



Online Field Guide NQF4 Course



+27 (0) 13 752 2532



enquiries@ecotraining.co.za



www.ecotraining.co.za

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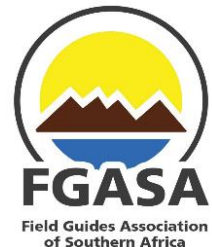
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ABOUT THIS COURSE

Are you passionate about furthering your qualifications and need the help of experts in the field, yet finding it challenging to allocate time for conventional courses? Look no further! Introducing the EcoTraining Online NQF4 Field Guide Course - a tailor-made solution for individuals with busy schedules who yearn to deepen their knowledge and develop their career as a field guide. This course is the next step to becoming a fully qualified Nature Site Guide, building on the foundational skills from your NQF2 certification.

A comprehensive online course with live lectures

This 10-week online course covers all 18 FGASA NQF4 Field Guide modules, and includes all required learning materials, theory reviews, workbook support, an EcoTraining theory assessment, as well as the FGASA written theory exam. EcoTraining's experienced instructors deliver the programme through live, interactive lectures. Participants will also be required to complete two compulsory elective modules, and one chosen elective module.



Designed for ambitious, working guides, this course allows students to deepen their knowledge, meet advanced industry standards, and work toward their full NQF4 Nature Site Guide certification, all while maintaining flexibility in their schedule. With EcoTraining's expert-led live online lectures, comprehensive learning materials, and full FGASA endorsement, this programme will be the next step toward becoming a leading field guide in South Africa.

PROCEDURE OVERVIEW

- EcoTraining will enrol the student for the Nature Site Guide NQF4 Qualification with FGASA and pay the relevant fee.
- The student must choose their third elective and inform EcoTraining.
- Enrolment fee includes: an EcoTraining online theory assessment, the FGASA written theory exam, and the two-day practical (within 150km radius of Hoedspruit, excludes distance extending from 150km and or any gate or conservancy levies).
- The student must complete their online Nature Site Guide NQF4 Workbooks 1 & 2 before they are allowed to book their written theory exam. This will be marked by EcoTraining in order have the information before the exam.
- The student must complete the two compulsory elective modules and one other chosen elective module.
- The student must pass the written theory exam with a minimum of 75% and be declared theoretically competent.
- The student is required to book and complete their practical assessment with EcoTraining within 18 months of enrolment. Failure to do so may result in additional assessor fees.
- All students must complete the practical assessment within three years of writing the FGASA theory exam. If this timeframe is exceeded, the theory exam must be retaken before proceeding with the practical assessment.
- For the practical assessment, the student is responsible for providing a suitable venue and all necessary equipment to support the assessor. This includes meals and

accommodation for the assessor. Additionally, the student must arrange for guests to participate in four consecutive guided game drives as part of the assessment.

- Once the student has passed the practical assessment, they will be awarded with the Nature Site Guide NQF4 qualification.

Additional steps required:

- Before students can take the two-day practical assessment, they must submit their Green FGASA Field Guide Logbook to the FGASA Head Office for verification and sign-off. The logbook must show a **minimum of 260 days** of recorded and approved guiding experience.
- EcoTraining and FGASA will update CATHSSETA with the student's new qualification (additional documentation will be required).
- The student must provide EcoTraining with their valid first aid certificate recognised by the Department of Labour South Africa.
- The student must register at NDT's Registrar for their province.

ONLINE COURSE DURATION

This online course runs on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 12:00 (GMT+2) (South African time). This is to accommodate working guides who conduct morning and afternoon game drives. Live lectures range between an hour and two hours, and include a dedicated 15-minute Q&A segment at the end.

Across these sessions, expert instructors guide you through all 18 modules of the Field Guide (NQF4) syllabus – from astronomy and geology to animal behaviour and ecology.

A detailed course schedule with all lesson dates and topics will be sent to participants upon registration.

PREREQUISITES

- Full FGASA Nature Site Guide (NQF2) qualification,
- Must be an active FGASA member with no outstanding fees,
- Valid first aid certificate,
- Access to a stable connection to the internet or WiFi,
- Basic understanding of English (speak, read, and write).

***Please note that all prerequisites for this course are strictly mandatory.**

NO exceptions can be made.

CERTIFICATION AND ACCREDITATION

Upon registration, EcoTraining will enrol the student for the **Nature Site Guide NQF4 Qualification** with FGASA and pay the relevant fee. This programme covers all the theoretical components required to certify as a FGASA-endorsed NQF4 field guide.

