>
<b>Category PD</b> Formal education at a South African University	15 points (max)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your certificates of attendance and/or competence</li> <li>The dates you attended training or conferencing</li> <li>The duration of the training and the name of the training provider</li> </ul>
<b>Category PD</b> Facilitation of an OPSA endorsed program	3 points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A copy of the program</li> <li>A letter from the organizer confirming the event</li> </ul>
<b>Category PD</b> Toastmasters or similar achievement recognition	3 points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certificate of achievement</li> <li>Date of achievement</li> </ul>
<b>Category PD</b>	5 points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your certificates of attendance and/or competence</li> </ul>

Microsoft Office Certification or similar software achievement recognition		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The dates you attended training or conferencing</li> <li>• The duration of the training and the name of the training provider</li> </ul>
<b>Category LE</b> Leadership positions within an association or committee – office bearer (minimum of 12 months) on committees and boards	5 points	A letter from the organization that includes the position held, primary duties of the position, and dates of term.
<b>Category LE</b> Organising and chairing admin forums within an organisation	3 points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda for admin forum</li> <li>• Attendance register</li> </ul>
<b>Category LE</b> Community involvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• through skills transfer – offering free workshops to administrative staff of community organisations</li> <li>• volunteer work in a community per year</li> <li>• an integral part of organising committee for an event held by OPSA</li> </ul>	Points determined based on evidence and actual education time	Written verification (on letterhead) from the Chairperson/organizer of the program, dates, duration and type of involvement.
<b>Category IS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending admin forums</li> <li>• Roadshows</li> <li>• E-learning on company specific skills</li> </ul>	Points determined based on evidence and actual education time	Written verification (on letterhead) from the Chairperson/organizer of the program, dates, duration and type of involvement.

11. How will OPSA know what learning I have done and how many CPD points I have earned?

Once evidence of continuous learning has been submitted to OPSA at [cpd@opsa.org.za](mailto:cpd@opsa.org.za), the information will be captured by the CPD Coordinator on the OPSA member database and an updated schedule will be emailed to you indicating your current status.

**Some tips:**

**Keep track of your points:** Once you have achieved your professional designation, start a spreadsheet (or something similar) to track points as earned. Set a goal to earn at least 10 points per year rather than wait and struggle to gain all the points at the end of the 2 years.

Not only will the spreadsheet help you stay on track, it will help you with your personal development planning.



**Keep a file of supporting documentation:** In addition to your spreadsheet of points earned, start a file of your supporting documentation (this can be asked for if an audit is required).

For all professional development, your supporting documentation must verify attendance and include:

- the subject and/or description of education
- date of completion
- length of education

For leadership positions and community involvement, attain a letter from the organization that includes:

- the position held
- primary duties of the position, and
- length of term served

## 12. Audit Process

To protect the integrity of OPSA professional membership and designations, OPSA will randomly audit a percentage of applications to renew professional membership. It is very important to document your professional development and leadership activities as suggested in point 11. If your application to renew your professional membership is audited, you will be required to verify, with supporting documentation, the activities listed on your spreadsheet. Additionally, you may be asked to submit supporting documentation if it is needed to determine eligibility of an activity.

## 13. Late Submissions

Members who have missed the date to renew professional membership are given a 30-day grace period in which they can submit a late application. No special permission is necessary if applying within the grace period. **It is important to note that the grace period is not extra time to accumulate points, it is additional time to submit the information.** All points submitted must be earned within the original 2-year period. Individuals are required to pay the OPSA Professional Membership fee of R700.00, plus a R250 late fee when renewing their professional membership during the grace period. If the application is approved, professional membership will be backdated to the month/year originally due.

## 14. Appeals

Those who are beyond the 30-day grace period must submit an appeal before applying to renew their professional membership. This type of appeal is for those who experienced extenuating

circumstances which prevented them from earning points or renewing their professional membership within the 2-year period. Examples include, but are not limited to, serious personal illness, serious illness of a family member, tragic event or long-term unemployment. If the appeal is accepted, the individual may be given additional time to earn points. Letters of appeal may be sent to [cpd@opsa.org.za](mailto:cpd@opsa.org.za) and should include the circumstances, documentation, and your plan for gaining the required points.

15. What support will OPSA offer applicants?

- OPSA will host various events throughout the year that will focus on building the skills and knowledge of OPSA members and for which points will be allocated.
- OPSA will partner with training providers and points will be awarded to approved programs.
- OPSA will endorse and allocate points to workshops and conferences for approved programs.

All approved training programs, workshops and conferences will be advertised in Terrific Tuesday as well as on the website.

16. What happens if I do not earn 20 CPD points within the 2-year period?

If you do not earn 20 CPD points in the 2-year period, your professional membership with OPSA falls away. If you wish to re-apply for professional members, you will have to start the process from the beginning with an assessment. The onus is on you to ensure that you do continuous learning within the 2-year period and keep up to date with what is happening in the industry.

**If you have any queries with regards to CPD or professional designations, please send your query to [dawn@opsa.org.za](mailto:dawn@opsa.org.za).**