



DEVELOPING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF)



TRAINING MODULE TEN

10

QUALIFICATIONS AND NQFS (OR NQSS): A SYSTEMIC VIEW



THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE



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Acronyms

ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
ASG-QA	African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance for vocational education and training
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NZQF	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
QA	Quality Assurance
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
TVET	Technical vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VET	Vocational Education and Training
ZAQA	Zambia Qualifications Authority

1 General information on the Training Module

The African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) is a policy initiative of the African Union, underpinned by continental cooperation and integration policies ranging from education to free movement of persons and free trade. Development of the ACQF is underway (2019-2022), and includes analysis and research, elaboration of the ACQF policy and Guidelines, networking and stakeholders' outreach and the capacity development programme. The [ACQF website](#) contains information on all components, activities and outputs of the ACQF development project.

1.1 Overview

1. Objective and scope

The package of ten ACQF Training Modules supports the dissemination and application of the ten ACQF Guidelines, and address the same themes relevant in the domain of qualifications and qualifications frameworks. The list of training modules is as follows:

- Training Module 1: Learning Outcomes
- Training Module 2: Level descriptors
- Training Module 3: Referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to ACQF
- Training Module 4: Validation of learning
- Training Module 5: Quality assurance in the context of ACQF
- Training Module 6: Registers / databases of qualifications
- Training Module 7: Monitoring and evaluation in the context of qualifications frameworks or systems
- Training Module 8: Communication and outreach
- Training Module 9: Innovation and Technology in the context of qualifications frameworks or systems
- Training Module 10: Qualification and qualifications frameworks – the systemic view

This Training Module expands on the content of the ACQF Guideline 10 on “Qualifications and NQFs (or NQSS): A systemic view”.

2. Utilisation of the Training Module

The Training Modules are designed for:

- Self-paced learning (individual)
- Teacher / trainer / facilitator directed learning – which may include group learning
- A combination of the above.

The Training Modules are freely accessible in several formats for flexible adaptation to different contexts and to learners' needs and possibilities: as PDF files to download from ACQF Website and disseminate; as digital content accessible via ACQF digital Learning Management System, accessible online or offline, including via an App for Mobile phones.

Interested users (learners, teachers / trainers and organisations) may use the full set of Modules, or focus on just a few.

ACQF Training Modules can be used in a variety of situations, e.g.:

- Ministries and departments dealing with qualifications frameworks development and coordination, especially in early stages of the development process, or when operationalisation starts and more staff, stakeholders and technical resource persons are involved
- Quality councils, quality assurance agencies - for their staff, members and technical resource persons
- Technical projects designing or reviewing national qualifications frameworks with national taskforces and working groups
- Education and training providers, e.g., as optional or regular training modules on the themes and issues related with qualifications frameworks and systems: teacher training institutes, higher education institutions (departments of education), training centres for staff of public sector institutions, training centres of employers' associations and professional bodies, sector skills councils involved in development of qualifications.
- International organisations' training centres and capacity development activities.

3. Concept and structure

The Training Modules

- Are based on the content elaborated in the Technical Guideline, and expand it, exploring the literature, recent research, and experiences.
- Raise questions and issues in debate that could not be expressed in the Technical Guideline
- Provide examples and cases illustrating the main concepts, issues and application of the approaches and methods
- Examples and cases are taken from relevant practices and developments worldwide, with a focus on frameworks and systems with substantial and relevant experience for the different themes.

The Training Modules include

- Reflective questions that could be addressed as an individual or as a group (e.g. workshop group, work group)
- Learning activities that could be addressed as an individual or as a group (e.g. class/lecture group, work group)
- Access to case studies or examples, readings, disparate views (if relevant)
- Assessment tasks

2 Overview of Training Module 10

2.1 Abstract

Training Module 10 addresses in detail how an NQF is part of an ecosystem, a qualifications system, and is integrally linked to its quality assurance arrangements. The Training Module focusses on the design, implementation and review of an NQF; governance arrangements; key structures of an NQF; how to analyse the NQF for logic and coherence; identifying the linkages to quality assurance; and implementation of associated strategies such as the recognition of prior learning.

2.2 Expected learning outcomes

At the end of this Training Module the learner will be able to:

1. Describe the three key phases of an NQF
2. Compare different governance arrangements of an NQF
3. Identify how an NQF and its quality assurance are linked within a qualifications system
4. Identify and understand the key structures of an NQF
5. Analyse an NQF for its logic and coherence
6. Identify key quality assurance approaches to the formulation and approval of qualifications, and the provision of qualifications through education and training providers
7. Identify implementation strategies to reduce the barriers to recognition of prior learning.

2.3 Key definitions

The following key definitions have been used within Guideline 10 and are included here as a key focus for Training Module 10.

Credit means confirmation that a part of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of learning outcomes has been assessed and validated by a competent authority, according to an agreed standard; credit is awarded by competent authorities when the individual has achieved the defined learning outcomes, evidenced by appropriate assessments and can be expressed in a quantitative value (e.g. credits or credit points) demonstrating the estimated workload an individual typically needs for achieving related learning outcomes.

Source: Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on European Qualifications Framework. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN)

Level descriptor: A statement describing learning achievement at a particular level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that provides a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.

Source: Adjusted from SAQA NQFPedia 2017

National Qualifications System: This includes all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and operationalising national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, QA processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems may be more or less integrated and coherent. One feature of a qualifications system may be an explicit framework of qualifications.

Source: OECD 2006

Qualification: Means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

Source: Council of the European Union (2017)

Means a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose or purposes, intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning and which has been assessed in terms of exit level outcomes, registered on the NQF and certified and awarded by a recognised body.

Source: SAQA NQFPedia 2017

Quality assurance: Processes and procedures for ensuring that qualifications, assessment and programme delivery meet certain standards.

Source: Tuck 2007

Validation of non-formal and informal learning: means the process of confirmation by a competent authority that an individual has acquired learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings measured against a relevant standard and consists of the following four distinct phases:

- identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual,
- documentation to make visible the individual's experiences,
- a formal assessment of those experiences, and

- certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification. Also known as recognition of prior learning (RPL), is the confirmation by a competent authority that the learning outcomes, that an individual has acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings, has been measured against a relevant standard.

Source: AQCF Thematic Brief 1 2021a, adapted from EQF Recommendation 2017

3 NQFs as part of a qualifications system

Guideline 10 explains that a qualifications system includes quality assurance arrangements (especially in relation to qualifications, provider arrangements, assessment and awarding processes) and an implicit or explicit qualifications framework. Figure XX below summarises the linkages within the qualifications system.



Figure 1: NQF as system (in the national qualifications system)

Source: Adapted from ACQF Thematic Brief 1.1 on NQFs. 2022. Author: Castel-Branco E. (forthcoming)

Viewing the national qualifications framework as a classification device and independent of the quality assurance arrangements and the governance of these arrangements, means that the NQF can support the quality assurance arrangements but is not necessarily central to it.

Such an approach to the NQF and the quality assurance arrangements allows for flexibility in the qualifications system as to how the quality assurance arrangements are applied in different sectors. For example, there may be one NQF (that scopes all sectors) but there may be different responsible bodies providing oversight of the quality assurance arrangements in the different sectors.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

1. Within your country's qualifications system, is there one or multiple NQFs (sectorally based, e.g. higher education) or is there one comprehensive NQF?



Reflective questions

2. Are there multiple responsible bodies providing oversight of the multiple sectors or is there only one?

4 Phases of an NQF

Guideline 10 notes that the 'life' of an NQF can be categorised into three distinct phases:

1. Design and development phase
2. Implementation phase
3. Review phase.

These three phases are explained below with examples.

4.1 Designing and developing an NQF

For the NQF design and development stage, Guideline 10 proposes 14 key steps in the process, which are outlined below:

1. Define the rationale for the NQF: which issues, problems and objectives and links to relevant national / regional strategies and policies
2. Define the panorama of stakeholders and interested institutions
3. Form a representative working group of relevant stakeholders and lead institutions, with defined tasks and roles related with the process of NQF development
4. Outline a roadmap / plan of action supporting a coordinated approach to develop or consolidate the NQF
5. Ensure expert and technical support for the process, and other resources
6. Define the scope of the NQF and the main components of the policy and technical documents to be elaborated.
7. Analyse the baseline situation, elaborate a baseline inventory of qualifications in all sub-sectors / levels of the existing system, identify important issues and information gaps
8. Learn from similar processes and on NQFs in countries of the region / beyond
9. Inform and communicate with institutions and wider stakeholders groups about the NQF process, share main concepts and objectives
10. Conduct the technical activities, collect feedback and comments, monitor the process
11. Conduct public consultation on the drafts of NQF policy and technical documents
12. Plan the steps related with consultation and approval of the proposals within the government channels / legislative process
13. Conduct capacity development activities for stakeholders and the representatives of the institutions to be involved in NQF governance.
14. Ensure public resources for the starting governance set-up supporting NQF implementation.

Correia (2021) proposes a schematic view of the dynamics, steps and participation to be considered when a country decides to plan and engage with development of an NQF.

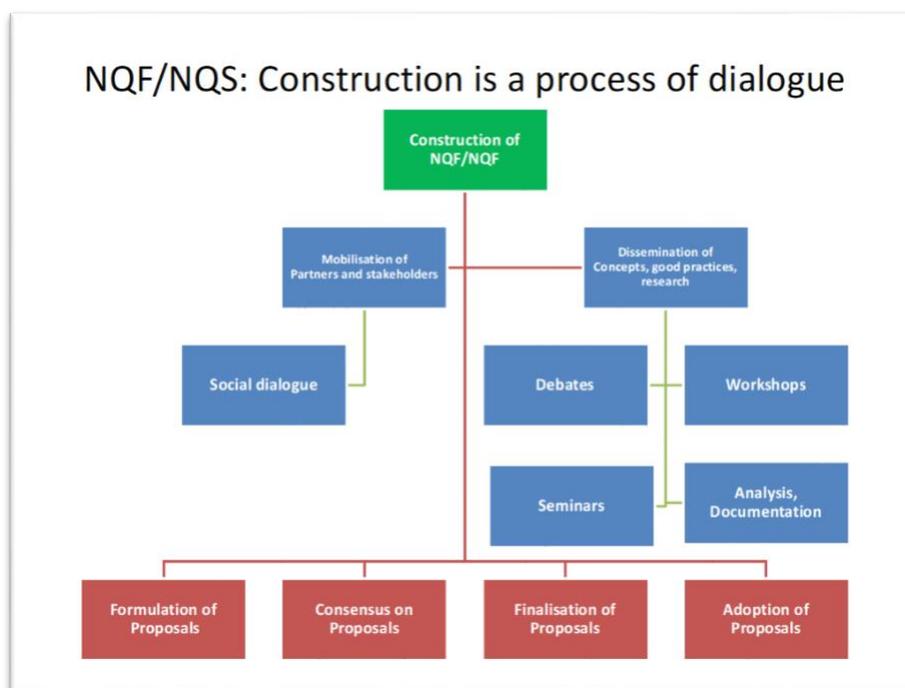


Figure 2: NQF/NQS development is a process of dialogue

Source: Correia O. 2021. Presentation at 10th ACQF Peer Learning Webinar, 22 July 2021.

https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/webinars/acqf-10th-peer-learning-webinar/session-2_en_acqf_plw-10_22jul2021_olavo-correia.pdf/@@display-file/file/session-2_en_acqf_plw-10_22jul2021_olavo-correia.pdf.pdf

This phase includes:

1. The conceptualisation and design of the NQF during which countries analyse and define the rationale and main objectives of the future NQF. This will often result in an outline of the NQF providing the basis for wider dissemination and discussion within a smaller group of key stakeholders. Key architectural features, such as purpose, scope and structures, are drafted.
2. Consultation and testing stage, during which the future NQF proposal is presented to and discussed within a broader group of stakeholders, normally as part of a public consultation process. Countries may choose to test the proposed NQF levels and qualification types through projects or targeted consultations.
3. Official establishment/adoption stage whereby the NQF is formally documented and agreed to through a decree/law or a formal agreement between stakeholders.

Within this stage there are some critical questions to be posed in regards to documenting the NQF, the linkages with other strategies, the potential linkages with quality assurance, and the adoption of a legal framework and governance arrangements. In doing so, the process for development needs to be planned and negotiated and involve a range of stakeholders. The table below outlines some critical areas and questions to be posed in the design phase.

Table 1: Critical questions in the design phase

Focus	Questions
Plan for development	<p>What overall approach should be taken to the development of the NQF? Who will be the overarching body (or group) to manage the development of the NQF?</p> <p>What stakeholders needs to be involved in the consultations of the NQF?</p>

Focus	Questions
	<p>How will these stakeholders be informed and consulted?</p> <p>How will the design of the NQF be negotiated?</p> <p>How will the NQF be tested or trialled?</p>
NQF design: Purpose and scope	<p>What are the goals to be achieved?</p> <p>What will be the scope of the QF? How will it link to other QFs within the country (if applicable)?</p>
NQF design: Structures	<p>Levels and level descriptors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the number of levels and the domains be determined? What are the key factors that need to be considered? <p>Volume of learning measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will be the volume of learning measure? <p>Qualification type descriptors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will qualification descriptors be documented? <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the design of the NQF promote the use of learning outcomes? • Does the structural design reflect 'common sense' in respect to key qualification types? Does it reflect future needs, labour market needs and international benchmarks? • Does the design of the NQF promote lifelong learning and learning pathways? • Does the design of the NQF promote access and equity principles for all citizens?
Legal basis	How will the NQF be formalised, e.g. decree, regulations, agreed in policy?
Governance and funding	How will the NQF be managed and governed? How will the NQF be 'owned' by stakeholders? How will it be funded? How will it be staffed?
Links: RPL	<p>How will the NQF provide the policy basis and support access to the validation of nonformal and informal learning?</p> <p>What policy linkages may need to be made with the quality assurance strategies, e.g. embedded in quality standards for qualification specifications and for provider provision?</p>
Links: Credit transfer system	<p>How will the NQF provide the policy basis and support access to the validation of formal learning?</p> <p>Will credit transfer be based on policy advice or will it link to an established credit accumulation and transfer system?</p>
Links: Registers	What registers need to be established for those qualification located and accepted onto the proposed NQF?

Focus	Questions
	Who will be responsible for these registers, e.g. centralised NQF body or sectoral quality assurance body?
Links: Quality assurance	<p>How will the NQF be coherently linked to other quality assurance strategies for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and design and approval of qualification specifications • Approval of providers and approval of programmes leading to a NQF qualification? <p>How will policy coherence of quality assurance strategies be determined to support the NQF goals and associated strategies (e.g. RPL, credit transfer)?</p>
Links: Other laws and regulations	<p>What other laws and regulations will be affected by the proposed NQF?</p> <p>Who will be responsible for ensuring coherence across laws and regulations?</p>



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

Table 1 outlines some critical questions to be addressed in the design phase of an NQF.

1. Consider what stakeholder engagement strategies could be used in the development process?
2. Select at least two focus areas and consider how key stakeholders can assist designers of NQFs in the responding to the questions.

4.2 Implementation of an NQF

The implementation phase moves from initial policy design and legal framework of the NQF to the operationalisation of the framework. This phase is focused on:

- Consolidating governance and associated laws
- Establishing and practically applying the linkages to associated structures and the quality assurance arrangements, and moving to full practical implementation
- Consolidating administrative and technical capacity and expertise.

Over a period of time this stage includes full scale applied practices of the NQF and requires the implementation and compliance with the quality assurance arrangements. Full implementation requires time and not all strategies and capacities will be available at the same time.

Within this phase the proposed linkages between the NQF and its associated strategies and quality assurance arrangements need to be determined, documented and agreed and formalised. Quality assurance arrangements may be centrally controlled together with the NQF but could be distributed across sectorally based quality assurance bodies. Ensuring the linkages and the coherence of design of the qualifications system is critical to the success of the implementation of the NQF, along with strengthening the understanding and credibility of the NQF with stakeholders.

Critical questions related to the design of the qualifications system and the role of the NQF within the system need to be considered, and implementation undertaken by the responsible bodies.

