More than SPIT AND POLISH added to new-look TPSA

Mark Malherbe was active in the establishment of the original TPSA organisation in 1998 when Rudi Kesting of the Southern African Institute of Theatre Technicians (SAITT) initially proposed the development of an organisation modelled on the British Production Services Association.

of the SASREA Act and the updating of the SANS10366 standard for safety at live events.

Unfortunately, the Association lost focus after the World Cup and over the next five years membership fell steadily. For all practical purposes, the Association devolved into an organisation more interested in protecting the interests of corporate members than

> **"Ever since the TPSA was reconstituted into SACIA we've been working on promoting the adoption of professional standards and ethical business practices in the live events industry."**
>
> *Mark Malherbe, TPSA*

It was a time of fundamental change in the theatre industry and the fledgling TPSA organisation, initially seen as an offshoot of the SAITT, soon found itself without a parent when the SAITT disbanded in 2000.

Over the last two decades the TPSA has played many roles and at its peak, shortly before the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, the Association boasted almost 400 corporate members.

FIFA Risk Management
Part of the reason for this success arose from FIFA's risk management strategy that required all suppliers and commercial partners in the FIFA World Cup to be an active member in a local Association dedicated to promoting the adoption of professional standards and safe working practices. In the build-up to FIFA2010, the TPSA was also engaged in the development

empowering individuals or building an industry based on the adoption of professional standards and ethical business practices.

Emphasis on the individual
In late 2014 the TPSA Board unanimously voted to reconstitute the Association as a special interest group within SACIA and in that process, fundamentally change the Association by placing an emphasis on the role of individual industry professionals.

"Ever since the TPSA was reconstituted into SACIA we've been working on promoting the adoption of professional standards and ethical business practices in the live events industry," says Mark Malherbe, current chair of the TPSA Council. "For a number of years the TPSA was a body which excluded many stakeholders from opportunities in the market and our new vision turns these exclusionary practices on their head.

Some of our achievements since our incorporation into SACIA include:

- The development of new SAQA-recognised professional designations for theatre and live event professionals.

- Expanded education programme that promotes a commitment to lifelong learning.

- Launch of a dedicated tax guide specific to freelance professionals working in the theatre and live events industry.

- Launch of an Employment Guide for Freelance professionals working in the live events industry.

- Launch of a specialist Crew Cover insurance programme for live event professionals

- Update of the SANS10366 national standard for safety at live events and development of a new SANS1685 national standard for safety in theatres.

- Contribution to the development of an industry-specific BEE scorecard designed to accelerate transformation in the live events industry.

- Engagement with ICASA on issues relating to the reallocation of radio frequencies used by wireless microphones operating in the 470-790 MHz range.

Our current focus is to ensure that these programmes receive the necessary uptake and to continue with our drive to remove the perception that the TPSA is irrelevant. Ongoing open forum meetings will be planned to communicate our achievements and encourage participation. •

ROAD TO EXCELLENCE

RECOGNITION OF EXCELLENCE
for theatre and live event technical crew

During September 2017 the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) recognised three new professional designations that allow formal acknowledgment of skill and competence in the theatre and live events industry.

The designations were developed after extensive engagement with industry, and are designed to recognise the skill, competence and experience of industry professionals working in the sector. "There are many paths to knowledge in the live events industry," explains Kevan Jones, executive director of the Southern African Communications Industries Association. "These designations are designed to recognise those individuals with proven knowledge and experience. We don't care whether you attended a University or College, or whether you simply learned on the job, if you have the skill, knowledge and experience required to work effectively in the theatre and live events industry you're able to qualify for a SAQA-recognised professional designation."

There are three levels that are assessed, each requiring the individual to demonstrate varying levels of knowledge, competence and work experience.

Associate Level
At the Associate level, candidates need to have an NQF level 4 qualification and at least one year's post-qualification work experience in the technical production and live events industry. They also need to sit for an online 100-question multiple choice exam that assesses their breadth of knowledge across 20 core subjects. The assessment covers the principles of sound and light, audio and video technology, display systems, RF, stagecraft, rigging, temporary structures, lighting, health and safety, lasers, pyrotechnics, event power, IT and management systems used in the live events industry.