Participants will graduate with:

1. EcoTraining certificate of participation in the Online Field Guide (NQF4) Course
2. Recognition of completed FGASA Nature Site Guide (NQF4) Theory Component

EcoTraining is a *FGASA-endorsed*, and *CATHSSETA-accredited* training provider (Sector Education Training Authority).

FGASA (Field Guides Association of Southern Africa) represents individual tourist guides; nature, culture and adventure guides; trackers; and organizations involved in offering professional guiding services to members of the public.

CATHSSETA is the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality, and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority in South Africa.

MODULES & OUTCOMES

The FGASA Field Guide (NQF4) course consists of the following learning modules and outcomes:

MODULE NAME		
Module 1: Introduction	Module 7: Plants	Module 13: Fish
Module 2: Astronomy	Module 8: Fungi	Module 14: Amphibians
Module 3: Geology	Module 9: Bacteria, viruses, and animal diseases	Module 15: Reptiles
Module 4: Climate and Weather	Module 10: Arthropods	Module 16: Birds
Module 5: Ecology	Module 11: Segmented worms	Module 17: Mammals
Module 6: Classification	Module 12: Molluscs	Module 18: Animal behaviour

Module 1: Introduction

In this first module you will develop an understanding of what is expected of someone at your level of experience while conducting guided experiences in nature. At this point in your career, you will have developed many skills and techniques related to your field and this module will outline the expectations of a FGASA field guide.

Module 2: Astronomy

In this module you will build upon your current knowledge of the universe and our solar system. You will be able to discuss different planets and their compositions, explain different space rocks and how they are formed. You will be able to talk about solar winds and explain what these are, further your understanding and identification of yet more constellations in the Southern Hemisphere as well as point out made-made satellites and the International Space Station (ISS).

Module 3: Geology

Continuing from the knowledge you developed during your Nature Site Guide NQF2 skills programme this module will give you an understanding of the rock cycle, more in-depth knowledge on soil formation, a deeper understanding of weathering and erosion as well as being able to discuss the properties and ecology of soils.

Module 4: Climate and Weather

In this module you will develop a greater understanding of Earth's atmosphere with particular focus on the troposphere and stratosphere, develop knowledge on the ozone layer, be able to discuss and explain Earth's complex wind systems and how they regulate global climate as well as develop a greater understanding of global seasonal changes.

Module 5: Ecology

By the end of this module, you will be able to explain with understanding the interactions of Earth's ecological spheres. You will be able to talk about the hydrological, oxygen, carbon and nitrogen cycles within the natural environment. You will gain a deeper understanding of various ecological niches and be able to identify and talk about limiting factors in ecosystems.

Module 6: Classification

In this module you will learn about the major goals of systemic classification of living organisms and what criteria determine these. You will be able to name, discuss and give examples of the domains and kingdoms living organisms are classified into and you will learn the differences between eukaryotes and prokaryotes.

Module 7: Plants

This module will build upon your established foundation of botanical knowledge. By the end of this module, you will have a deeper understanding of plant classification, flower anatomy, pollination, and plant life cycles. You will also develop an understanding of plant succession and retrogression. Finally, you will be able to discuss and explain photosynthetic pathways in plants and how these enable plants to produce their own energy.

Module 8: Fungi

By the end of this module, you will understand the kingdom fungi and how to classify them. You will understand the differences between fungi, plants, and animals and develop knowledge on diverse types of fungi and their roles in the ecosystem.

Module 9: Bacteria, viruses, and animal diseases

This module will give you the ability to understand and talk about various bacteria, viruses, and diseases encountered in the animal kingdom. You will be able to discuss how bacteria and viruses are classified, the important roles bacteria play in ecosystems, how bacteria and viruses can cause disease and understand animal diseases and how to identify their symptoms.

Module 10: Arthropods

Building upon your arthropod knowledge from your Nature Site Guide NQF2 skills programme this module will give you a deeper understanding of invertebrate phyla and arthropod classification. You will gain knowledge on arthropod sensory organs and how they work and develop increased knowledge on arachnid classification and identification.

Module 11: Segmented worms

This module will give you a good understanding of how to classify segmented worms, explain the basic anatomy of earth worms, and discuss the feeding and reproductive behaviours as well as the role of earth worms in the ecosystem.

Module 12: Molluscs

By the end of this module, you will be able to classify molluscs and explain the basic anatomy of land snails. You will also be able to discuss snail morphology, feeding behaviours, preferred food sources and locomotion. You will also develop and understanding of the basic anatomy, reproduction, and locomotion of bivalves.