Table 2: Critical questions in the implementation phase

Focus	Questions
Design to full implementation	<p>What documents, e.g. a national strategy plan, will articulate the goals and aspirations of the country and link the NQF and the qualifications system?</p> <p>Who will develop an implementation plan? Who needs to agree to the implementation plan? Who will fund and resource (including human resources) implementation? What is the timeline placed on full implementation?</p> <p>How will implementation be monitored? Refer to Section 4.3 for further information.</p>
QA of qualifications	How will the link be made from the NQF to the standards or criteria for the development of qualifications and the approval onto the NQF? What will be the processes for development and approval and for locating a qualification on the NQF?
QA of provider provision	How will provider provision of programmes leading to a NQF qualification be documented? Who is responsible for monitoring provider provision? How will monitoring of providers be undertaken? What rewards or sanctions related to provider performance will be applied?
Assessment and validation of outcomes	Who is responsible for assessment of individuals' achievement of learning outcomes? How will assessment decisions be moderated or validated?
Certification	Who is responsible for issuance of NQF documentation? Who will the issuance processes be quality assured?
Registers	How will the registers be made public? What information shall be publicly available? How will registers be updated?
Data collection	Who will be responsible for the collection of relevant data of the qualifications system? What data will be collected? How with the consistency of data be organised? How will the data be used for monitoring NQF implementation?
Credit transfer system	How will credit accumulation and transfer system be negotiated? Will it be part of the NQF or a separate negotiated system? How will it be operationalised?
Visibility of NQF and engagement of stakeholders	<p>End users need to be aware of the NQF and the service it provides. How will the NQF and associated structures and quality assurance arrangements be communicated to stakeholders?</p> <p>How will dialogue between stakeholders be facilitated?</p>
Technical capability	<p>How will QA body staff expertise be developed?</p> <p>How will provider and qualification developer expertise be developed?</p>



Activity

The activity can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

Table 2 outlines some questions to consider within the implementation phase of an NQF.

1. The final focus area is that of technical capability of quality assurance body staff and also of providers and qualification developers. In the table below suggest what specific areas in which each of these three would require capability development.

QA body staff	Providers	Qualification developers

4.3 Monitoring implementation and reviewing of an NQF

Guideline 10 explains that NQFs are not static constructs, and that they will (and should) evolve overtime to meet the changing needs of the country. In doing so, NQF implementation needs to be monitored and periodically reviewed. Although monitoring occurs in the implementation phase it is included here as it is separate from implementation and focussed on reflection and evaluation.

4.3.1 Monitoring NQF implementation

Whilst a review is often undertaken after a period of years after implementation, many countries undertake continuous monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the NQF. Information gained through monitoring may be used at periodic reviews, or may be used to 'tweak' the NQF or its associated initiatives overtime.

Quality assurance bodies or relevant ministries can require providers to collect data, according to a national data standard. Data standards outline the definitions, fields and potential responses that are to be collected by the provider and passed to a central depository, or indeed are collected at national level. These data standards are generally linked to the student data management system.

In South Africa, The NQF and the National Learners` Records Database (NLRD) provides the following information some key fields that would provide sufficient data for monitoring the implementation of the NQF, including:

- *Qualifications and part qualifications (including unit standards) registered on the NQF, their purpose statements, exit level outcomes and assessment criteria, and the NQF sub-framework allocated to each qualification and part qualification*
- *Accredited providers*
- *Registered assessors*

- *The records of learners who achieve qualifications or part qualifications registered on the NQF and their achievements.*

For learner records:

Each education and training provider sends its learner achievement data to the quality assuring body that has accredited the provider to offer that particular qualification. These datasets are sent in the format specified by each quality assuring body, and providers are encouraged to obtain these specifications from their quality assuring bodies.

The quality assuring bodies submit their datasets to the NLRD (in the format specified by SAQA) for batch-loading onto the NLRD.

Source: <https://www.saqa.org.za/nqf-and-national-learners-records-database-nlrd>

There are other regional examples that responsible bodies could use to monitor the implementation of the NQF. Including that proposed by UNESCO for the Asia Pacific TVET sector and the EQAVET¹ framework in the EU TVET sector. Both these frameworks could equally be applied to the higher education sector. Both these frameworks are included in Annex 3 and Annex 4.



Activity

This activity can be undertaken as an individual or as a group.

Review both the UNESCO TVET Guidelines for Asia Pacific (Annex 3) and the EQAVET Framework (Annex 4).

1. For each framework, principles and indicators (UNESCO) and Indicators (EQAVET Part B), consider and identify which indicators would be useful when reviewing the implementation of an NQF.
2. If some indicators are excluded, explain the reason for the exclusion.

4.3.2 Reviewing an NQF

A major review of an NQF can occur at any time, however reviews generally after there has been a period time after the implementation of the NQF and its associated quality assurance functions. It is important to separate the implementation of the NQF from the implementation of the quality assurance functions

The Zambia Qualifications Authority is currently undertaking a review of its NQF². The main motivation for the review includes:

- a) Ensure the Framework is kept current and continues to respond to changing education and training demands in the country, in line with the ZAQA Act No. 13 of 2011;*
- b) Ensure continued regional and international comparability of Zambian qualifications and standards;*
- c) Cater for requirements for recognition of qualifications presently not catered for on the Framework, e.g. Advanced Level (A-Level), Skills Awards, Trade Certificates II and III, etc.; and*

¹ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1202\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1202(01)&from=EN)

² <https://www.zaqa.gov.zm/about#zqf>

d) Provide for the implementation of the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Systems (CATS).

Guideline 10 stated that qualifications frameworks are used to promote the trust and transparency of individual qualifications and the qualifications systems to which they belong. In doing so, they:

1. Act as a classification device to organise qualifications according to type and/or level
2. Set down (or link to) the quality measures for qualifications to be entered or accepted onto the qualifications framework
3. Act as an official bridge to international users of domestic qualifications and holders of international qualifications.³

Responsible bodies when considering the timeliness of a review could consider using these three key functions and ask some critical questions, included in the table below.

Table 3: Questioning the NQF: Should changes be made to improve the NQF?

Classification device	Sets out (or links to) quality measures	Bridge between domestic and international qualifications
<p>Is the NQF helping to raise aspirations to learn?</p> <p>Do citizens use the NQF to see progression opportunities?</p> <p>Does the NQF assist in overcoming barriers to qualifications, including the validation of nonformal and informal learning?</p> <p>Are valuable qualifications sitting outside the NQF that should be brought in?</p>	<p>Is the NQF raising the standard of qualifications in terms of the use of learning outcomes, content, assessment, and certification processes?</p> <p>Is the NQF applying the right kinds of pressures to qualification owners to describe and operate their qualification appropriately?</p> <p>Is the NQF helping to increase the potential of qualifications to provide social and economic returns to holders?</p>	<p>Do people abroad use the NQF to appreciate elements of specific domestic qualifications?</p> <p>Is it easy to make comparisons between the domestic qualifications and international qualifications?</p> <p>Are the links to international qualifications clear?</p> <p>Is the quality assurance functions of the NQF inspiring confidence among international application to domestic education and training programmes?</p>

Source: Adapted from QQI 2017.

When undertaking a major review, other than ongoing monitoring, it is suggested that the responsible body for the review:

1. Develop a terms of reference for the review
2. Identify a coordinating committee (or similar) to manage the review, and include key stakeholders
3. Identify the scope and extent of the review
4. Develop a strategy and timelines for the review and full engagement of stakeholders.

The responsible body would base some of their research on the data gained (as mentioned in the section above related to monitoring implementation of an NQF), but also on stakeholder consultations.

As NQFs change overtime, responsible bodies could think of incremental change to the NQF to reach an end goal, rather than major changes in a short period of time.

³ Quality and Qualifications Ireland 2017.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

1. What would be a reasonable timeframe from inception to a review of an NQF?
2. What might trigger a review of an NQF in a country that you are familiar with?
3. In your country, what stakeholders could be identified to engage with the review?

5 Governance arrangements of an NQF

Guideline 10 notes that the interplay of the NQF with the country specific quality assurance arrangements provides each country with a unique qualifications system. In doing so, there are variations in terms of governance of the quality assurance arrangements and also the governance of the NQF. In some countries, the management of the NQF does not rest with one agency which is also the quality assurance or qualifications authority.

There is no one right way for establishing the governance arrangements of an NQF, but consideration needs to be given to how the management of the NQF brings together all stakeholders that may have a stake in the NQF or the broader qualifications system, e.g. employers, students, recognition bodies [for the recognition of international qualifications], professional associations, and education and training providers.

The ACQF website includes a benchmarking exercise of 6 countries,⁴ and their key functions. These six case studies indicate that the NQF fall under the remit a central entity.

Table 4: Six NQF entities as part of a benchmarking exercise

Country	NQF entity	Scope of functions of NQF entity
France	<u>Department of Professional Qualifications</u> : one of 5 operational departments of 'France Compétences'. History: since 1972; Decree 2019 (new NQF)	<u>Department Prof Qualifications manages</u> : - National qualifications registers: RNCP and RSCH - Updated list of emerging or highly evolving professions <u>Commission of Qualifications</u> : decision-making on registration of new qualifications (upon request). Autonomous decision-making.
Bahrain	General Directorate of NQF and Examinations (GDQ), within the Education and Training Authority (BQA) Independent institution	2 functions (Directions): - Directorate of Examinations - Directorate of NQF Operations
Namibia	Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) NQA Act: 1996; NQF Regulation: 2006 Combined funding: state budget, service income, projects	- Development of standards, qualifications, registration of qualifications. - Accreditation of training providers and programmes - Evaluation and validation of qualifications
Ireland	1. National Qualifications Authority (2001-2012)	"Swiss army knife" – many functions: - Quality Assurance (post-secondary non-tertiary)

⁴ <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/nqfs-learning-materials/6-nqfs-governance-models>

Country	NQF entity	Scope of functions of NQF entity
	2. QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) – since 2012 Law of 2012 (Qualifications and QA) Combined funding: 11 millions EUR annually (State budget, service revenues – 50/50)	- NQF – registration, integrity, referencing; impact analysis and NQF review - Recognition of diplomas, certifications - Promotion of qualifications Ireland
Kenya	Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA) KNQA Act 2014 + NQF Regulation 2018 Combined funding: state budget, service income, projects	Five main services: - Verification, recognition of qualifications - Registration of qualifications - Recognition of prior learning - Equivalency certificate of foreign qualifications - Credit accumulation and transfer
Portugal	ANQ (National Qualifications Agency): 1 st format ANQEP (National Agency of Qualifications and Vocational Education) – since 2012	- National Catalogue of Qualifications (CNQ) - online: update, integrity, development - RVCC (RPL): develop and manage, coordinate Qualifica Centres - Monitoring, evaluation, regulation of the offer of VET courses for youth and adults - Design of courses, standards, methodologies

Source: Adapted from Castel-Branco 2021, <https://acqf.africa/resources/library/publications-from-international-sources/etf-nqf-rqf-interplay-and-governance-models-2021>

An NQF should be considered as belonging to the qualifications system and the citizens that access or use the system (or wish to access or use the system). The custodian/s of the NQF are just that, custodians, and establishing the governance arrangements to reflect this stance is, in most instances, paramount to the success of the NQF and meeting the needs of the country.

How the governance arrangements of the NQF include, or a led by, stakeholders varies across countries. As mentioned, in most instances, the NQF governing body is also a qualifications/quality assurance agency, however this is not always the case. Annex 5 provides additional details in regards to stakeholder engagement in the governance arrangements of three selected NQFs in Africa (that is Kenya, Namibia and South Africa), plus three international examples. The international NQF governance models provided include:

- Hong Kong - which utilises a government ministry
- Scotland – which has a charitable organisation to manage the NQF
- New Zealand - which has an authority with a commission providing oversight, similar to the models presented here for Kenya, Namibia, and South Africa.

The Annex outlines the more detailed functions of the governing bodies and also the level of stakeholder engagement in these arrangements including membership of any boards or councils.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

Review the various models of stakeholder engagement in the governance of the NQF. Scotland has probably the most different approach to that of the other models as it has been legally established and is not a quality assurance or qualifications authority.



Reflective questions

1. Consider the pros and cons of Scotland's approach to engaging stakeholders in the management of its NQF.
2. Within other models listed in Annex 5, e.g. how has the membership encouraged stakeholder engagement?

6 Key structures of an NQF

Guideline 10 provides detailed information in relation to the key structures of the NQF. Understanding the interplay between the different structures is important for the development and review of NQFs.

6.1 Purpose or objectives

Guideline 10 indicates that within Africa, various qualifications frameworks have varying purposes or objectives and scope. However, there are common themes related to purpose or objectives, included promoting:

- Access, pathways and progression
- Transparency
- Harmonisation
- Recognition both locally and internationally
- Quality and meeting needs of the country.

In relation to the scope of the qualifications frameworks, the database of ACQF Mapping Study and Inventory indicates that out of the 41 countries, 23 countries have approved NQFs, some of which are sectoral, but the majority have a comprehensive scope.

Annex 1 provides a summary of selected African countries (Botswana, Cape Verde, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Zimbabwe). The summary reveals that the purpose or objectives are varied, with some NQFs having a highly detailed list and other less so. Some objectives have changed overtime, e.g. Rwanda, and the objectives may have been updated due to the changing context within the country and the level of maturity of the qualifications system.

Keeping the purpose or objectives clear and concise assists the development of the technical aspects of the NQF.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

Review Annex 1, and consider the following questions.

1. Mozambique has both a Higher Education framework and a TVET framework and is moving to a comprehensive NQF in March 2022. The objectives of the Higher Education framework and the TVET framework are different. Reflect on these objectives and consider how the focus of each sector has influenced the purposes or objectives.



Reflective questions

2. For Mozambique, then consider the revised objectives for the new NQF in Annex 1. Compare these objectives against the newly revised version in the Annex 1. What shift in, or broadening of focus can be discerned?
3. The Rwanda Education Qualifications Framework 2016 (the previous iteration of the NQF) had the following objectives. Compare these objectives against the newly revised version in the Annex 1. What shift in, or broadening of focus can be discerned?

Mozambique:

Higher education QF

- *Establish parameters and common criteria for design of qualifications and to facilitate their comparability*
- *Establish coherence and transparency, helping with understanding and articulation of different qualifications in a uniform and harmonised system*
- *Facilitate harmonisation with the higher education systems of the region with a view to improve mobility, employability and competitiveness*

TVET QF

- *Responsiveness to the requirements of the labour market and the development needs of the country*
- *Assure mechanisms for permanent dialogue, active participation and articulation amongst stakeholders*
- *Establish a framework for equivalence between professional training acquired in the institutions and outside*
- *Provide qualified human resources and expand the supply of workforce for development*
- *Operationalise the principle of lifelong learning, facilitating recognition of short-term courses and competencies acquired outside of training institutions*
- *Encourage flexible learning pathways and continuous training of the workforce*
- *Provide a framework for equivalence between professional and general qualifications*
- *Establish the framework for evaluation and certification, in terms of professional outcomes*
- *Provide a base for the accumulation and transfer of credits in and between qualifications*
- *Align the national system of professional education with international and regional requirements, especially SADC.*

Source: ACQF Mapping Study: Country Report Working Paper Mozambique

The REQF is designed to:

- *Promote a more integrated approach to the Rwandan education and training system covering adult education, basic education, TVET and higher education*
- *Enhance and coordinate the quality of education and training by setting standards across levels of qualifications*
- *Generate qualifications and awards that are comparable with those from other NQF both regionally and internationally*
- *Promote competence-based assessment practices and qualifications in all the education subsectors in the country*
- *Provide multiple pathways that encourage learners to upgrade their skills, knowledge and competencies to respond to the changing needs of education and the labor market*
- *Promote the recognition of prior learning in order to bring on board acquired experiential learning and work experience.*

Source: Rwanda Education Qualifications Framework 2016

6.2 Level and domain descriptors

Guideline 10 indicates that across the African continent there is a predominance of 10 level NQFs, 13 of these in a region that has a regional qualifications framework of 10 levels.

Table 5: Summary of QFs in Africa

QFs	Number	Comments
NQF 10 levels	16	13 in SADC, 1 Kenya, 1 Rwanda, 1 The Gambia,
NQF 8 levels	6	in West, East, North Africa
NQF 7 levels	1	Tunisia
Sector QF 6 levels	1	Nigeria (NSQF - TVET)
Sector QF 5 levels	1	Senegal (TVET)

Source: ACQF 2021a, ACQF 2021b

Guideline 10 explains that the determining the levels in a country's qualification system will most likely depend on how many qualifications types (and their implicit levels of complexity) that need to be addressed. In addition, the wish to link with other NQFs or regional qualifications frameworks will also be a major influence.