An individual without an NQF level 4 qualification can still apply for the designation but needs to have at least two years relevant work experience. Only once a candidate has written and passed the online exam (TLE001) can they apply with a portfolio of evidence that supports their claim of competence. Generally, this portfolio will include a copy of their CV, testimonial letters from work colleagues, clients or employers, a signed copy of the SACIA Code of Professional Conduct, and of course proof of payment of the annual membership and certification fees.

Practioner Level
At the Practitioner level designation, a candidate needs to have an NQF level 5 qualification with at least three years relevant, post-qualification work experience, and again there's an online 100-question multiple choice exam. Although this exam (TLE002) covers the same topics as the Associate level exam, it explores a greater depth of applied knowledge.

Professional Level
To progress to the Professional level, the candidate first needs to complete the TLE002 Practitioner level exam and then demonstrate their in-depth understanding of three areas of core competence: Management & Health & Safety are compulsory competencies, plus any other from amongst the core subjects assessed. "As individual's progress through their career we're expecting them to demonstrate a growing depth of knowledge on all the core subjects," explains Jones, "but more importantly, we're expecting them to become deep experts in a particular skill or technology. Individual's claiming deep knowledge in audio, video or IT systems are able to write another multiple-choice exam to demonstrate their knowledge, while individuals claiming deep knowledge in any of the other areas need to provide a portfolio of evidence supporting their claim of deep knowledge."

The real value of these designations is that, for the first time ever, individuals working in the live events industry have a formal designation that allows them to demonstrate their competence, as well as their commitment to excellence in all aspects of the live events industry. •

"As individual's progress through their career we're expecting them to demonstrate an expanded understanding of the science and technology used in the theatre and events sector"

Kevan Jones, SACIA

	Requirement	Education	Experience	Examination	Ethics
SACIA CERTIFIED TLE ASSOCIATE	Demonstrate a broad understanding of the technology used in the theatre and live events industry	Relevant NQF level 4 qualification	Min 1 year experience 2 years if qualification assessment on RPL	TLE001 exam 100 question multiple-choice online exam + portfolio of evidence	Sign code of professional conduct + testimonial letters
SACIA CERTIFIED TLE PRACTITIONER	Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the technology used in the theatre and live events industry	Relevant NQF level 5 qualification	Min 3 years post-qualification experience 6 years if qualification assessment on RPL	TLE002 exam 100 question multiple-choice online exam + portfolio of evidence	Sign code of professional conduct + testimonial letters
SACIA CERTIFIED TLE PROFESSIONAL	Demonstrate a deep understanding of at least one core technology used in the theatre and live events industry.	Relevant NQF level 6 qualification	Min 5 year's post-qualification experience 10 years if qualification assessment on RPL	TLE002 exam + TLE003 exam Includes management competence + portfolio of evidence	Sign code of professional conduct + testimonial letters

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

What is RPL? Do you qualify for a professional designation when you've not earned a formal qualification?

SACIA is very aware that many people working in the technical production and live events industry don't have any formal qualifications relating to their workplace activity. Fortunately, we're able to recognise prior learning on our assessment of competence so that competent individuals working in the live events industry can still earn a professional designation, whether they have a formal qualification or not. According to SAQA, the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process through which formal, non-formal and informal learning are measured, mediated for recognition across different contexts and certified against the requirements for credit, access, inclusion or advancement in the formal education and training system or workplace.

Providing to support

The aim is to make it possible to obtain formal recognition for knowledge gained throughout life, such as in workplaces and own reading or experiences. The RPL process also entails providing support to a candidate to ensure that knowledge is discovered and displayed in terms of a relevant qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

What this means from a practical perspective is that individuals without a relevant NQF level 4 qualification (either matric or the National Certificate in Live Event Technical Production offered by both SARA and the Gearhouse Academy) can still earn an Associate level designation, but need to demonstrate at least two year's relevant work experience in the live events industry. •

MULTI-MEDIA COMMIT TO SACIA's
TLE Professional designations

With 27+ years' experience in event technical solutions, Multi-Media have consistently produced high-quality productions that exceed their clients' vision and expectations. Tim Fish, Multi-Media's Managing Director, has always been a strong advocate of skills development, and he explains that by attracting and retaining skilled employees and providing continual learning and development opportunities, the company has positioned itself as "an employer of choice and a partner of choice".