Module 13: Fish

This module will continue to develop your knowledge on fish species. By the end of this module, you will be able to talk about freshwater habitats, explain buoyancy, swim bladders and fish reproduction. You will also be able to explain and discuss osmotic regulation in saltwater fish.

Module 14: Amphibians

In this module you will continue to grow your knowledge on amphibians and be able to understand how frogs are grouped, the processes employed in sound production and the various vocal sacks in frogs. You will also be able to discuss different environmental and defensive adaptations as well as the importance of frogs as bioindicator species.

Module 15: Reptiles

By completing this module, you will increase your knowledge and ability to talk about various reptile species. You will be able to understand and discuss the differences between chelonian species in Southern Africa. You will develop a good understanding of reptile senses. You will be able to talk about reptile reproduction, parental care and offspring development. Finally, you will be able to understand and explain different reptile venoms, symptoms, and their effects.

Module 16: Birds

At the end of this module your knowledge and understanding of birds will be increased to include the basic mechanics of flight. Bird reproduction including egg development, incubation, and brooding. You'll learn to identify bird songs and calls, and you'll also gain a better understanding of how and why birds migrate.

Module 17: Mammals

This module will continue to develop your knowledge and understanding of mammals starting with herbivore classification, their digestive systems, the relationships between food consumption, body size and homeostatic regulation. You will also develop a good understanding of the key differences between horns and antlers.

Module 18: Animal behaviour

In this module you will further your knowledge and understanding of animal behaviour including protective behaviours and their reasons. You will also be able to talk about animal communication, courtship displays and mating behaviours in more detail. You will be able to discuss animal agonistic behaviours and gain an understanding of animal reactive zones.

ELECTIVES

Two additional **compulsory** elective workbooks:

- Minimise and Manage Safety in Emergency Incidents,
- South African General Knowledge.

Third additional **custom** elective workbook: (Student to choose ONE)

- Research and design a Guided Experience at a prominent tourist destination,
- Conduct a Guided Birding Experience (This will be at an additional cost, we will set an exam date for the slide and sound, the workbook must be completed and then an additional day birding practical assessment, the student will need to conduct a full day Birding activity, locate and find a minimum of 100 birds and supply relevant information on the guided activity),
- Conduct a Guided Biome Experience.

ONLINE COURSE RATES

2026 rate per person : R 18, 000.00* (online only)

2027 rate per person : TBC

**The fee for the online course is not refundable.*

RATES INCLUDE:

- Live online lectures,
- Theory reviews,
- Live Q&A sessions,
- Workbook support,
- Digital workbooks and learner manual (on *FGASA Campus* platform)
 - The Nature Site Guide NQF4 Learner Manual,
 - Nature Site Guide NQF4 Learner Workbooks 1 & 2,
 - Elective workbooks (excluding practical assessment on birding, and slides and sounds assessment),
- Access to EcoTraining eLearning platform,
- Access to FGASA eLearning platform (*FGASA Campus*),
- Access to a WhatsApp group for additional assistance,
- FGASA registration for the NQF4 course,
- EcoTraining online theory assessment,
- One attempt at the written FGASA NQF4 theory exam (thereafter, at additional cost),
- Two-day practical assessment (within 150km radius of Hoedspruit),
- Pre-assessment briefing, as well online pre-practical preparation,
- Reserve/gate fees/conservancy fees.

RATES EXCLUDE:

- NDT (formerly known as DEAT) registration,
- Additional on-site training before practical assessment,
- Distance extending 150km radius of Hoedspruit for the practical assessment.

ONLINE COURSE DATE

2026 DATE

Monday, 19 January 2026 - Monday, 02 March 2026

2027 DATE

TBC

Please note: Registration for this course closes strictly on Monday, 12 January 2026.

No bookings can be accepted after this date, as EcoTraining must ensure that students are granted access to both the EcoTraining and FGASA eLearning platforms and that all prerequisites are fully met. These include holding a complete NQF2 qualification, having an active FGASA membership, holding a valid First Aid Certificate, and selecting a third elective.

BOOKING PROCESS

- Book directly online at www.ecotrainingonline.co.za
 - Click **Register** to create a unique profile,
 - Once logged in, add the course to your cart,
 - Continue to **Checkout**, complete payment via **PayGate**, and then fill in the **Enrolment form** in full.
- **Full payment** is required to confirm your place on the online course.
- All online course purchases are **non-refundable**.
- Invoices will be issued on request **only**.
- Further information will follow from our eLearning department once payment has been confirmed.
- If you encounter any issues during the registration process, have questions, or require assistance with course access, please don't hesitate to contact us at elearning@ecotraining.co.za.
- For all other online course dates, click [here](#) to view our course calendar.