A qualifications framework does not need to reflect the whole of the education and training system, but only those sectors where qualifications (or certification) are issued. This means that the NQF map or table does not need to include all sectors, it should only include those sectors that issue formal qualifications and are therefore relevant to a qualifications framework. In addition, NQFs do not need to align with the ISCED classification⁵. ISCED is not directly relevant to an NQF as ISCED levels relate to stages of learning in an education and training system and serves a different purpose, that is, collecting educational statistics.

Across the NQFs noted in Table 5: Summary of QFs in Africa, the common domains are almost universally knowledge and skills, with variations on a third or more domains, e.g. autonomy, responsibility, attitudes, competence, working with others, and behaviours. Other domains that could be considered in a future looking NQF is that of including green, digital, innovation, resilience and social skills.

Guideline 10 explains that countries address level descriptors in two separate ways:

- As separate domains
- Merged domains into one overarching descriptor.

In addition, Guideline 10 also explains that level descriptors are written:

- As statements of learning complexity to which a qualification type is assigned, using a map or table, and/or a text-based descriptor.
- A statement of learning complexity for a specific qualification type.

⁵ <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/international-standard-classification-education-isced>



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

1. Consider what are the pros and cons of developing level descriptors in separate domains.
2. Consider what are the pros and cons of developing level descriptors to which a qualification type is assigned, using a map or table, and/or, a text-based descriptor.
3. Consider an NQF that you are familiar with. How could you build into the NQF additional domains (or sub-domains), such as green, digital, innovation, resilience and social skills?

6.3 Volume of learning measure

Guideline 10 uses a generic term, ‘volume of learning measure’ for how NQFs describe how ‘big’ the qualification type is in terms of duration (usually defined as years) or learner effort (usually defined as hours or credit points). If NQFs include a credit value they can be used to assist in consistency of the size of a qualification type, or be used within a credit and accumulation transfer system, either nationally or internationally.

When developing an NQF, the query often is ‘how many hours equates to a credit point’, and much effort is often taken to discuss and explore this calculation. However, the definition of a credit point is a more complex and more interesting discussion, and which directly impacts on the understanding of a qualification within a country. The table below summaries a number of African country definitions.

Table 6: Definitions of credit

Country	Definition
Lesotho	Learning activity that an average learner is expected to be engaged. This includes class/workshop/lecture time, study and assessment, and is based on what can be achieved in that time by an average learner. Therefore, this time is notional , to be considered when designing qualifications and programmes. Source: Lesotho Qualifications Framework 2019
Namibia	Notional learning time inclusive of directed and self-directed learning and assessment. Source: Regulations Setting-Up the National Qualifications Framework for Namibia 2006
Rwanda	Notional learning hours include direct contact time with teachers or trainers (‘directed learning’), time spent in studying, doing assignments, and undertaking practical tasks (‘self-directed’) as well as time spent in assessment. The number of credits is worked out on the basis of the amount of time that an ‘ average ’ learner at a specified study level might be expected to take to achieve the expected learning outcomes. Source: Rwanda Qualifications Framework 2021
Seychelles	Notional hours refer to direct contact with teachers and trainers and non-contact time which is time spent on independent study, working on assignments and on other forms of assessment. Source: Regulations Setting-Up the National Qualifications Framework for the Republic of Seychelles 2008
South Africa	“ Notional hours of learning” means the agreed estimate of the learning time that it would take an average learner to meet the defined outcomes, it includes consideration

Country	Definition
	<p>of contact time, research, completion of assignments, time spent in structured learning in the workplace, individual learning, group work, projects and others. Ten (10) notional hours equate to one (1) credit.</p> <p>Source: Policy for credit accumulation and transfer within the National Qualifications Framework 2021</p>

A review of the definitions indicates that the volume of learning across these examples are based on:

- Notional hours or estimated hours and are not a 'fixed' figure
- An average learner. Within this notion of an average learner is also a consideration that the learner has limited knowledge and skills of the field of study/practice. Some frameworks indicate that the average learner has 'no underpinning knowledge and skills in the field of study.

Equally important in these definitions is the determination of what constitutes notional learning, and what is directed and non-directed time.

Although many definitions of notional learning time include self-directed time, it is important that this is also identified and clear as to why it is included. Including unstructured or undirected time in a volume of learning measure is a reflection of an individual student's input rather than the estimated time calculated for a programme design, learning and assessment to meet the requirements of the qualification type or qualification.

It is suggested that a definition is best to exclude the notion of allocating extra credit points for potential individual exceptional achievement, nor for extra time spent learning, as it is the 'average'. Time spent away from directed teacher time can still be calculated as directed time if the approach includes time spent undertake learning activities that have been directed by the teacher outside class time.

Further information in relation to credit values and how to determine these is included in Section 8 of this Training Module.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

1. List what learning and assessment activities you think should be included in a definition of directed time?
2. Could time spent learning in the workplace (such as an internship) be included in the definition of directed time? If no, why not. If yes, would additional requirements need to be in place in the learning modality for it to be included?
3. Do you think for non-directed time, e.g. the learner undertakes extra study to achieve a higher score be considered in the definition? If yes, why? If no, why not?

6.4 Qualification types

Qualification type descriptors bring together the two main metrics of a qualifications framework; level of complexity and volume. Some countries (e.g. Rwanda) summarise the qualification type in a map or table that places the qualification type title on a level and includes a volume measure (e.g. credit points) whereas others include specific text based information (e.g. Botswana and Namibia). Finally, some countries use the level descriptor to also describe a qualification type (e.g. Ethiopia, Lesotho and Zimbabwe).

Guideline 10 suggests that the approach used by both Botswana and Namibia provides the greatest flexibility. The approach allows for multiple qualification types to be included at one level and allows the country to include additional information that may be pertinent to the qualification type, e.g. purpose, entry requirements, links to other qualification types.

Guideline 10 proposes that suggested areas to address in a text-based qualification type descriptor should include:

- Entry requirements (only for Bachelor and above to promote access into qualifications)
- Purpose as this assist especially in distinguishing between two qualification types at the same level
- Linkages to other qualification types as this promotes pathways discussions
- Credit value.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

1. Do you agree with the inclusion of Entry Requirements in a qualification descriptor or not? If yes, why? Would you limit the inclusion to certain qualification types? If not, why not?
2. Are there other areas that need to be included in a qualification type descriptor?

7 Logic and coherence of an NQF

7.1 Internal logic and coherence

Guideline 10 discusses both the purpose or objectives and the scope of an NQF, as well as the level descriptors, qualification types and linkages to other strategies such as recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit transfer, potentially within a credit transfer and accumulation system.

An NQF as the primary policy instrument within a qualifications system, needs to be clear, unambiguous and coherent. Connections need to be made between the NQF structures and the strategies, such as to RPL, credit transfer and lifelong learning. For example:

- If the credit value is assigned in an NQF, does it relate to the formulation and development of a qualifications, and/or does it relate to a credit transfer and accumulation system.
- If the focus of the NQF is on labour mobility and international recognition, is there a need to include basic education, especially if no qualifications are issued in that sector.

Some countries in their NQF often try to not use a map or table that implies a hierarchical relationship with only a vertical progression focus, and implies sectoral separation. These countries use a diagram to emphasise that all qualifications are important. The three NQF examples below provide a visual representation for stakeholders. The fan diagram of the Irish framework is probably one of the most well-known. The newly revised Rwanda Qualifications Framework includes a fan diagram, and the final one in the suite below is a simple wheel diagram of the Australian Qualifications Framework indicating no sector divisions.

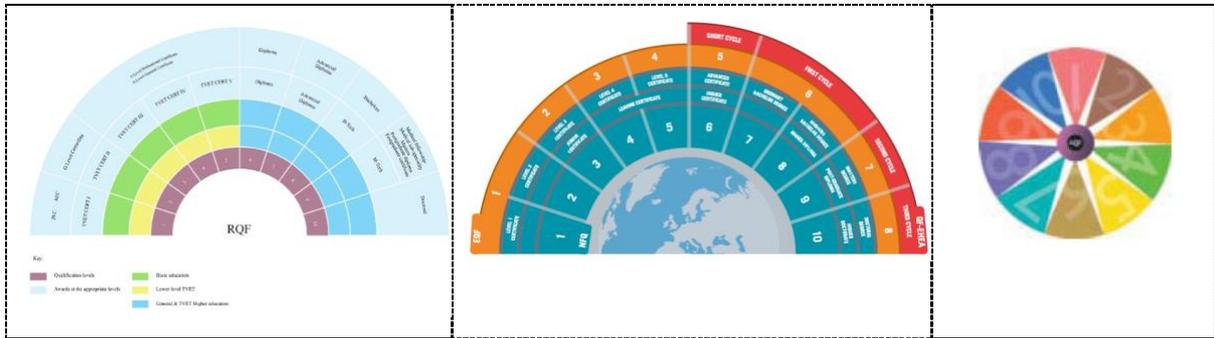


Figure 3: Framework symbols

Source: Rwanda Qualifications Framework 2021, <https://gazettes.africa/archive/rw/2021/rw-government-gazette-dated-2021-10-20-no-Special.pdf>, Irish National Framework of Qualifications <https://nfq.qqi.ie/>, Australian Qualifications Framework <https://www.aqf.edu.au/>

Careful study of terminology, diagrams, maps/tables, and symbols/logos and ensuring that they reflect the needs, aspirations and understandings of the stakeholders is paramount in the final NQF design and policy document.



Reflective questions

Annex 2 includes a selective extract of an NQF not within the African continent. Review the case study, and consider the following questions.

1. Are the two statements in the rationale consistent with each other in terms of scope?
2. Does the rationale statement 1 align with the map/table of the scope?
3. Does the map/table imply that there are some sector entries for which no qualification type is apparent, and therefore no qualifications are issued at that level (and in that sector)?
4. Does primary education and lower secondary education levels align with Objective statement #2 and Scope statement #2?
5. If one of the objectives is pathways and lateral movement, does separating the qualification types into columns assist in the notion of an integrated qualifications system, or does it create distinctions between the sectors that could be barriers to learning pathways and lateral movement?
6. If a key objective is to promote lifelong learning, does the map/table promote this ideal, given that it appears to emphasise only vertical/lateral progression?

7.2 Logic of level descriptors

7.2.1 Conceptual basis of the level descriptors

Guideline 10 indicates that there is very little written about the conceptual basis of level descriptors. It noted that in the development of the EQF, significant research was undertaken, and that the knowledge and skills domains were agreed partly due to existing taxonomies of learning based on revised Bloom on taxonomies of learning (Anderson et al., 2001). For the Competence domain, it was more difficult to develop and additional research was undertaken and there was consideration on other taxonomies related to various level of competence development, such as the work of Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986).

The more recent review of SADCQF levels (Keevy et al 2017) and the mapping report for the development of the proposed African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) (ACQF 2021g) used the following taxonomies for the analysis of the EQF and other frameworks:

- Knowledge domain: revised Bloom’s knowledge taxonomy (Anderson et al 2011), ranging from factual, to conceptual, to procedural, and to metacognitive knowledge
- Skills domain: SOLO taxonomy (Biggs and Collis 1982) for five levels of learner performance and understanding
- Responsibility and autonomy domain: Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) novice to expert taxonomy.

However, other researchers (ETF 2021) argue that the SOLO taxonomy and Dreyfus and Dreyfus taxonomies may not be suitable for developing the taxonomies in the skills and competence (autonomy and responsibility) domains, as:

- SOLO (1982) refers to Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome, and is a taxonomy for describing how a learner’s performance and understanding grows in complexity when mastering specific tasks. Performance levels include: pre-structural, unistructural, multi-structural, relational, extended abstract.
- Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) is a taxonomy of skills acquisition that plots an individual's progression through five levels: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. The model is related to an individual’s acquisition level of a specific task.

Both these taxonomies (SOLO and Dreyfus and Dreyfus) focus on an individual’s skill acquisition or performance on specific tasks and therefore are not necessarily applicable to levels of learning complexity of an NQF or RQF and may not be appropriate as forming the basis for some domains of levels of learning complexity.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

1. Do you think that taxonomies related to individual levels of competence (skills acquisition and demonstration) can be used to assist in the formulation of level descriptors? If yes, why? If not, why not?

7.2.2 Logic of level descriptors

The focus for the developers of the level descriptors is generally on ensuring that the level descriptors are technically sound. However, this belies the notion that in some respects qualifications frameworks are social constructs that are a part of a change management strategy within the qualifications system, and are the result of stakeholder engagement and negotiations.

There are two dimensions when developing level descriptors. Guideline 10 refers to:

1. Vertical dimension which outlines the level of learning complexity implicit in the qualifications system and to which qualification types (or qualifications) are linked.
2. Horizontal dimension which outlines the domains of learning. Within an NQF, the domains generally reflect that which is important to the nation and which are considered desirable to be reflected in the qualifications designed. Domains are almost universally described as knowledge and skills, and accompanied other domains such as application, competence, autonomy and responsibility, and innovation. Determining how many domains to include becomes a balancing act between ‘what is reasonable’ without over complicating the framework.

Level descriptors in an NQF need to:

- Capture the domains and sub-domains (horizontal dimension), and there should be a general degree of comparability of complexity across the domains.

- Be hierarchical in nature, from lower to higher levels (vertical dimension):
 - With sufficient detail to enable differentiation from one level to the next. The more levels developed, the more difficult the degree of differentiation can be achieved.
 - With a diagonal progression; a clear upward progression throughout the levels.

In regard to the vertical dimension, the analysis of level descriptors in the review of the SADCQF (Keevy et al 2017, p. 33) asserts that 'ideally, the progression should be on the diagonal', meaning that there should be a clear upward progression, and consequently this would enable to differentiation between levels of complexity.

However, many frameworks do not necessarily demonstrate a clear 'build' of levels of complexity across all levels of a taxonomy in a particular domain or sub-domain, with some only being 'built' over a lesser number of levels than that of the framework (ETF 2021). There is little research to determine which is the best approach, however countries in the development stage of the level descriptors should confirm that stakeholders see logic and benefits of taxonomies not spanning the full number of levels of the framework.

Guideline 2 further explains how the vertical and horizontal logic can be addressed, and the figure below summarises the horizontal and vertical logic in the ACQF.

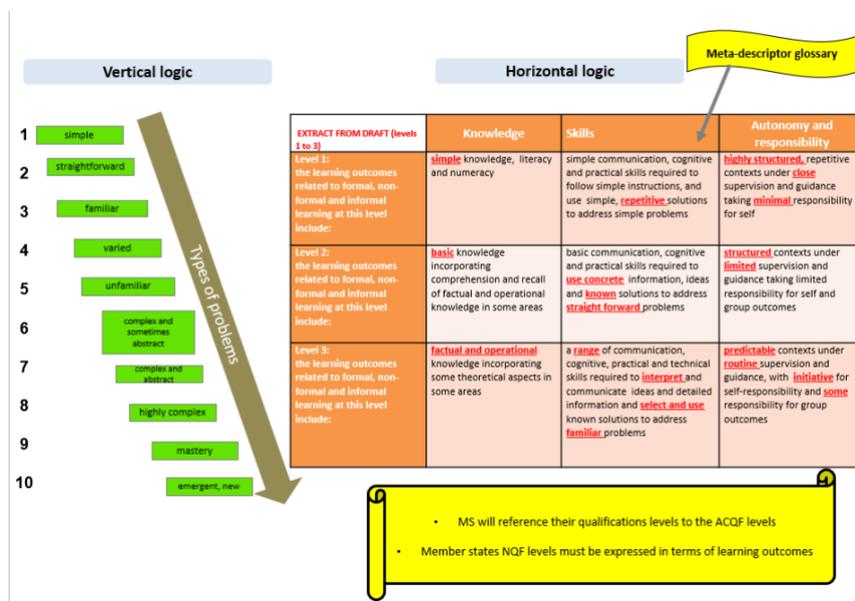


Figure 4: Vertical and horizontal logic of the ACQF

Source: Coleen Jaftha 2022 presentation at the ACQF Advisory Group Meeting 13 January 2022

You can see from the diagram above vertical development in the Knowledge domain includes the following terms, from *simple*, to *basic*, to *factual and operational*. For the horizontal dimension, Level 2 uses terms such as *basic*, *concrete*, *straightforward*, *limited*, *structured*.