TPSA AV Technician of The Year

Wayne Susman, a project manager with Multi-Media in Johannesburg, is the first industry professional to have been awarded the prestigious Certified TLE Professional designation. He has extensive experience in the technical eventing industry and was awarded the "TPSA AV Technician of The Year" award in 2009.

The Certified TLE Professional designation requires that an individual demonstrate a deep understanding of the core technology used in the theatre and live events industry. "We are exceptionally proud of Wayne and this certification," says Tim. "Our commitment to service excellence extends to all areas and having highly skilled employees enables us to transfer this commitment within the business and offer the best service possible to our clients." •

Wayne Susman, a project manager with Multi-Media in Johannesburg, is the first industry professional to have been awarded the prestigious Certified TLE Professional designation. He has extensive experience in the technical eventing industry and was awarded the "TPSA AV Technician of The Year" award in 2009.

multi-media
your event enthusiasts

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING
Professional Development

According to the SA Qualifications Authority, a professional body recognised by SAQA is expected to "set criteria for, promote and monitor continuing professional development (CPD) for its members to meet the relevant professional designation requirements".

With SACIA's TLE designations for live event professionals, each designee is required to acquire a total of 45 CPD points in the three-year period, starting at the date of award of the professional designation.

CPD points are awarded based on relevant content bearing activity in which the candidate has participated. Usually 1 CPD point is awarded for every hour of activity.

Range of training activities

SACIA recognise a range of training activities, including participation in academic and vocational programmes; professional development courses; coaching and mentorship programmes; learning activity in workshops, conferences and seminars; experiential learning and on-the-job training; and self-study initiatives. We also award CPD points for volunteer activity on a Board, Council or task group.

There are currently several training programmes that provide CPD points, including the SACIA AV Essentials course, the Prolyte rigging course, as well as several other vendor-specific training programmes. SACIA has also been running a

Twenty riggers in South Africa kicked off the year with the intensive 2018 Prolyte Rigging Course in conjunction with DWR Distribution, Prolyte and Rhino Rigs. Rinus Bakker from Rhino Rigs (Netherlands) hosted his course from 29 January to 2 February 2018, and on the sixth day, DWR's Robert Izzett and Keith Pugin presented practical training. The training covered important aspects of safety, maintenance, lifting materials and force calculations.

Train the Trainer programme designed to help recognised industry experts design training initiatives that can be delivered as part of this CPD programme.

Some of the industry experts who've completed the Train the Trainer programme during the last six months include Wikus Visser (rigging), Robbie Blake (event safety), Mike Lord (event safety), Chris Grandin (Audio-Visual) and Mark Hull (Audio-Visual). •

The Four E's of Excellence

In describing the award of professional designations, Joe Samuels, CEO at the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) describes how the four E's become benchmarking tools for professional bodies.

"A key distinction between a qualification awarded by a University, school or college and a Professional Designation awarded by a SAQA-recognised professional body is that the professional body considers the 4 E's – Education, Examination, Experience and Ethics," says Samuels. "A designation goes beyond a qualification in that the awarding body is looking to recognise how an individual's knowledge has been applied in the workplace. Individual's need to demonstrate they're committed to the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their profession, and to maintain a designation, they're required to participate in a programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). They need to ensure that they keep themselves up to date with the trends and technologies shaping their future so that they're able to provide a current service to their customers. •

THE FOUR E'S OF EXCELLENCE

- EDUCATION
- EXAMINATION
- EXPERIENCE
- ETHICS

"A professional designation goes beyond a qualification because individuals need to demonstrate their long-term commitment to excellence in all aspects of their profession."

Joe Samuels, SAQA

DRIVING TRANSFORMATION
in the live events industry

The Technical Production & Services Association (TPSA) was established in Johannesburg in 1998 but it's only in the last few years that the live events industry has made any meaningful effort to embrace transformation and set professional standards for the industry.

"In 2015, with the TPSA merging into the SACIA, we witnessed a fundamental shift in the organization and its willingness to engage with the freelance community active in the live events industry," explains TPSA council member Sharif Baker. "After many years of conflict between employers and the freelance community, SACIA's leadership demonstrated a willingness to address the concerns of the freelance community in an open and transparent fashion. They listened to our grievances and instead of sweeping these under the carpet, they found solutions to the problems we brought to the table."