In relation to sub-domains, some NQFs collapse taxonomies into one overarching domain which is often the case for autonomy and responsibility. In the ACQF example above the Autonomy and responsibility domain is made up of:

1. Context
2. Level of autonomy, such as level supervision and guidance
3. Level of responsibility.

When there are multiple sub-domains and the developers or reviewers are checking the logic of the descriptors, it is useful to separate the sub-domains into separate columns. Such as the example below extracted from the ACQF in Figure 2 above. This example separates the sub-domains of the 'Autonomy and responsibility' domain.

Table 7: Sub-domains

Level	Context	Autonomy	Responsibility
2	Structured contexts	Limited supervision and guidance	Limited responsibility for self and group outcomes



Activity

This activity can be undertaken as an individual or as a group.

Select a NQF that you are familiar with, ideally with level descriptors that are separated into domains. Identify if the domains have sub-domains. You may need to separate these sub-domains into different columns.

1. Check the vertical and horizontal dimensions for logic. Are there any gaps? Is the vertical progression spread throughout the levels or not? Does the vertical progression appear out of sequence?

8 NQF linkages to quality assurance arrangements

The strength of an NQF lies in its linkages to quality assurance. The NQF requirements may be addressed qualifications system wide, however the quality assurance could be sectorally implemented. The key quality assurance strategies include:

- Linkages to the qualification formulation, development, approval and review
- Linkages to providers and the provision of programmes leading to a qualification
- Registers of quality assured qualifications and providers
- System wide monitoring and evaluation.

8.1 Links to qualification formulation and development

The NQF is intrinsically linked to the quality assurance of qualification specification, their formulation, development, approval and review.

The approval of a qualification specification is separate from and not the same as a programme designed by a provider to meet the requirements of a qualification. In some countries the two approval processes are merged, but in some systems, especially TVET systems with the use of national qualification specifications, programme approval is a separate step and linked to the provision of providers. Separating the approval of the qualification specification from the approval provider's programme design and capacity to deliver provides greater flexibility in the qualifications system.

Given that the NQF promotes a learning outcome focus, countries should be promoting a learning outcome approach to qualifications. Learning outcomes can be applied at NQF level, qualification profile level, and component level (both as an outcome statement and embedded learning outcomes). Guideline 1 and Cedefop (2017) provide information regarding developing learning outcomes.

Guideline 10 indicates that the quality assurance agencies aim to define the requirements for submission of the qualification specifications, mainly to ensure consistency of documentation and to manage the

format in which qualification specifications are submitted. Control of qualification specifications format may be through quality standards, forms or templates. Common themes to be addressed include:

- Title and purpose of the qualification
- Level and number of credits (or other volume measure that is relevant to the NQF)
- Outcomes, e.g. qualification outcome statement, licensing or professional association outcomes
- Requirement for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit transfer
- Structure and completion rules (e.g. core, electives)
- Delivery methods and assessment methods (and process to quality assure assessor judgements)
- Resources required
- Evaluation or review processes
- List of components (e.g. modules, units of competency)
- Component specifications (for all those listed).



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

1. Could, and should, a standard format be applied to qualification specifications across all sectors? What other options are there available to quality assurers?
2. Are there any additional fields that should be added to the format fields listed above?
3. What fields could be included in a component specification?
4. What components formats are used in your country (e.g. modules, subjects, competency) and what fields are included in them?
5. In your country, how is learning outcomes promoted and implemented in qualification development?

8.2 Links to quality provision by providers

Quality assuring the provision of qualifications is critical to engendering trust in the qualification outcomes of those listed on the NQF. Guideline 10 explains that most quality assurance agencies tend to base provider requirements on legislation (laws or regulations), quality standards or policy. Provider requirements generally focus on the following common themes:

- Governance (institutional and academic)
- Financial sustainability and probity
- Data management and certification processes
- Internal quality assurance and continuous improvement
- Learner support
- Programme delivery capability.

Programme delivery capability generally focusses on the providers' ability to:

- Design a programme specific to the qualification outcomes and mode of delivery, e.g. face to face, online, blended
- Have in place facilities and equipment required for the programme
- Have in place training materials and assessment tools required for the programme
- Have sufficient number and profile of educators with vocational/professional qualifications and experience, including pedagogical qualifications and experience.

Within some qualifications system, programme delivery approval is blended with the processes for qualifications approval. However, the approval of programme delivery clearly rests in the realms of provider capability. The separation between qualification specification approval and that of programme approval allows for a two-step process. The first step is focussing on whether the qualification specification meets the requirements of the NQF and any design quality assurance arrangements, and the second step focussing on the provider capability.

The Lesotho Qualifications Framework Procedures Manual⁶, provides for this clear distinction between qualification and programme.

When considering the design of a programme of learning, a clear distinction must be made between a programme and a qualification:

A programme of learning is a course, curriculum, training package, units of study, or structured workplace learning that leads to the award of a qualification.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

1. Within your qualifications system (and sector) which approach is applied:
 - a. Blended qualification and programme approval
 - b. Separate step process?
2. What do you think are the pros and cons to both approaches?

8.3 Registers / databases of qualifications

A critical tool for providing transparency and confidence in the qualifications system is that of registers. The provision of public information includes:

- Registers of qualifications that meet the requirements of the NQF, and registers of approved providers of NQF qualifications which could include information about their compliance to specified requirements (e.g. quality standards, quality criteria) as well as the performance of these providers (such as programme and component completions and student and employer satisfaction)
- System wider evaluations.

Registers of qualifications are important instruments for transparency across the panorama of qualifications of different countries. The quality, completeness and accessibility to this information is fundamental for the end-users (learners, training providers, employers, and workers). Registers of qualifications also offer a view on the actual status of implementation of NQFs.

A register can be both a compliance tool as well as a marketing tool. For example, a register may only list qualifications that meet the requirements of the NQF, and be linked to a register that only lists those providers that have met specified requirements (e.g. quality standards, quality criteria) and the qualifications they are approved to provide educational and training services. Not being on the public list

⁶ <https://acqf.africa/resources/nqf-inventory/countries/lesotho>

means that stakeholders, including potential learners, know that the provider and its programmes leading to a qualification are not quality assured and therefore there may be a potential risk applied to this provider. In some countries, not meeting specified requirements and not being on the register results in reduced or no funding or support from government.

8.3.1 Snapshot of national databases/registers of qualifications in Africa

The following overview is based on web search (online registers and databases), the ACQF feasibility report (2021) and ACQF Mapping study (2021). This brief section explores two main questions:

- What can we learn from NQF registers and databases?
- Which qualifications are included in NQF registers and databases – by levels and by sectors?

For the purpose of this brief analysis, the ACQF Feasibility study explored existing and accessible registers of qualifications in five countries: Cape Verde, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique and South Africa.

Table 8: Overview on registers/databases of qualifications (associated with the NQFs)

Country	Register/database of qualifications	Qualifications included	Key features
Botswana	Botswana Qualifications Authority – Register of qualifications	401 full qualifications - all levels of NCQF	<p>The register is searchable by title of qualification (search by key word tool). Qualifications documents can be viewed and downloaded.</p> <p>The online register publishes a list of qualifications (title, type, level, field, document). All registered qualifications are formatted based on a standardised model. Section B of the model - Qualifications Specifications contains: graduate profile (learning outcomes) and the associated assessment criteria (detail and clarify the learning outcomes).</p>
Cape Verde	National Catalogue of Qualifications	64 full qualifications (levels 2 to 5 of the NQF)	<p>The digital online Catalogue is accessible as a repository of PDFs.</p> <p>All qualifications are structured based on a standardised format, including: professional profile, units of competence (learning outcomes and assessment criteria), training programme (modules) and training module in the real context of work.</p> <p>The qualifications in the Catalogue are distributed in 15 professional families. The Catalogue includes also a new Transversal Training Module of 3 units (entrepreneurial competences).</p>
Kenya	1. New : National Qualifications Information		NAQMIS is a system for automating processes, based on Blockchain technology

Country	Register/database of qualifications	Qualifications included	Key features
	<p>Management System (NAQIMS)</p> <p>2. Register of qualifications (of accredited bodies)</p>		to register: a) qualifications awarding institutions (QAIs), b) qualifications and c) learners' records.
Morocco	<p>Vocational training in figures (2019-2020)</p> <p>Summary of all registered qualifications maintained by TVET Department. Annual update</p>	352 TVET programmes leading to qualifications in 4 levels of NQF	<p>Distribution of programmes by levels of qualification and sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 levels: specialization, qualification, technician, technician specialist - 21 sectors
Mozambique	<p>National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications</p> <p>Managed and maintained by ANEP</p>	164 qualifications registered, at levels 2 to 5. Published on the online Catalogue: 149. 19 independent modules	<p>The digital online Catalogue is accessible as a repository of PDFs.</p> <p>All qualifications are structured based on a standardised format, including: general information, units of general competencies, units of vocational competencies, training modules (general and vocational), training programme (modules) and training module in the real context of work.</p> <p>The qualifications in the Catalogue are distributed in 16 professional families. Moreover the Catalogue also includes 19 independent modules.</p>
South Africa	<p>SAQA: register of qualifications and part-qualifications</p> <p>Managed and maintained by SAQA</p>	Large number of qualifications of all levels (over 22,000)	<p>SAQA online register contains searchable databases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All qualifications and unit standards (no matter their status) 2. Registered qualifications and unit standards (NQF qualifications) 3. Qualifications and unit standards that have passed their registration end date 4. Professional Bodies and Professional Designations

The NQF qualifications registers and databases of the six cases are differently structured.

- In five out of the 6 countries mentioned in this analysis the national registers of qualifications are available online and maintained on the website of the institution tasked with the coordination and implementation of the NQF. Morocco publishes annual reports updating information on existing

qualifications and is currently developing a comprehensive searchable information system of TVET standards, programmes and qualifications, and plans to establish a comprehensive register of the NQF at a later stage.

- SAQA ensures the integrity and maintenance of the [Register of qualifications and part-qualifications](#). The Register contains four searchable databases (more information in Table 8).
- KNQA, as the custodian of national qualifications, developed NAQIMS, based on Blockchain technology. At the moment access to qualifications documents is possible via this [KNQA database](#). Qualifications in the database are structured by institution, and currently the number of qualifications of TVET institutions largely exceeds the number of qualifications of other bodies (university bodies, professional bodies, foreign qualifications awarding bodies, basic level bodies). Analysis based on data submitted by KNQA, Figure 7 and Figure 8.
- Botswana: [Botswana Qualifications Authority – Register of qualifications](#) contains 401 qualifications at all levels of the NCQF. Registered and accredited Education and Training Providers (ETPs) are encouraged to develop learning programmes, based on the registered qualifications, for accreditation in Botswana. The search function allows queries by title of qualification.
- Cape Verde is implementing an inclusive and already reviewed eight-level NQF. The NQF register ([National Catalogue of Qualifications](#)) is available online and is managed by the leading NQF institution – the Coordination Unit of the National Qualifications System (UC-SNQ). However, it includes only TVET qualifications (levels 2–5). All qualifications in the NQF register are displayed according to a standard template, which includes the qualifications profile, the training standards and assessment, described in learning outcomes. Qualifications of the higher education system are registered by the regulatory authority of higher education, Agência Reguladora do Ensino Superior (ARES). Analysis of qualifications data from National Catalogue of Qualifications, Figure 5 and Figure 6.
- Mozambique has significantly advanced the process of design and consultation of the integrated comprehensive NQF, and its decree is to be approved in 2022 by the Cabinet of Ministers. Historically Mozambique implemented two sectoral qualifications frameworks, which work in parallel (TVET and Higher education). Each framework is based on a different legal basis, defining the level descriptors, types of qualifications and quality assurance requirements. The TVET QF is implemented by the National TVET Authority (ANEP), while the Higher education QF is coordinated by National Council for Quality Evaluation (CNAQ). Data on the higher education qualifications is not available in an online register, but was obtained via a request to CNAQ. All qualifications in the TVET qualifications framework database ([National Catalogue of Qualifications](#)) are displayed according to a standard template.

The distribution of the number of qualifications in the indicated NQF registers, by levels and by sectors, is visualised below by two graphs for two countries (Kenya and Cape Verde) (Figure 7 and Figure 8, and Figure 5 and Figure 6). One graph depicts the distribution of qualifications by levels; the other shows the distribution by sector. In addition, for Morocco, Table 9: Morocco - Distribution of qualifications in TVET by level of qualification and sector (2019-2020) shows the distribution of qualifications by sector.

A salient finding concerns the large difference in the total number of qualifications included in the NQF registers. Comparing the two cases that have comprehensive registers comprising all levels: Kenya has 1,262 qualifications, while South Africa has 22,026 qualifications. The distribution by levels in these two cases shows a different pattern of concentration of qualifications in higher, medium and lower levels. The South African NQF register displays a clear concentration of qualifications in the higher levels (especially

levels 8 and 9), while the NQF register of Kenya shows a balanced distribution across levels 3 to 7. In addition, there are variations in the scope of the qualifications across industry sector classifications.

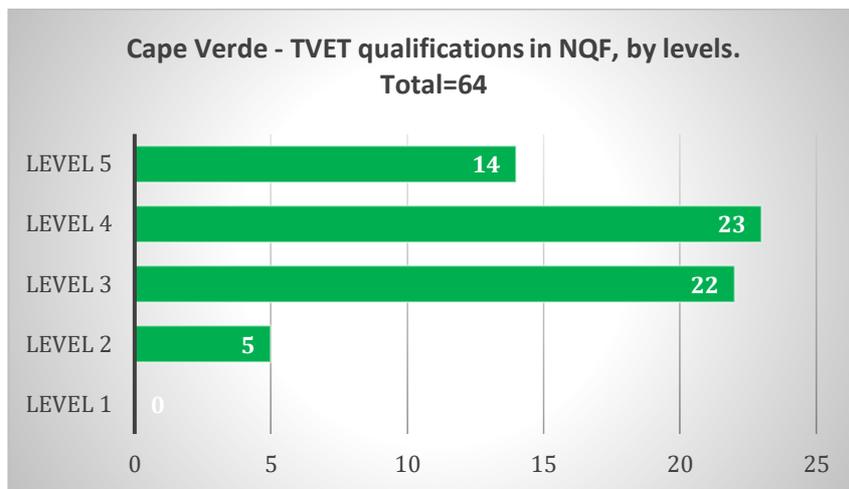


Figure 5: Cape Verde - TVET qualifications in the NQF Catalogue of Qualifications, by levels

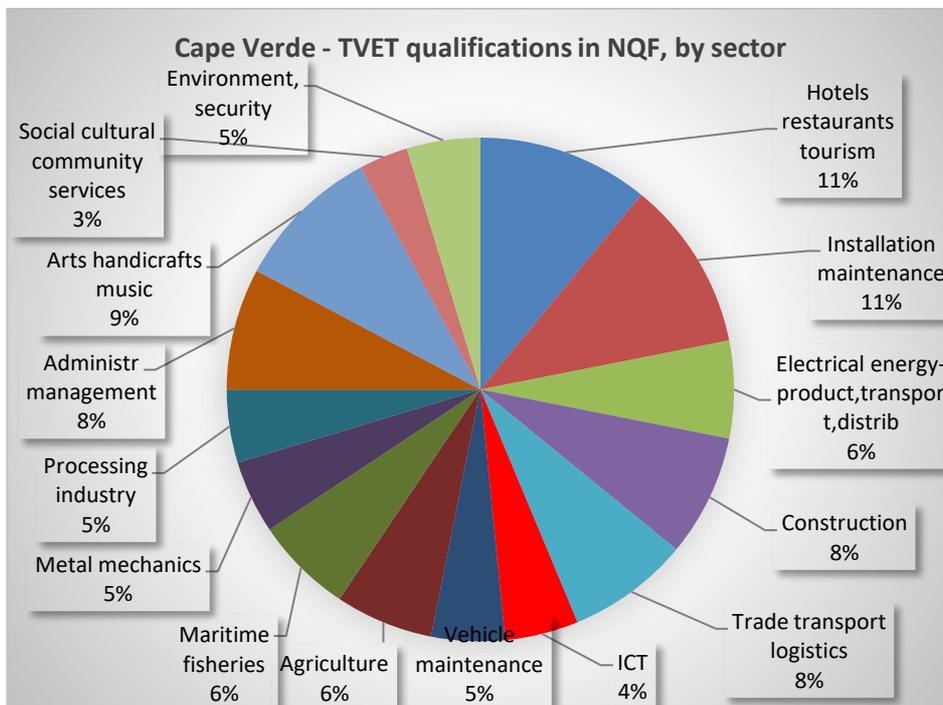


Figure 6: Cape Verde - TVET qualifications in the NQF – National Catalogue of Qualifications, by sector (15 professional families)

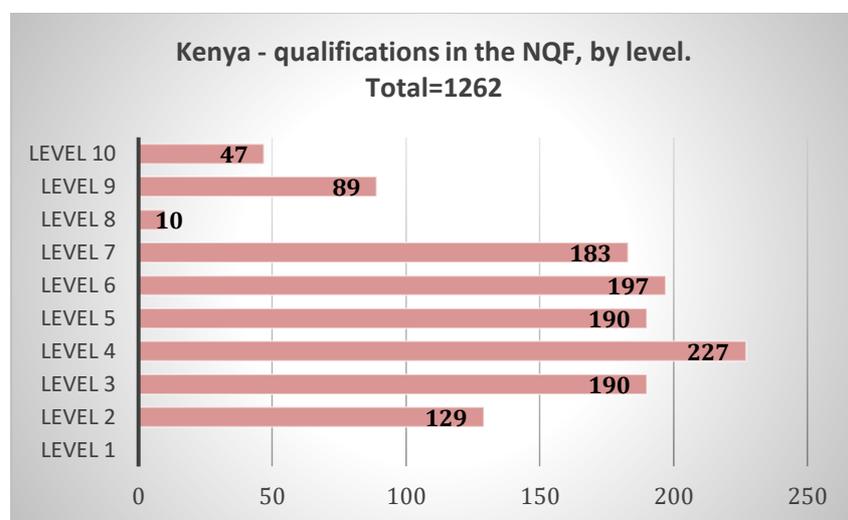


Figure 7: Kenya - Qualifications in the NQF register, by levels

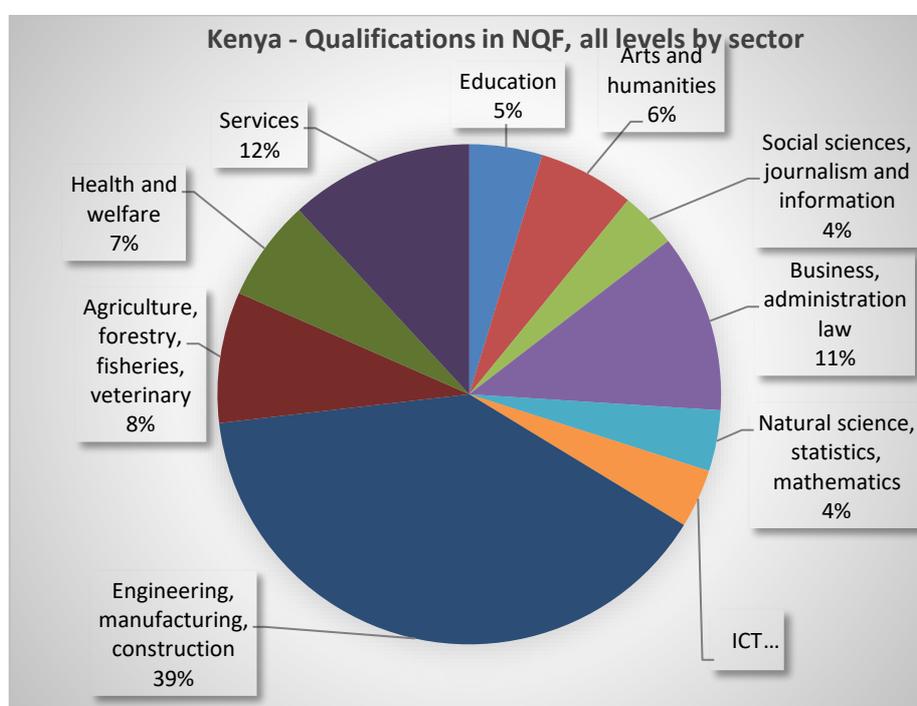


Figure 8: Kenya - Qualifications in the NQF register, by sectors

Table 9: Morocco - Distribution of qualifications in TVET by level of qualification and sector (2019-2020)

SECTOR	Level of training - qualification				Total
	Specialisation	Qualification	Technician	Technician specialist	
ADMINISTRATION GESTION ET COMMERCE	1	7	10	12	30
AGRICULTURE		8	3	10	21
ARTISANAT	10	8	5	4	27
ASSISTANCE AUX MENAGES	1	4	2	3	10
AUDIO VISUEL ET CINEMA		1	8	12	21
BTP *	7	7	9	18	41

SECTOR	Level of training - qualification				Total
	Specialisation	Qualification	Technician	Technician specialist	
CHIMIE ET PLASTURGIE ET MINES		1	1	5	7
COIFFURE ESTHETIQUE	2	3	1		6
CUIR	3	4	5	2	14
HOTELLERIE ET TOURISME		5	7	11	23
IMME **		12	13	12	37
INDUSTRIE AGROALIMENTAIRE		4	3	11	18
PARAMEDICALE ET SANTE		2	5	13	20
PECHES MARITIMES		2	3		5
TEXTILE HABILLEMENT	2	5	8	3	18
SPORT EQUESTRE	1		6	2	9
TIC ***			3	5	8
AERONAUTIQUE			3	5	8
TRANSPORT ET LOGISTIQUE			4	4	8
AUTOMOBILE		2	3	10	15
ENERGIE RENOUVELABLE				6	6
TOTAL	27	75	102	148	352

8.3.2 Qualifications registers and databases in other regions or countries

Implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and availability of targeted funding from the EU budget (Erasmus+ and other programmes) has contributed to development and operationalisation of NQFs across the 38 involved countries, including qualifications databases accessible online. The most recent update on the status of NQF implementation in EQF countries provides information on NQF databases / registers. Table 10 contains the URLs to the existing and accessible national qualifications databases / registers. Some EQF countries are not included in the table due to lack of information on the most recent and functioning online register of qualifications.

Table 10: EQF countries: national qualifications databases/registers

Country/NQF	Database / register of qualifications
Austria	Qualifications Register Connection to Europass in preparation
Belgium (Francophone)	Qualifications register Connected to Europass
Belgium (Flandres)	VKS Database connected to Europass (phase of testing)
Bulgaria	List of TVET qualifications: NAVET
Czech Republic	National Register of Qualifications Connected to Europass 1448 qualifications available
Denmark	UddannelsesGuiden (Education Guide)
Estonia	Qualifications Register-search Connected to Europass

Country/NQF	Database / register of qualifications
	4,279 qualifications available
Finland	StudyInfo
France	RNCP – search Connection to Europass in testing phase
Germany	Qualifications Register-search Connected to Europass
Greece	Qualifications Register-search Connected to Europass
Ireland	Irish Register of Qualifications - QQI Connected to Europass
Latvia	Latvian Qualifications Database Connected to Europass
Lithuania	AIKOS – register of qualifications Connected to Europass
Hungary	Hungarian Qualifications Framework – register Connected to Europass
Malta	
Netherlands	NLQF Qualifications Database Connected to Europass
Poland	Integrated Qualifications Register Connected to Europass
Portugal	Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações Connected to Europass
Slovenia	SQF Register Connected to Europass
Slovakia	SOK Register of qualifications
Sweden	NQF register of qualifications Connected to Europass

Other countries have well-developed and functional registers / databases of qualifications and credentials.

- United States: [Credential Engine](#) has a sophisticated technology, services and analytical capabilities.
 - [Credential Finder](#): is a tool for exploring all of the information published to the Credential Registry. As of March 2022, the Registry contains 30258 credentials
 - [Credential Publisher](#): Publish to the Credential Publisher
- New Zealand: the search tool to find qualifications is integrated in the website of the [New Zealand Qualifications Authority](#).
- Australia: The [TVET database](#) integrates all accredited qualifications and units of competency and the details of all registered providers and their approvals to deliver specific education and training services.
- Hong Kong: [Qualifications Register](#) (QR). QR is a centralised online database containing information on quality assured qualifications and their operators and assessment agencies for Recognition of Prior Learning. All qualifications listed on the QR are quality-assured and recognised under the [Qualifications Framework](#). Under the Accreditation of Academic and

Vocational Qualifications Ordinance, the [Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications](#) is specified as the QR Authority.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

1. What registers exist within your qualifications system?
2. If there are registers, are they made public? What are the benefits of having a public register?
3. Is there a separate qualifications register to that of providers, or is it a combined register that informs stakeholders of what qualifications the provider has been approved to provide education and training services?
4. If yes, for qualifications register/s does it provide more information than just the qualification title? What other information is included or could be included?
5. If yes, for provider register/s, what information does it contain? For greater transparency of provider performance what additional information could be included?

9 Microcredentials

9.1 Microcredentials in a qualifications system

Guideline 10 explains that in recent years there has been increasing interest in microcredentials and shorter recognised programmes as an alternative, or an addition to qualifications, within a qualifications system. The following definitions has been applied in Guideline 10.

Micro-credentials are typically focused on a specific set of learning outcomes in a narrow field of learning and achieved over a shorter period of time.⁷

Existing definitions (from OECD, European Commission, UNESCO) point to key characteristics of micro-credentials:

- Referring to learning over a limited time period and/or in a specific area
- May form part of or adding to formal qualifications
- Potentially 'stackable' over time, adding to individual learning careers
- Given their limited size and focus, more flexible than traditional qualifications
- Frequently delivered in a digital form.

Microcredentials may be offered by education and training providers, vendors (e.g. Microsoft, CISCO), professional bodies and other types of organisations.

Microcredentials are promoted as a way of supporting lifelong learning, of offering more flexible and modular learning opportunities and pathways, and as an efficient way to upskill or reskill workers. Microcredentials are increasingly important where the higher education or TVET qualifications system only offer full programmes leading to a qualification and there is limited opportunity for entry for partial completion for specific purposes.

⁷ UNESCO 2021

The tension for including microcredentials in a qualifications system is multi-faceted:

- It is not a full qualification and qualification approval processes may be limited to only full qualifications
- Qualifications tend to offer a coherent outcome, often related to a workforce or professional role
- Whether they are quality assured by the responsible body or not.

Microcredentials should:

- Be a record of what a learner has achieved confirming what the learner knows, understands or can do, and is awarded by provider approved to do so
- Include assessment based on clear achievement standards
- Have a stand alone value and may be stackable towards a qualifications
- Meet relevant quality standards for approval.⁸

A proposal to the European Commission (2021) outlines some key principles for microcredentials:

1. Quality – in that they are subject to internal and external quality assurance arrangements
2. Transparency – in that they are measurable, comparability and understandable with clear information on learning outcomes, workload, content, level, and the learning offer, as relevant
3. Relevance - should be designed as distinct, targeted learning achievements and learning opportunities leading to them are updated as necessary, to meet identified learning needs
4. Valid assessment – in that they are assessed against transparent standards
5. Learning pathways – in that they are designed to support flexible learning pathways
6. Recognition – in that they are recognised as a for a wider offer of learning experiences
7. Portable – in that they are owned by the learner and may be stored and shared, e.g. through digital wallets
8. Learner centred – in that they are designed to meet the needs of the target group
9. Authentic – so that there is sufficient information to check the identity of the holder, the issuer, data and location of issuance
10. Information and guidance – which should be integrated into lifelong learning guidance services.

9.2 Micro-credentials in higher education

OECD (2021) analyses the quality and value of micro-credentials in higher education. This research provides numerous cases illustrating existing experiences as well as new perspectives emerged from the responses to the Covid-19 crisis.

OCED (2021) compares two systems of micro-credentials predating the Covid19 crisis: Ireland and New Zealand.

Ireland: In 2011, the Government of Ireland launched Springboard (and, subsequently, Springboard+), a national upskilling and reskilling initiative offering free and heavily subsidised higher education programmes to the labour force, with priority given in many cases to unemployed individuals. Springboard+ aims to complement the provision of traditional higher education programmes and to support individuals to develop skills highly in demand in the labour market. It combines shorter and longer higher education programmes within the same initiative, recognising that reskilling and upskilling requirements may vary according to the field of study. The Springboard+ programmes are developed at different education levels (between Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications - level 6 and 9,

⁸ Adapted from Oliver 2021

equivalent to International Standard Classification of Educational Qualifications (ISCED) level 5 to 7. They differ in credit size (from 10 to 100 ECTS) and can be full-time or part-time. Notably, the Irish government also envisages the future development of micro-credentials as a stand-alone education product that is widely recognised across the system, and integrate industry collaboration, in a similar way to the New Zealand model.

New Zealand has been one of the frontrunners in national policy making around micro-credentials. The system authorities micro-credentials as a complement to traditional higher education, although, in contrast to Ireland, their micro-credential programmes are defined as a stand-alone education offering and feature compulsory employer involvement. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) created a quality assurance system for micro-credentials in 2018, by defining them in specific regulations and setting their quality standards. The New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission started providing funding to higher education providers for the development and delivery of micro-credential programmes in 2019. Fees may be charged to learners, but a maximum ceiling of NZD 60 (around USD 40) per credit is specified in regulations. Recognition of micro-credentials by the NZQA requires providers that they demonstrate their programmes do not duplicate existing higher education programmes, and address unmet skill needs in the labour market and society. The providers are also required to prove their capacity to deliver quality education. The micro-credential programmes approved by the NZQA are reviewed annually against the quality criteria. There are currently about 150 NZQA-approved micro-credential programmes offered by higher education institutions and other training providers, with the education level ranging from New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) level 2 to 8, equivalent to ISCED level 3 to 6. The workload of micro-credentials ranges between 5 and 40 credits (equivalent to 2.5-20 ECTS).

OECD (2021) suggests perspectives on the future of micro-credentials: potential, challenges, and solutions.

a) Potential

- Micro-credentials can increase the flexibility of education and training provision, and improve its alignment to labour markets
- Micro-credentials can widen and deepen collaboration among educational institutions, professional bodies, and firms

b) Challenges ahead

- There is a risk that micro-credential innovations will deepen existing inequalities in access to higher education and lifelong learning
- Learners lack information about micro-credential offerings and benefits
- Widespread recognition of micro-credentials by academic institutions is not yet well-established, limiting their portability and stackability

c) Some solutions

- Micro-credentials and the challenge of equivalence: To recognise a learning experience from a micro-credential and incorporate it into a degree programme, higher education institutions must first solve a problem of equivalence: what is this learning experience equivalent to in our curriculum?

Sharing the description, validation and sharing of credentials, including micro-credentials.

- Table 11: Selected approaches to describing and sharing microcredentials outlines some approaches for including details of microcredentials.

Table 11: Selected approaches to describing and sharing microcredentials

Instrument	Owner	Description
Credential Transparency Description Language	Credential Engine (USA)	It provides a common, unified, consistent and transparent vocabulary for describing credentials, making it possible to compare that credential's data across all other credentials in the registry.
Credentify	MicroHE Consortium	It is an API service that enables universities and students to issue and receive micro-credentials that can be stacked into ECTS.
Digital Credentials Initiative	Consortium of universities coordinated by MIT (United States)	It is a central platform for storing students' achievement records based on key infrastructures, public ledgers and blockchains that aims to become the standard for storing and verifying the authenticity of credentials.
Digitary	Digitary	It is an online platform used to verify the authenticity of degrees, transcripts, or other academic records.
Diploma Supplement	Council of Europe, European Commission and UNESCO	It is designed as an aid to support the recognition of academic qualifications. It contains information such as the holder of the qualification, the qualification type, the content and the results of the qualification, as well as some details on the national higher education system).
European Digital Credentials	European Commission	It is a set of standards, services and software that allow institutions to issue digital, tamper-proof qualifications and other learning credentials within the European Education Area.
Open Education Passport	OEPass Consortium	It is a standard format for describing open education and virtual mobility experiences in terms of ECTS using a project segmented in five steps.

Source: OECD, 2021: 20.

The bottom line is that micro-credentials can be integrated in diverse and flexible ways into higher education systems to support a range of policy goals.

9.3 Micro-credentials in vocational education and training

Research on micro-credentials in vocational education and labour market (company) context is less developed than in higher education.