Sharif Baker was elected to the TPSA Council during July 2017 and asserts that many of the TPSA's current initiatives have the potential to bring about a radical transformation in the live events industry.

Forefront of a Revolution

"With the introduction of the new SACIA TLE Professional designations we at last have an internationally recognized designation that identifies competent individuals working in our market," explains Baker. "In the past the TPSA was an 'old boys club' which protected the interests of employers by diminishing the role of the freelance community," he says, "but those days are long gone. We're now at the forefront of a revolution which will address transformation, not just for the production houses but more so for the individual technician, whether employed full-time or working as a freelancer."

Baker is very aware that many employers see the call for transformation as a threat to their livelihood, and he's quick to explain that the TPSA's objective isn't so much a call for political change as it is about upliftment and recognition. "It's about elevating the status of freelance professionals working in the live events industry by creating formal career paths and articulating a vision for the growth and development of every individual," he explains.

He also points out that, to achieve any transformation, we need to develop a united industry body that can speak with a cohesive voice. "Over the years, I too have been sceptical of the TPSA but it's very clear that, under the leadership of SACIA, they have worked tirelessly to implement standards that work for all, from the grass roots upwards." By way of example, he points to the development of employment guidelines for freelance technicians, and the association's ongoing involvement in the development of the Department of Arts & Culture's Transformation Forum.

"I'm serving on the TPSA Council because I want to make a difference," says Baker. "Transformation is what we (TPSA) desire for our industry. We have already identified the need for change and we'll work with all who are committed. The spirit of Ubuntu is instilled within the Association and with your support, we can achieve a dream that we never thought was possible … AMANDLA!!! •

> **"It's about elevating the status of freelance professionals working in the live events industry by creating formal career paths and articulating a vision for the growth and development of every individual."**
>
> *Sharif Baker, TPSA*

TLE Professionals celebrate in CPT

On 4 May 20 industry professionals active in the theatre and live events industry in the Western Cape met at the Artscape theatre to discuss the implications of the new SACIA TLE professional designations for technical crew working in the Province.

TLE Professional certificates were awarded to Sharif Baker, Grant Faiers and Jean-Paul (JP) Chetty – the first three people to qualify in the province. During the discussion there was widespread support expressed by both employers and freelancers.

Hosted just two days before the opening of the "Sound of Music" in Cape Town, the Artscape theatre complex was a hive of activity. Despite this, director of operations Marius Golding responded positively to the launch of these new designation.

"Most of the technicians employed by Artscape learnt on the job and until now, there's not been an opportunity for this workplace learning to be recognised," says Golding. "The fact that these designations are based on an assessment of knowledge gained through workplace learning is marvellous for them because it provides a structured career path," he says.

During the meeting Kevan Jones, executive director of the Southern African Communications Industries Association (SACIA) described the professional designations as a

Jean-Paul Chetty, Grant Faiers and Sharif Baker have been awarded the SACIA Certified TLE Professional designation in recognition of their deep understanding of the technology used in the theatre and live events industry. Attending a celebration at the Artscape Theatre Complex are (l to r) Jean-Paul Chetty, Mark Malherbe (TPSA Council chair), Kobus Russouw, Grant Faiers, Kevan Jones (SACIA Executive Director), Sharif Baker and Dick Putter.

'three-legged cooking pot'. "Standards, Training and Certification are the three components that link together in our pursuit of excellence within the theatre and live events industry," says Jones. "Without clearly defined standards we have no way to assess performance, reward competence and develop professional development programmes that build a sustainable industry." He described how SACIA was working with third-party training providers to ensure a structured learning programme was available to individuals

working in the sector. "From a technical perspective, the theatre and live events sector is developing at a rapid pace. Anybody that doesn't keep up to date with the trends and technologies shaping the future of this industry will simply get left behind," he says. "By combining a formal certification programme with a commitment to standards and an emphasis on the need for lifelong learning, we're empowering individuals and creating opportunities for long-term career development." •

THE CHALLENGE
of hiring freelance crew

The cyclical nature of the technical production and live events industry means that many professionals work on a freelance basis, earning good money during periods of peak work.