Cedefop initiated a large-scale research strand on [Micro-credentials for Labour Market education and training](#) (first publication is forthcoming) in Europe. A related international conference on 25 and 26 November 2021 offered a platform for debate, gathered participants from over 40 countries. This research area addresses:

- The potential role of microcredentials in vocational and professional education and training, in companies and labour market sectors.

- Learning more about the characteristics of microcredentials, their added value to individual learners, employees and employers, as well as their impact on existing qualifications and recognition systems.
- Understand whether we are observing a revolution in the way learning is being valued or whether microcredentials are just a new name for something that existed all along.

Key findings of the first study of this research point to

- Uncertainty linked to the naming and function of micro-credentials.
- Micro-credentials emerging mostly in areas such as ICT, engineering, manufacturing, and construction, but also in sectors such as hospitality, human health, and social work.
- Clear benefits of microcredentials with regards to the flexibility and responsiveness to labour market needs.
- There also needs to be a wider awareness of microcredentials.
- Quality assurance of microcredentials is one of the most important aspects. However, quality assurance processes differ and not all micro-credentials are quality assured based on the nationally established quality standards.

The study mentions a trade-off between flexibility and regulation: “Microcredentials are evidence of practical, flexible, on-demand, and short learning experiences. This is what makes them so attractive. Common European standards must preserve this attractiveness and not limit it through over - regulation and - formalization. It is thus central to find an appropriate balance between fostering trust and transparency as part of a common approach without compromising the flexibility of microcredentials” (Cedefop, 2021b).



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

1. Should microcredentials be quality assured (for formulation, development, approval and review) the same way as qualifications? If not, what variations to the process would be required?
2. What arrangements would need to be in place for microcredentials to be implemented into your qualifications system?
3. How could the various registers accommodate microcredentials and the providers approval to provide these microcredentials?

10 Developing and formulating qualifications

Guideline 10 outlines some key steps in the development and formulation process of a qualification specification. This section provides further elaboration of a development approach and also on some critical points in the process.

10.1 Development and formulation process

A process for the development of a qualification specification includes various stages and considerations. The information below refers to ‘qualification developers’ which would vary depending on the context of the qualifications system, and could include those responsible for the development of a qualification within a Ministry, or a provider, or a professional association, or a council given the remit to do so.

Qualification development requires significant planning in the consultation process, the research undertaken, and the drafting of the qualification specification

10.1.1 Engaging stakeholders

Qualifications confer recognition of a person's value in the labour market and in further education and training. In some countries and professions or trade that are a legal requirement to practice that profession or trade. Therefore, it is important for qualification developers that the qualification designed will meet its target needs and also be accepted as such by the relevant stakeholders. It is also for this reason that many qualifications authorities (or responsible bodies) stipulate the requirements for stakeholder engagement, for example New Zealand.

Criterion 4	Acceptability of the programme and consultation
	There is a written summary of the consultation undertaken, the views expressed, and consideration of the views. The consultation and summary must articulate the need for and acceptability of the programme to the relevant communities (<i>including ākonga, whānau, hapū, iwi and where appropriate, hāpori Māori</i>) and other key stakeholders (<i>including the qualification developer and any relevant academic, employer, industry, professional and other bodies</i>) and any required endorsement by a WDC under section 366(1)(g) of the Act has been obtained.

Source: NZQA 2021

Qualification developers will need to consider the number and mix of relevant stakeholders throughout the development stages, and the level of consultation required. Depending on the qualification to be designed, stakeholders may include a mix of the following:

- Enterprises or employers
- Community leaders or groups
- Unions
- Professional or industry associations
- Regulator or licensing bodies
- Educators (both national and international)
- Equity or disadvantaged groups.

In the early stages of the research, relevant stakeholders can assist in the clarification of the occupational, educational or social outcomes. In the latter stages of development, stakeholders can assist in the refinement of the draft qualification specification and provide explicit support for the design.

10.1.2 Research and concept proposal

Qualification agencies (or responsible bodies) within Africa usually require qualification developers to ascertain that there is a need for the qualification and its outcomes. Within the world of work this usually relates to job outcomes or labour needs; however, it is less clear in higher education where qualifications do not always have an occupational or professional outcome.

Identifying the need and scope of the qualification, includes two key research stages in the development process.

1. Scoping of the relevant industry, education, community or professional need. Scoping may include analysis of current and future occupations or consultation with relevant stakeholders. Sources of information could include: statutory of licensing requirements, professional association requirements, labour market reports, national strategic initiative reports, regional agreements related to trades and services, international benchmarks (from other county qualifications systems or agreed regional qualifications), international or multinational organisation standards

2. Research such as job task and work process analysis using a range of development methodologies (TVET/Skills) and/or identifying professional outcomes and/or identifying expected knowledge, skills and attributes of graduates. Research methods could include: surveys, interviews, critical incident techniques, group processes (such as DACUM), functional analysis, observation).

10.1.3 Determining the qualification structure and completion rules

Qualifications should have a coherent outcome and meet the specifications of the NQF level descriptor and qualification type. Developers need to clearly describe the learning outcomes of the qualifications as whole as this will influence component development and final structure and completion rules of the qualification.

Qualification developers need to ensure that the proposed qualification structure and the coherence of the mix of components meets the outcomes of the NQF qualification type.

When determining the structure of a qualification, developers could involve key stakeholders and seek advice regarding the most appropriate structure to achieve the qualification learning outcomes. This could occur through a consultation process or a DACUM process. For TVET qualifications, components that are consistent across work contexts will more than likely be treated as core components, whereas those not considered to be applicable to all contexts would be considered as specialisations or electives. For higher education qualifications, developers could seek clarification through professional standards or agencies and use examples of appropriate structures (from other providers nationally or internationally), and may use the skills of a curriculum design expert. Benchmarking the proposed structure, content and completion rules against the international benchmarks reviewed in the research stage will be an important concern at this stage of the qualification development. Consideration of the benchmarking activity will in turn influence where the qualification is located on the NQF, refer to section 10.2.

There are different ways of grouping the components within a qualification, including the potential models outline below:

- Core only
- Core and electives
- Core and specialisation
- Core, specialisation and elective
- Electives only.

10.1.4 Drafting components

How to develop each component (e.g. subject, unit, competency) of a qualification will depend on the NQF's definition of a qualification and any requirements set by the quality assurance agency (or responsible body) in regards to drafting learning outcomes at component level. Qualification developers need to ensure that the learning outcomes (specified in components) as a whole meet the specified learning outcomes of the qualification.

ACQF Guideline 1 Learning Outcomes and its accompanying Training Module provides advice and information in relation to learning outcomes. Two resources in the TVET sector provide guidance in this area (that is ILO 2016; World Bank 2001) and the process for defining and writing learning outcomes is well documented in the Cedefop handbook (Cedefop 2017).

When drafting individual components there should be no requirement to meet all aspects (implicit in the domains). However, as a complete package the components should meet all aspects of a level descriptor. In some countries (within some sectors), a mapping is required to demonstrate that this is the case.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

Within your country, or another country that you are familiar with, consider how stakeholders are included in the development and formulation of qualification specifications.

1. At what stages of the development and formulation of qualification specifications are stakeholders involved?
2. Suggest additional strategies to strengthen stakeholders engagement in the process, including approval and review of qualifications.

10.2 Locating the qualification on the NQF

A clear understanding as to how qualifications are located on an NQF is an important aspect of the formulation and development process. However, there is not always clear guidelines or a clear understanding as to how the level and qualification type are determined when designing a qualification. Confidence in this process will engender confidence the consistency of design of qualifications within a country, and will also engender confidence in any links that are made between the NQF level descriptors to RQF level descriptors in the referencing process.

Guideline 10 indicates that broadly speaking there are two approaches depending on whether the qualification includes a volume measure (credit value) or not:

- Best fit approach
- Credit based approach.

These two approaches are not mutually exclusive and an NQF and its quality assurance processes may have a mix of approaches. In both approaches, no assumption is made that all components will be at the same level of learning complexity, and there may be a mix of components above and below the qualification outcome NQF level.

As an NQF can be viewed as a social construct, other factors may influence the location of a qualification on the NQF. These factors may not be explicit and may depend on traditions, social, historical or labour/employment understandings or agreements. The diagram below summarises the considerations when determining the location of a qualification on the NQF.

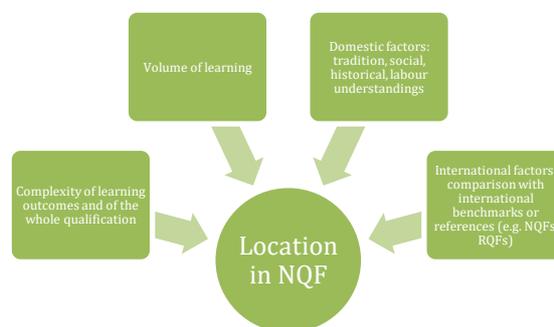


Figure 9: Factors for locating a qualification on the NQF

The methodology for allocating a level, volume measure and qualification type to a qualification specification (and its components) will vary across NQFs and there is no right way. The following example related to the Lesotho Qualifications Framework provides a detailed explanation.

Lesotho in the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (LQF) Procedures Manual⁹ outlines a methodology for rating the proposed qualification specification. The LQF is a credit based framework and therefore takes the credit based approach. The Manual includes two processes:

- Determining the level of complexity of the qualification
- Rating the credit value to each component (e.g. subject, unit) of the qualification and of the qualification as a whole.

When determining the LQF level of a qualification or part-qualification, the following elements are considered critical:

- Ensure alignment with the level descriptors in terms of depth, breadth, complexity and volumes of learning
- Specific learning outcomes (attached to units/courses/modules) must lead to the attainment of the attributes in the level outcomes.
- Qualification descriptors, especially for specialist and professional programmes, regulate the planning and design to improve rigour and the recognition of qualifications.

In the LQF the credit value is the average amount of learning and assessment time needed to achieve the component. For determining the credit value consideration of potential activities in a programme, include:

- formal teaching sessions (lectures, classes, coaching, seminars, tutorials)
- practical work (in laboratories and other locations)
- relevant ICT activities
- use of the library or learning resource centres for reading and research
- private study time
- self-directed study time using online and/or text-based open learning materials
- informal learning activities (e.g. community groups, community-based workshops)
- reflection
- assessment.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

Within your country, or another country that you are familiar with, source any relevant documents related to the NQF and processes for development of a qualification specification. From the perspective of a qualification developer:

1. Is there a clear explanation as to how the proposed qualification specification is located on the NQF?

⁹ <https://acqf.africa/resources/nqf-inventory/countries/lesotho>



Reflective questions

2. What information do you think you would need to assist you in determining the level, credit value (if relevant) and qualification type of the qualification specification?

11 Recognition of prior learning

11.1 Overview of recognition of prior learning

Guideline 10 places the definition of recognition of prior learning (RPL) in line with the Council of European Union (2017) definition of validation of nonformal and informal learning.

RPL is considered both a process and an assessment. Castel-Branco (2022) summarises the RPL process in the following diagram.

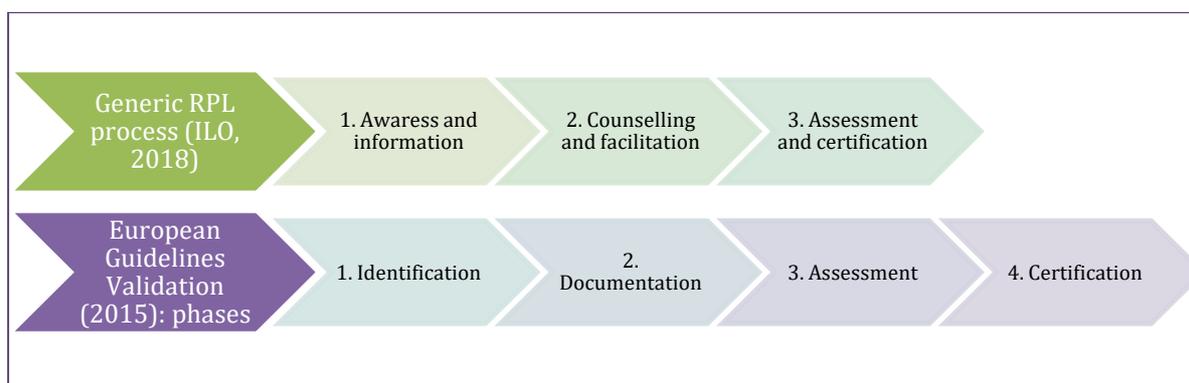


Figure 10: RPL phases

Source: Castel-Branco 2022 (adapted from ILO 2018, Cedefop 2015)

The four phases of the European Guidelines noted in Figure 5 is also explained through key questions noted below.

Table 12: Four phases of validation – main questions

Identification	Documentation	Assessment	Certification
Which procedures and tools?	What criteria are used for admitting evidence into the process?	Are assessment tools adapted to the individual's needs and characteristics?	Certification – linked to national qualifications systems?
Mix of standardised and dialogue-based identification approaches?	What formats are used for documenting non-formal and informal learning?	Which reference point (standard) is being used and how suitable is this for capturing individual variation characterising non-formal and informal learning?	Credibility of awarding body?
How is guidance and counselling included?	Do documentation formats support the transfer and portability of acquired knowledge, skills and competences?	Have the conditions for assessment been clearly defined and	Certificates specify the qualification (identical to certificates of formal learning?) Can the outcomes of validation (documents, portfolios, certificates, etc.) be exchanged into

Identification	Documentation	Assessment	Certification
		communicated in terms of procedure, tools and assessment standards (to candidates; to employers and education institutions)?	further education, employment?

Source: Adapted from *European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*, Cedefop 2015.

 Reflective questions
<p>The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think the four phases of the European Guidelines provide a clear framework for a country to base the implementation of recognition of prior learning? 2. What questions might you add to each of the four phases?

11.2 Approach to recognition of prior learning

Guideline 10 explains there are an array of approaches and models of RPL across countries. Some countries build separate processes and structures for recognition whereas others have merged the processes within the assessment processes of all learners (regardless of the how the learning was gained). Some countries limit or put boundaries around access to RPL (within or across all sectors), whereas others consider that there should be no limitations or boundaries around RPL within or across all sectors.

The ACQF peer learning webinar on RPL on 18 February 2022¹⁰ conducted a poll regarding implementing recognition of prior learning indicated that for countries within Africa, the majority of systems included access to RPL for all qualifications on the NQF or were mainly being implemented in TVET sector. A small number of countries indicated that only a partial qualification could be achieved through RPL.

The table below provides a summary of some selected countries, in terms of the basis for RPL and the general model taken.

Table 13: Approaches and models of RPL

Country	Basis	Model
Cape Verde	Law (Decree-Law 54/2014 of 22 September – provides for recognition, validation and certification of competence as a right for all citizens. Source: Castel-Branco 2022	Law defines the process over 3 phrases: information and guidance, recognition and validation of competences, certification of competencies.

¹⁰ <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/webinars/13th-peer-learning-webinar-focus-on-recognition-of-prior-learning>

Country	Basis	Model
Mauritius	<p>Mauritius Qualifications Authority Act 2001 – requires the authority to recognise and validate competencies</p> <p>Source: Castel-Branco 2022</p>	<p>RPL considers both recognition of nonformal and informal learning, as well as formal (accredited) learning.</p> <p>Recognition of Prior Learning Guidelines (2016) outlines the rationale, phases, appeals process, and quality assurance of RPL. Phases include: pre-application, re-screening, facilitation, assessment.</p>
Morocco	<p><i>Strategic Vision 2030 for a School of Equity Quality and Promotion</i> plans for a comprehensive system for RPL.</p>	<p>Process includes: information and counselling, admissibility, follow-up and certification.</p> <p>Qualification awarded as the outcome of the RPL process does not have the same value and standing as qualifications from formal TVET pathways.</p>
Mozambique	<p>Decree no. 58/2021 of 17 August 2021, the new System for Recognition of acquired competencies received legal status and supported by a regulation (SRCA Regulation was published in the Bulletin of the Republic on 16/12/2021).</p> <p>Source: Castel-Branco 2022</p>	<p>Quadro Nacional de Qualificações Profissionais (QNQP) validates and certifies learning outside training providers and enables access to formal training.</p> <p>Applicants are to be 18 years and above, and have at least 3 years proven professional experience in the relevant field.</p> <p>Assessments are conducted by centres approved to do so.</p>
Seychelles	<p>Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) in 2017 adopted a revised National Policy of RPL and National Guidelines of RPL.</p> <p>Policy provides overarching policy direction.</p> <p>Guidelines outline for all organisations and persons involved in the RPL process the development of an RPL model, implementation and RPL.</p>	<p>Guidelines note that the outcome should be valued at the same level as outcomes achieved through formal learning, there is no limit on level of achievement, e.g. all qualification.</p> <p>Phases: initiation, application, appointment of an RPL coordinator (registered with the SQA), meeting, portfolio development, submission, identification of components of qualifications, pre-screening of portfolio, assessment of portfolio, identification of RPL provider and credit transfer matrix provided, provider conducts an RPL assessment using 2 – 4 selected assessors (using a range of methodologies), certification. RPL assessments are internally moderated and externally verified.</p>

Country	Basis	Model
South Africa	<p>Policy, https://www.saga.org.za/documents/policies-and-criteria/national-policy-and-criteria-implementation-rpl-amended-march-2019</p> <p>Policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of different players in the system including: SAQA, Quality Councils, education and training institutions, professional bodies, employers, RPL practitioners and RPL candidates.</p>	<p>Assessment for access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning.</p> <p>Has a flow on effect to other sub-frameworks approaches.</p> <p>Emphasis on value/equal parity of outcome (except that required for data analysis)</p> <p>Data is collected on rate of RPL</p>
Australia TVET	<p>Quality standards in law (qualification and provider)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National qualifications, https://www.dese.gov.au/aisc/trainin-g-packages • Provider qualifications, https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2021L00269 • https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/F2014L01377 	<p>Assessment of an individual against individual defined standards. Certification occurs at individual unit level or qualification level (if achieved).</p> <p>Qualification design cannot limit particular pathways.</p> <p>Providers must offer RPL to applicants. Credit transfer (of formal learning) is mandatory for national units of competency previously achieved.</p> <p>Data is collected on rate of RPL and credit transfer.</p>
France	<p>Various laws have been implemented, such as:</p> <p>2002 <i>Social Modernisation</i> law established the validation of experiential learning outcomes (VAE) as a right for every citizen.</p> <p>2014 law on vocational education and training, making RPL accessible below level 3.</p> <p>2016 labour law requires only 1 year experience to seek RPL (there was a 3 year limit), and there is no limit on time retaining assessed components without reaching the full qualification (there was 5 year limit).</p> <p>2018 TVET reform confirms block of competencies, hours of work experience and on-site mentoring accounts in 1 year limitation.</p>	<p>Assessment against standards and can result in a full qualification. There has been a shift of focus from process to an assessment.</p> <p>Data is collected on rate of RPL</p>

Country	Basis	Model
	<p>2018 labour law on the freedom to choose one's professional future requires qualifications to enable validation of acquired competencies</p> <p>Sources: Werquin 2021, France updated referencing report to EQF (n.d.), https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-egf</p>	

The various approaches to RPL indicate that there are variances especially in terms of:

- Scope of RPL e.g. nonformal, informal and formal
- Accessibility (or limitations) to RPL
- Comparability of esteem of outcome.

The ACQF website includes a report, 'Recognition of prior learning gives us wings' (<https://acqf.africa/resources/recognition-of-prior-learning/recognition-of-prior-learning-gives-us-wings>) that addresses how RPL is implemented in 10 African countries. The following activity relates to this report.

 Activity			
<p>This activity can be undertaken as an individual or as a group.</p> <p>Read the report, 'Recognition of prior learning gives us wings' which can be sourced at the following weblink (https://acqf.africa/resources/recognition-of-prior-learning/recognition-of-prior-learning-gives-us-wings).</p> <p>1. Select two country case studies from the list below in the table. Review the case studies and summarise (very briefly) the key information in relation to RPL.</p>			
Country	Sector application	Limitations as to who can apply	Who can provide services in RPL
Cape Verde			
Kenya			
Mauritius			

11.3 Barriers and enablers to implementing recognition of prior learning

Guideline 10 provides from the research a list of barriers and enablers to implementing recognition of prior learning.

The ACQF peer learning webinar on RPL on 18 February 2022¹¹ conducted a poll regarding implementing recognition of prior learning:

- The participants noted that the main barriers or challenges for RPL implementation were: lack of trained RPL professionals, lack of guidance and information for the public, lack of RPL centres/providers, RPL not a strong part of the education and training system, and financial resources.
- The participants noted enablers to implementing RPL included: change of mindset that all forms of learning are valuable, big RPL information campaign, and involvement of employers. Additional enablers included: an NQF, financial resources and supportive legislation.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

1. What do you think are the main three barriers to implementing RPL in your country?
2. What three enablers to RPL implementation would you suggest in your country?

11.4 Strategies to support a recognition of prior learning process

Guideline 10 indicates that recognition of prior learning is both a process and an assessment.

As a process, it can be viewed as different steps or phases, with assessment and certification being the end point. The steps or phases prior to these latter stages are about informing and supporting the candidate through the process and the organisation of evidence.

11.4.1 Supporting the applicant

Considering the 4-step phase in Figure 5, the process includes both awareness and information and also counselling and facilitation. These two phases could encompass the following steps:

1. Preparing the applicant
2. Facilitating the applicant to undertake a self-assessment
3. Identifying relevant evidence that is current (or from the recent past) and can be authenticated.

The applicant should be considered at the centre of the process, and **preparing the applicant** is critical to the successful engagement of the applicant. Preparing the applicant would include **providing information** to the candidate about:

- What is RPL
- The process including: how it occurs, how evidence is to be assessed, what is expected of the applicant, what support is available, the standards against which they will be assessed, how to enter the process

¹¹ <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/webinars/13th-peer-learning-webinar-focus-on-recognition-of-prior-learning>

- The outcome and parity of value in decisions.

The way in which applicants are given this information will vary according to applicant knowledge level of the process, their confidence in stepping into the process, how well they deal with written and preparing information, and how much support they are likely to need.

As part of preparing an applicant, a **self-assessment** is often undertaken. A self-assessment allows for the applicant to determine whether they have a strong case for applying for recognition and also identifying the components (e.g. competencies or subjects) they should apply for. A self-assessment needs to be able to identify the strength of experience of the individual and also potential evidence, but it should not pose too many obstacles to impede the process. A self-assessment may also identify gaps in experience and/or evidence.

The self-assessment is the preparatory step in **identifying relevant evidence**. An RPL process generally assumes that the applicants will have generated evidence prior to the start of the process. Applicants may need assistance in identifying relevant evidence that is both current (or in the recent past) and can be authenticated. Validation processes may include:

- Portfolio of evidence and an interview to seek clarification and check knowledge and understanding, as may be used ascertain authenticity
- Challenge assessments to fill any identified gaps, e.g. specifically designed tasks to generate evidence which may include interview, demonstration and product development

Preparing the applicant for the various strategies to gather evidence will become a critical aspect of the support process.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

The SAQA policy related to RPL¹² makes connections with the different players in the validation of nonformal and informal learning process. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of the different players including: SAQA, Quality Councils, education and training institutions, professional bodies, employers, RPL practitioners and RPL candidates.

The following questions can be responded to from different contexts, such as: at quality assurance body or qualifications authority level, at a provider level, at a professional association level, or at employer level. Prior to responding or discussing the questions, clearly specify from which context the response relates to.

3. Within the organisation, what strategies could be put in place to inform potential candidates of validation of nonformal and informal learning?
4. Within the organisation, what support strategies could be implemented to assist candidates in the process?

¹² <https://www.saqa.org.za/documents/policies-and-criteria/national-policy-and-criteria-implementation-rpl-amended-march-2019>

11.4.2 Prioritising support strategies

Various support strategies could be put in place by the entity that undertakes RPL processes. Such support could include:

- Briefing session or meeting to inform potential applicant of RPL
- Assistance with self-assessment
- Providing a contact person to answer questions whilst the applicant prepares evidence
- Assisting the applicant to understand the standards (e.g. competencies)
- Providing applicants with examples of evidence
- Allowing mentors or support people to be involved in the application, gathering the evidence, and the assessment process
- Language, literacy numeracy and disability support.



Reflective questions

The reflective questions can be undertaken as an individual or as a group discussion.

1. Given the list above, as a potential applicant for RPL, what form of support would you value the most?
2. What would be the pros and cons in allowing mentors or support people to be involved in the assessment process?

12 Summary

An NQF as a policy instrument does not function in isolation but is part of a broader ecosystem, the qualifications system. It is intrinsically linked to its quality assurance arrangements and a range of associated structures (e.g. registers) and strategies, e.g. RPL.

Qualifications frameworks have the capacity to be transformational, regardless they should have at their core:

- Accessibility for all citizens
- Formal recognition regardless of how or where the learning was gained; formal, nonformal and informal learning
- Transparency of learning outcomes as well as of quality assurance arrangements
- Relevance to the needs of the country and citizens; not just limited to labour needs but relevant to the broader social and community needs
- Quality assurance arrangements so that qualifications are recognised and accepted as an accurate reflection of what an individual knows, understands and can do.

NQFs as a policy instrument is only one of many that policymakers will need to employ in a coherent response within the country's qualifications system.

13 Glossary

African Continental Qualifications Framework: The ACQF is a policy initiative of the African Union and its development process is underway (2019-2022). The current vision for the ACQF is: to enhance comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications from all sub-sectors and levels of education and training; facilitate recognition of diplomas and certificates; work in cooperation and complementarity with national and regional qualifications frameworks; promote cooperation and alignment between qualifications frameworks (national and regional) in Africa and worldwide.

Source: ACQF Thematic Brief 1 2021a

Basic education: Education and training that takes place in primary and secondary schools, as well as in adult education and training centres. Also known as general education.

Source: ACQF Thematic Brief 1 2021a, adapted from SAQA NQFPedia 2017

Autonomy and responsibility domain means the context in which knowledge and skills are applied autonomously and with responsibility; this learning domain refers to the amount of independence required to solve problems and complete tasks including decision-making and responsibility for self and others.

**NEW Level descriptor guideline*

Competence: The proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.

Source: Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on European Qualifications Framework. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN)

Credit means confirmation that a part of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of learning outcomes has been assessed and validated by a competent authority, according to an agreed standard; credit is awarded by competent authorities when the individual has achieved the defined learning outcomes, evidenced by appropriate assessments and can be expressed in a quantitative value (e.g. credits or credit points) demonstrating the estimated workload an individual typically needs for achieving related learning outcomes.

Source: Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on European Qualifications Framework. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN)

Credit systems means transparency tool for facilitating the recognition of credit(s). These systems can comprise, inter alia, equivalences, exemptions, units/modules that can be accumulated and transferred, the autonomy of providers who can individualise pathways, and the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Source: Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on European Qualifications Framework. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN)

Credit transfer means the process of allowing individuals who have accumulated credit in one context to have it valued and recognised in another context.

Source: Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on European Qualifications Framework. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN)

Domain means a category of learning. It can be structured into sub-domains.

** NEW Level descriptor guideline*

Formal learning: Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to validation and certification.

Source: Cedefop Glossary 2014

General education (primary and secondary education): See basic education.

Higher education:

- All programmes of study, or sets of courses of study, training, or training for research at the post-secondary level which are recognized by the relevant authorities of a State Party as belonging to its higher education system.

Addis Convention,

- Tertiary education that is of a higher academic level than secondary education, usually requiring a minimum level of admission and successful completion of secondary education.

Thematic brief 1

Informal learning: Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning in most cases is unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification.

Source: Cedefop Glossary 2014

Knowledge domain means the various kinds of knowledge such as facts, principles, theories and practices; knowledge can be theoretical or factual.

***NEW Level descriptor guideline**

Learning outcomes: Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

Source: Council of the European Union (2017)

Level: One of the series of levels of learning achievement according to which an NQF or RQF is organised. Levels are typically arranged in ascending order, from lowest to highest, depending on the number of levels in the NQF or RQF.

***NEW Referencing guideline**

Level descriptor: A statement describing learning achievement at a particular level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that provides a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.

Source: Adjusted from SAQA NQFPedia 2017

Lifelong learning: All learning activity undertaken throughout life, which results in improving knowledge, knowhow, skills, competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons.

Source: Cedefop Glossary 2014

National Qualifications Framework: A policy and instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.

Source: Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on European Qualifications Framework. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN)

National Qualifications System: This includes all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and operationalising national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, QA processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems may be more or less integrated and coherent. One feature of a qualifications system may be an explicit framework of qualifications.

Source: OECD 2006

Non-formal learning: Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view.

Source: Cedefop Glossary 2014

Qualification: Means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

Source: Council of the European Union (2017)

Means a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose or purposes, intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning and which has been assessed in terms of exit level outcomes, registered on the NQF and certified and awarded by a recognised body.

Source: SAQA NQFPedia 2017

Qualifications Frameworks: Systems for classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality assured qualifications.

Source: Addis Convention, UNESCO 2014

Quality assurance: Processes and procedures for ensuring that qualifications, assessment and programme delivery meet certain standards.

Source: Tuck 2007

Recognition of foreign qualifications: A formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of a party of the value of a foreign education qualification or a validated training.

Source: Addis Convention, UNESCO 2014

Referencing: A methodology used to compare national qualifications frameworks/ qualifications levels with an overarching framework. Through a structured referencing process, a national multi-stakeholder body of experts references (defines and establishes the relationship/ link) the NQF/ NQS levels and the levels and quality assurance of a Regional Qualifications Framework. (DEFINITION IN DISCUSSION)

**NEW Referencing guideline*

Regional Qualifications Framework: A broad structure of levels of learning outcomes that is agreed by countries in a geographical region. A means of enabling one national framework of qualifications to relate to another and, subsequently, for a qualification in one country to be compared to a qualification from another country.

Source: ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework 2015

“Skills” domain: ‘Skills’ means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. Skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).

Thematic brief 1

Stakeholder: A person or organisation with an interest or concern in something. In vocational education and training, stakeholders include government, providers of training, industry, clients and the community.

Source: TESDA Philippines,

<https://www.tesda.gov.ph/uploads/File/RelatedTvetInfo/The%20TVET%20Glossary%20of%20Terms,%204th%20Edition.pdf>

Sub-domain means a sub-category of any of domain of learning.

**NEW Level descriptor guideline*

Technical vocational education and training (TVET): TVET, as a part of lifelong learning, can take place at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels and includes work-based learning and continuing training and professional development, which may lead to qualifications. TVET also includes a wide range of skills development opportunities attuned to national and local contexts. Learning to learn, the development of literacy and numeracy skills, transversal skills and citizenship skills are integral components of TVET.

Source: AQCF Thematic Brief 1 2021a, original source, UNESCO 2015

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000234137>

Validation of non-formal and informal learning: means the process of confirmation by a competent authority that an individual has acquired learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings measured against a relevant standard and consists of the following four distinct phases:

- identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual,
- documentation to make visible the individual's experiences,
- a formal assessment of those experiences, and
- certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification.

Also known as recognition of prior learning (RPL), is the confirmation by a competent authority that the learning outcomes, that an individual has acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings, has been measured against a relevant standard.

Source: AQCF Thematic Brief 1 2021a, adapted from EQF Recommendation 2017

14 Guidance for trainers and learners

At the end of this Training Module the learner will be able to:

1. Identify how an NQF and its quality assurance are linked within a qualifications system
2. Identify and understand the key structures of an NQF
3. Analyse an NQF for its logic and coherence
4. Compare different governance arrangements of an NQF
5. Identify key quality assurance approaches to the formulation and approval of qualifications, and the provision of qualifications through education and training providers
6. Identify implementation strategies to reduce the barriers to recognition of prior learning.

The following guidance is provided to trainers and learners in terms of the demands of the learning programme.