It's a relationship that makes sense for both production companies and technical crew, allowing production companies to scale up and down according to the dictates of the market, and giving freelancers the flexibility to ply their trade as and when they deem fit.

"Although Gearhouse is one of the largest employers in the technical production and live events industry in Southern Africa, we still outsource about 60% of our production work to freelance crew," explains Charl Smit, Branch Manager of the Johannesburg and Cape Town operations, "Using freelancers gives us the ability to hire in as required rather than carry a large contingent of full time staff during the downtimes we experience on and off during the year."

"Over time we've formed relationships with many of the most experienced freelancers and we certainly prefer working with people who have demonstrated their competence in the past, and who understand our quality standards and best practice" says Charl, "but the reality is that our preferred freelancers are

not always available and then we must ask how best we can identify technical and operational talent. While we know that our own Gearhouse Kentse Mpahlwa Academy graduates have the competencies we require, there is still a big gap when it comes to assessing the skills levels of freelancers who have been in the business for years. Many years' experience tells us that you cannot rely only on their claimed competence and there are very few qualifications out there that denote the range of knowledge we require." SACIA's new TLE designations aim to address just this. In collaboration with industry specialists across the spectrum, TPSA/SACIA has developed a set of 'exams' which assess the competencies of candidates and through which they can earn themselves a professional designation – a means of gaining recognition for prior and experiential learning. For an individual to earn a designation they need to demonstrate their knowledge in a written test, they need to have an underlying qualification relating to their field of expertise, they need to have relevant work experience, and they need to have proven themselves competent by providing testimonials and reference letters from past employers or work colleagues.

If a freelance crew member can tick all those boxes it is obviously much easier for companies

to verify their competency from the outset, but it also goes further. Every individual who holds a professional designation has also signed a code of professional conduct in which they specifically undertake not to misrepresent their skillset, and they're required to participate in a programme of continuing professional development (CPD) that keeps them up to date with recent trends and technologies. Anybody who claims a competence they don't have can be held accountable against SACIA's disciplinary code.

The SACIA professional designation gives companies the ability to employ freelancers they've not worked with before, confident that they're up to date with recent developments in the marketplace and have the ability to deliver the service they need.

Chris Grandin, Gearhouse Group Technical Advisor was involved in the project pretty much since inception. "We kicked off by defining the competencies we were looking for in our freelance contractors at Gearhouse, and then worked to develop and test questions that allow us to better understand both the breadth and depth of an individual's knowledge" says Grandin. "These exams are tough and certainly identifies the serious players quite quickly. For many years, freelance professionals working in the live events industry have been looking for a tool that allows them to prove their competence… and now they can."

All someone has to do is write the exam and provide the supporting documents required to back-up their claim. It seems to be a process that will deliver real value to both freelancers and employers, and once there is wide spread participation, will uplift the industry as a whole. •

> *"Although Gearhouse is one of the largest employers in the technical production and live events industry in Southern Africa, we still outsource about 60% of our production work to freelance crew."*
>
> *Charl Smit, Gearhouse*

What does it mean to be a professional body?

The policy and criteria for the recognition of Professional Bodies and the registration of Professional Designations has been developed by SAQA as part of its mandate to further develop and implement Section 13 (1)(i) of the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008. This section is designed to encourage the development and implementation of continuing professional development programmes.

SAQA

A Professional Body is established to:

i. Advance the objectives of the National Qualifications Framework

ii. Promote public understanding of, and trust in, professions through the establishment of a nationally regulated system for the recognition of professional bodies and for the registration of professional designations

iii. Encourage social responsibility and accountability within the professions relating to professional

services, communities and individuals

iv. Promote pride in association for all professions, including traditional trades and occupations

v. Promote the protection of the public by professional bodies from malpractice related to the fulfilment of the professional duties and responsibilities of professionals registered with them

vi. Encourage international leading practice and the raising of esteem for all professions in South Africa

vii. Facilitate access to, and analysis of, data related to professions, including traditional trades and occupations, for the purposes and use as prescribed by the NQF Act

viii. Support the development of a national career advice system.

ix. Encourage the development and implementation of continuing professional development.

WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?

One of SACIA's core responsibilities is to promote ethical business practices in the communications industry throughout Southern Africa.

All our corporate members are required to sign and abide by the SACIA Business Code that holds them to a higher standard of ethics and business practice. In addition, individual members are required to sign a Code of Professional Conduct.

SACIA identifies that a practitioner interacts with various stakeholders when delivering their services. To this end, it is important that professional conduct be upheld when engaging with colleagues, peers, employers as well as industry role-players. To this end, a practitioner needs to uphold certain principles when practicing in this industry.

Disciplinary process

To ensure that members are held to their promise, SACIA has a strict disciplinary process. In instances where a member is accused of unethical behaviour we first attempt to bring parties together in a mediation process. In instances where this process is unable to facilitate a solution, we are also able to convene a disciplinary council that will hold members accountable.

If you believe that any member has behaved in a manner inconsistent with the SACIA Business Code or the Code of Professional Conduct you should address your concern in writing to the Association's Executive Director. You can also download a copy of the SACIA Disciplinary process from the SACIA website at www.sacia.org.za. •

Five values that underpin the Professional Code of Conduct

Honour:
Showing respect for myself, my organisation, my industry and the community of clients that I serve by behaving in a manner that reflects favourably on my profession. Acting above reproach. Avoiding compromise of professional judgement by conflicts of interest.

Integrity:
Acting with honesty and openness. Displaying trustworthiness. Showing consistent good behaviour over time. Ensuring that my words and actions correspond.

Reliability:
Undertaking what I am competent to do and fulfilling commitments that I have made to my organisation, my industry and the community of clients that I serve.

Honesty:
Being truthful and accurate when executing my job even when it sometimes might be difficult. Not misrepresenting my own or my associate's academic or professional qualifications. Only undertaking assignments that I am competent to perform by way of my education, training and experience.

Accuracy:
Ensuring that what I say, do and write are correct and reflect the information that is required to complete the job. Where this is not possible, ensuring that my organisation or my client understand the factors that could influence the accuracy of the information I have provided.

Principles to be upheld

Avoiding conflict of interest:
This means understanding when a conflict of interest arises and speaking up to the parties present about the possible conflict to ensure that my integrity and honesty are not brought into question. This includes opportunities when I might be given information that I could use to my own advantage, but that could undermine my integrity and honesty.

Building and enhancing relationships:
When acting in the best interest of my client, my focus is on building and enhancing long term relationships that are built on trustworthiness and reliability.

Upholding safety, health and welfare of the public:
As a competent practitioner who is proficient in what I do, I have the required insight and understanding into the laws, codes and principles governing safety, health and welfare of the public within my area of responsibility. I therefore ensure that the work I complete is compliant with these laws, codes and principles to ensure the well-being of my client, as well as the public that I affect.

Remaining in good standing:
As a practitioner in this industry, I need to remain in good standing in terms of the laws governing South Africa. I also need to ensure that I abide by the codes set out by international counterparts within this industry.

"In instances where a member is accused of unethical or improper behaviour we first attempt to resolve the issue through a mediation process."

Adv. Louis Nel, SACIA Disciplinary Council Chair

Setting the standard

The process of developing SACIA's online testing protocol started more than a year ago in a casual conversation between current TPSA Council chair Mark Malherbe, SACIA executive director Kevan Jones and Wild & Marr's Geoff Isaacs. Over lunch, the trio started making some notes on the back of a paper serviette and soon identified a list of core competencies required by industry professionals working in the live events sector.

From that initial discussion, the process of developing an online test accelerated and at one stage there were almost 60 industry experts contributing to the process of designing and testing questions. "For each area of competence, we identified a group of subject matter experts who set standards and then developed multiple choice questions that were tested and re-tested for accuracy and relevance," explains Jones. "In addition to local practitioners we spread the net wide and engaged with international bodies to ensure that our designations were aligned with international standards.

We also reviewed SABS national standards and collaborated with governmental bodies to ensure that, for example, our health and safety test was aligned with the SANS10366 national standard for safety at live events, and our pyrotechnics questions were aligned with the standards set by the SAPS Chief Inspector of Explosives."

Assessment criteria

After months of work, the Council ended up with almost a thousand multiple choice questions across 20 different areas of competence. "For each exam we define the assessment criteria and competencies being assessed, and questions are then selected in random order from amongst the questions in our question bank," explains Jones. "Even when two people are writing the same exam side by side, they'll be served up different questions."

The questions are delivered using the Classmarker online testing system so they can be accessed from any computer or tablet by candidates writing from anywhere in the world.

SACIA's tests are delivered using the online Classmarker system that allows individual's to participate from any computer or tablet.

"We're very aware that we're a regional body and have designed our assessments so that industry professionals across the SADC region can participate on an equal footing," explains Jones. "Candidates are allocated two hours to complete the test, and the results are provided as soon as the test has been done." •

Standing in THE SPOTLIGHT

In late 2014 the TPSA Board voted unanimously to de-register the Association and reconstitute as a special interest group within the Southern African Communications Industries Association (SACIA). It was a brave move for a 17-year old organisation that, at its height, claimed almost 400 corporate members. The negotiations leading up to this integration lasted more than 12 months.

"Although the decision to merge into SACIA was unanimous it was one made with a heavy heart," recalls Barry Snow, TPSA chair at the time of the vote. "We'd achieved a lot of success in previous years but the pressure of running an Association that was fully reliant on volunteer members for all of our activities was simply overwhelming. We knew we needed to up our game to remain relevant to the technical production and live events industry but the cost of doing so was simply too high. We had several meetings with the SACIA Board and it became increasingly clear that there was a clear alignment between SACIA's long-term vision and the needs of our members."

This view is supported by Robert Blake, TPSA Board chair between 2008 and 2013. "I was very sad to see the TPSA lose its independence," says Blake, "but three years down the road and it's clearly been the right decision. Our TPSA community continues to have a dedicated Council elected from amongst our membership so we're well represented within SACIA, and the value proposition now available to members makes the organisation more relevant than it has ever been."

Blake points to three immediate benefits that have revolutionised the Association since the merger. "The development of formal, SAQA-recognised professional designations for the audio-visual and live events industry is something we could never have achieved without SACIA," he says. "For many years there's been a clamouring, particularly from the freelance community, for a formal programme that recognises their competence and experience. The new SACIA Certified TLE designations do exactly this, allowing people with many year's work experience to earn a professional designation based on a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). He also points to the rollout of a structured programme of continuing professional development (CPD) as a key component of SACIA's relevance. "In May 2017 I attended SACIA's 3-day 'Train the trainer' course and have now launched a dedicated Event Safety training programme for our industry," he explains. "With SACIA support there

are many industry-specific training programmes under development. These will empower industry professionals and create opportunities for personal growth and development." Finally, he points to SACIA's code of professional conduct as a critical component of their value offering. "All members of SACIA are bound to a higher standard of business and ethics," he says "and SACIA's disciplinary processes are designed to ensure that members honour their commitment to these standards. It's not about becoming an 'industry policeman' who sticks his nose into the commercial activities of others, but rather about holding people to account and supporting those organisations already mandated to fill the 'policeman' role."

In the three years since the TPSA was merged into SACIA and while membership is well short of previous highs, there's a spring in the step of the TPSA Council members, and a realisation that many more people are supportive of the Association's activities. "It's important to realise that the TPSA does not exist independently from SACIA," concludes Mark Malherbe, current chair of the TPSA Council. "We're fully integrated into SACIA and are leading the way in the rollout of services that add real value to members." •

> **"The development of formal, SAQA-recognised professional designations for the audio-visual and live events industry is something we could never have achieved without SACIA"**
>
> *Robbie Blake, TPSA*

SACIA launch Crew Cover
Public Liability insurance for freelance crew working in the live events industry.

During Mediatech 2017 SACIA launched a new Crew Cover insurance programme specifically for freelance crew working in the theatre and live events industry.

Build around an insurance programme created by Precision Insurance in the UK for members of the Production Services Association, the package is only available to SACIA members.

"Crew Cover insures crew exposure to claims whether this is for equipment you are working on, kit in your custody and control or while you are operating forklifts or telehandlers, anywhere in the World and at whatever height you might be working," explains Murray Torrible from Precision Insurance. "Crew Cover liability also covers defence costs for Local Authority

prosecutions." Torrible describes how the equipment freelancers use day in day out is worth thousands of Rands. "If equipment is damaged while it's under your control you could be liable for the repair costs," he says. "Our policy covers you where most others exclude it." For more information check out www.crewcover.co.za •