Area of guidance	Notes
Recommended Pre-requisite	<p>There are no pre-requisites to undertake this Training Module. However, given the technical nature of the material, learners should have the following background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General knowledge and understanding of qualifications and qualifications frameworks - General knowledge and understanding of quality assurance as it relates to a qualifications system - Practical experience (for example, in organisations dealing with NQFs, qualifications).
Notional time to complete the module	<p>The Training Module scopes a wide range of technical information pertaining to qualifications and qualifications framework with a series of reflective questions and activities.</p> <p>It is anticipated that if this Training Module is undertaken on an individual basis or as a group, it should take approximate 16 hours of learning and 8 hours of assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading: 4 hours - Face-to-face: 16 hours - Assessment: 8 hours. <p>The pre-reading would include Guideline 10.</p>
Materials	<p>There are no specific materials or associated links needed during the learning module. The need to access associated external links are limited to:</p> <p>Reflective question related to RPL, Recognition of prior learning gives us wings' (https://acqf.africa/resources/recognition-of-prior-learning/recognition-of-prior-learning-gives-us-wings).</p> <p>Assessment #1 requires the learner to access a NQF document of a country of their choice.</p> <p>Assessment #2 requires the learner to map quality assurance arrangements in the qualifications systems, across the sectors, to the NQF chosen in Assessment #1.</p>

Area of guidance	Notes
Organisation	<p>If delivered within a large group it is suggested that smaller groupings be restricted to about 4 – 6 people to encourage participation of each member. It is suggested that each small group, for each task, allocates a note taker and speaker. Views should be shared across all groups with the aim to prompt further discussion and revelations.</p>
Assessment	<p>The assessments can be undertaken as an individual or as a group.</p> <p>If the Training Programme becomes a part of an accredited component of a qualification (e.g. module, subject) then the assessments would need to be adjusted to ensure that individual performance can be demonstrated.</p> <p>There are no specific resources required except for that included in Assessment #1 and #2 which requires access to information pertaining to an NQF and its associated quality assurance arrangements.</p>

15 Assessment

Approach to assessment

The assessments have been developed to enable an individual or a group to complete the tasks. There are three assessments focussing on:

1. NQF coherence and logic
2. NQF linkages to quality assurance
3. Consideration of stages in the recognition of prior learning, based on a case study.

Assessment tasks 1 and 2 require the individual or group access to an NQF that they are familiar with and also its associated quality assurance arrangements within and across education and training sectors.

Assessment #1: NQF coherence and logic

The following assessment may be completed as an individual or as a group.

Select an NQF policy document of your choice. Write a report, as if to the responsible authority, providing a critique of the policy document and suggestions for improvement or suggest areas for that require further consideration

1. Critically analyse the document and in relation to the following questions. The questions are not exhaustive but are aimed at guiding your response. It is suggested that for each area of interest,
2. Once you have analysed the NQF policy document, provide suggestions for improvement or suggest areas that require further consideration. Justify your response.

The following table outlines some key areas to which your report will need to address. However, the list of key areas is dependent what is included in the NQF policy document, and the list therefore is indicative rather exhaustive.

Area	Questions
Scope	What is the scope of the NQF? Is the information consistent across the document?
Objectives	What are the purposes or objectives of the NQF? Are they consistent with the scope of the NQF?
Level descriptors	Are the level descriptors generic or specific to a qualification type? Are the domains separate or blended? Is there a vertical and horizontal logic?
Volume of learning measure	What volume of learning measure is used? If a credit value is ascribed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the definition clear? Is directed and non-directed (or similar terms) well defined.

Area	Questions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the volume measure used for? Consistency of construction of qualifications and/or a credit and accumulation system? Is the purpose clear?
Qualification type descriptors	Are qualification types ascribed a level on the NQF? Is there a map/table and/or text descriptor? Is there alignment with other aspects of the NQF? Are there entries on the map/table that are not qualification types but rather a stage in the broader education and training system?
Coherence	Is there overarching coherence? Do all the structures link together.
Promotion of other strategies	How does the NQF promote other strategies, such as lifelong learning, recognition of prior learning? Are these concepts clearly explained? Does the accompanying information and the diagrams support the intention of the strategies?

Word length: Suggested word length is 2000 words.

Assessment #2: Linkages to quality assurance

The following assessment may be completed as an individual or as a group.

For the NQF selected in Assessment #1, consider the quality assurance arrangements for two sectors, e.g. TVET and higher education.

Write a report for an international audience, explaining the quality assurance arrangements for the two sectors. It is suggested that the two sectors be treated separately and that there is some analysis of any variances.

The following table outlines some key areas to which your report will need to address. However, the list of key areas is dependent what is included in the qualifications system, and the list therefore is indicative rather exhaustive.

Area	Questions
NQF	Who is responsible for the NQF? What is the legal basis of the NQF and/or the authority? How is stakeholder engagement acknowledged in the governance of the NQF?
Responsible body for quality assurance	Who is responsible for the quality assurance in the sector? What is their legal remit? How does the agency (or agencies) include stakeholders in the governance of the agency or the qualifications system?
Assurance of qualifications formulation and development	Is there a transparent process for quality assuring the formulation and development of qualifications, e.g. quality standards, guidelines, criteria? How are qualifications approved? Is there is process to monitor the efficacy of qualifications, e.g. continue to meet an

Area	Questions
	identified need? How are stakeholders, e.g. professional associations, included in the quality assurance processes?
Assurance of providers	Is there a transparent process for quality assuring providers, e.g. quality standards, guidelines, criteria? How are providers approved? How are providers monitored? Are the reports of monitoring activities made public? Considering the outcomes of monitoring activities, are sanctions, conditions and rewards applied?
Assurance of the provision of programmes leading to a qualification	Is there a transparent process for quality assuring the provision of programmes leading to a qualification, e.g. quality standards, guidelines, criteria? How are providers approved to deliver a programmed leading to a qualification? How is provider provision monitored? Are the reports of monitoring activities made public? Considering the outcomes of monitoring activities, are sanctions, conditions and rewards applied?
Assurance of assessment and certification	<p>Who issues certification documents, e.g. awarding body?</p> <p>How is assessment judgements quality assured, e.g. verification or moderation processes?</p> <p>How are certification documents quality assured to ensure that they provide consistent information and strategies are in place to avoid fraudulent activity?</p>
Registers	<p>Are there public registers for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications that meet the NQF • Providers and the programmes that they are approved to deliver? <p>Who is responsible for maintaining these registers?</p>
Public information (system wide evaluations, data)	<p>Is data on provider compliance and/or performance made public?</p> <p>Are system wide evaluations, e.g. up take of RPL, stakeholders satisfaction, undertaken and made public?</p>

Word length: Suggested word length is 2000 words.

Assessment #3: RPL

The following assessment may be completed as an individual or as a group.

RPL is considered both a process and an assessment. Castel-Branco (2022) summarises the RPL process in the following diagram.

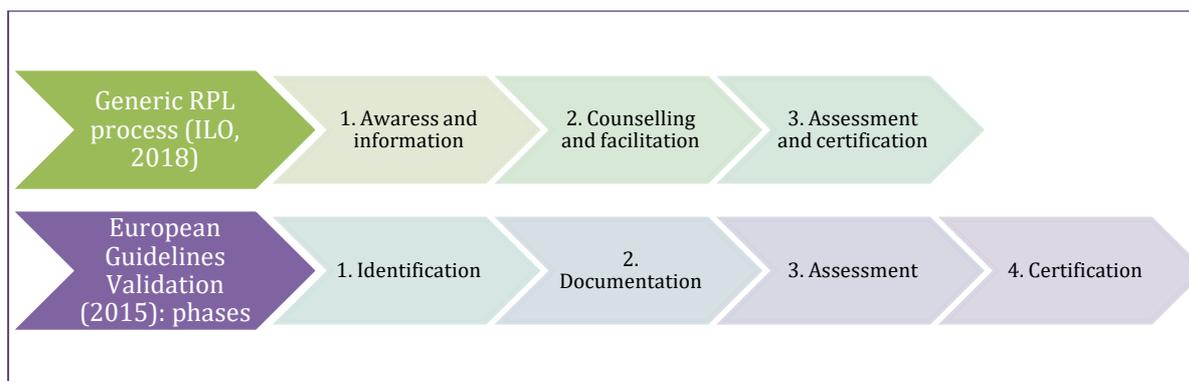


Figure 6: RPL phases

Source: Castel-Branco 2022 (adapted from ILO 2018, Cedefop 2015)

The ACQF website includes a report, 'Recognition of prior learning gives us wings' (<https://acqf.africa/resources/recognition-of-prior-learning/recognition-of-prior-learning-gives-us-wings>) as to how RPL is implemented in 10 African countries.

Annex 6 includes an extract from this report in relation to implementation of RPL in Kenya.

 **Assessment**

This assessment can be undertaken as an individual or a group response.

Read the Kenyan overview of implementation of RPL (Annex 6) and respond to the following questions.

1. In the case study under section 'How does RPL work?', identify the various steps that fall within the 4 phases of European Union model.
2. Within the process 'How does RPL Work?' what steps could be added to strengthen the Identification phase noted above?
3. RPL in Kenya is applicable to the basic sector, industrial sector, TVET sector and university sector. Review the 'How does RPL Work?' Consider whether aspects of this process identified 'How does RPL work?' need to be adapted (e.g. strengthened, change of focus) for the different sectors. If so, how and what could be adapted?

16 Appendices

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Annex 1: Purpose or objectives of NQFs

Country	NQF purpose or objectives	Scope
Botswana	<p>To provide for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single integrated framework for learning achievement • Access, mobility and progression • Enhancement of quality of education and training • Comparability and determination of equivalency of qualifications • Alignment of qualifications with industry needs • Promotion of lifelong learning through the recognition of learning achievements including workplace learning • Promotion of regional and international recognition, and portability of local qualifications • Recognition of international quality assured qualifications • Registration of quality assured qualifications. <p>Source: Botswana Qualifications Authority (National Credit and Qualifications Framework) Regulations 2016</p>	Early childhood to tertiary education and training
Cape Verde	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate and articulate the qualifications obtained in different subsystems of education, vocational education and higher education and those obtained from non-formal and informal pathways and professional experience; • improve transparency of qualifications, supporting their value in the labour market, education and training and other contexts of personal and social life; • promote access, evaluation and quality of qualifications; • apply a competence-based approach to define and describe qualifications and promote validation of non-formal and informal learning; tap into the advantages of this approach to increase the participation in lifelong learning of the population at risk of unemployment and precarious employment; • promote close links with the European Qualifications Framework and with NQFs of other countries, notably ECOWAS member countries, with the aim to improve people's mobility and facilitate recognition of skills and competences; • improve readability, transparency and comparability of qualifications in the education and training system and employment training; and 	Covers basic, secondary and higher education, professional training and the processes of recognition, validation and certification of competences acquired through non-formal and informal ways, in accordance with the legislation

Country	NQF purpose or objectives	Scope
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adopt adequate measures assuring that all new certificates and diplomas issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference to the adequate NQF level. 	
Lesotho	<p>The objectives are summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To integrate existing sector frameworks into a single framework, as reflected in the Level Descriptors • To remove barriers between institutions and other sub-sectors for improving articulation and learner progression • To uphold equity and redress enabling citizens to acquire qualifications irrespective of age and lack of formal qualifications. Special measures are in place to allow access for disabled, and disadvantaged minority groups and promote gender access to scarce skills programmes • To improve articulation and learner mobility through links and pathways between education and training courses and qualifications. Competences obtained in different settings are recognized through the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and the recognition of current competencies (RCC) at workplaces or educational institutions • To foster quality and relevance through outcomes and standard-based education and training which is more demand-driven and leads to meaningful employment. This requires the engagement and commitment of all social partners • To acknowledge and value diversity and worth of all qualifications as they serve identified purposes contributing to the larger developmental goals • To facilitate curriculum innovation and qualifications renewal • To ensure consistency in terms of the qualification verification and articulation processes of all awards in education, training, research, innovation and skills development within Lesotho, the SADC region and internationally. 	Basic education, technical and vocational and training, academic, professional development awards and part qualifications.
Mozambique	<p>The draft decree of the integrated NQF defines 7 objectives, briefly summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to facilitate clarity and articulation of all qualifications in an integrated framework and promote competency-based education; • establish coherence and transparency of qualifications in the frame of the national education system (SNE) and facilitate mobility and recognition of degrees and other qualifications; • define parameters to compare qualifications in the SNE; • facilitate horizontal and vertical mobility of holders of qualifications within the SNE; 	New integrated and comprehensive NQF (planned for adoption in March 2022, by the Cabinet of Ministers)

Country	NQF purpose or objectives	Scope
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure the portability of qualifications, mobility of learners and workers, and lifelong learning; • facilitate alignment of national qualifications with SADC qualifications frameworks (SADCQFs) and other qualifications in Africa and in the world; and • facilitate access to qualifications offered within the context of the SNE through processes of recognition of acquired competencies. <p>Principles of the new comprehensive NQF: equality, equity, transparency, flexibility, mobility, internal adequacy, external adequacy, mandatory application, and technical authority.</p>	
Namibia	<p>The NQF represents a set of agreements, rules and requirements that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the consistent use of qualification titles • Provide people with a clearer understanding of what a person holding a particular qualification has achieved • Assist people determine the similarities and differences between qualifications in Namibia • Improve the harmonisation of the different education and training sectors, and their alignment with the worlds of work • Give people greater assurance of the quality of education, training and assessment in Namibia • Enhance the reputation of Namibia’s education and training systems in the regional, continental and international communities. <p>Source: http://www.namqa.org/about-us/Overview/161/</p>	Certificate to doctorate (TVET and Higher Education)
Rwanda	<p>The RQF’s objectives are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 To create an integrated NQF for learning and training achievements for Basic Education, TVET, Higher Education among other service providers in industry and professional practice 2 To improve the understanding of the Rwandan education system, including learning pathways and qualifications and how they relate to each other 3 To ensure that Rwandan education and training standards are defined by agreed learning outcomes that are applied consistently 4 To enhance and coordinate the quality of education and training by setting standards across levels of qualifications in the different education subsectors 	Basic, adult, TVET, Higher education

Country	NQF purpose or objectives	Scope
	<p>5 To promote competence-based approaches to learning, teaching and assessment in all Rwandan education subsectors</p> <p>6 To provide multiple pathways that encourage learners to upgrade their skills, knowledge and competencies to respond to the changing needs of education and the labour market</p> <p>7 To promote the recognition of prior learning through which, formal and informal learning are measured and mediated for recognition across different contexts for credit, access, inclusion or advancement in the national formal education and training system and labour market</p> <p>8 To establish a reference framework for Rwandan education and training providers to ensure that they meet required quality standards and award qualification certificates and degrees which are nationally, regionally, and internationally recognized.</p> <p>Source: Rwanda Qualifications Framework 2021</p>	
Seychelles	<p>The Act setting up the Seychelles Qualifications Authority defines the Seychelles National Qualifications Framework (SNQF) as “a framework for the development, recognition and award of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skills and competence to be acquired by learners.”</p> <p>As described in the Report on Alignment of Seychelles NQF to SADCQF (pg 21-22), the Seychelles National Qualifications Framework (SNQF) is designed to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assured, nationally recognized consistent training standards and qualifications; • Recognition and credit for knowledge and skills acquired. It aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure comprehensiveness in the recognition of learning and qualifications attained in the country, while ensuring parity for occupational qualifications; • Promote and regulate the development of qualifications based on unit standards which are linked to the workplace and society requirements; • Promote a more integrated approach to education and training; <p>The website indicates the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It provides a structure, or a framework, by which all education and training can be included in one system and can be compared with each other 	Primary through to higher education.

Country	NQF purpose or objectives	Scope
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is intended to help learners to make informed choices about their qualifications and to see what qualifications and careers paths can be available to them. It also makes it easier for the learner to explain to others what qualifications he or she holds. This is important when seeking to undertake further education and training, or applying for a job - at home or overseas • It is intended to help providers of education and training to ensure that the standards of their qualifications are at the required level and can be recognized both at home and abroad • For employers the framework will serve to clarify the level of education and training that their current or prospective employees possess, for example, by being able to compare with other qualifications on the framework. <p>Source: http://www.sqa.sc/pages/NQF/Nqf.aspx</p>	
South Africa	<p>The objectives of the NQF are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements b) facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths c) enhance the quality of education and training d) accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities. <p>Source: No. 67 of 2008: National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008</p>	General and further education, occupations and trades, higher education
Zimbabwe	<p>The primary goals are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. establish pathways for vertical progression of education and training qualifications 2. establish pathways for horizontal comparability of education and training qualifications 3. increase coherence between education output and needs of the labour market <p>Source: Zimbabwe National Qualifications Framework 2018</p>	General education, TVET, Higher Education, Professions

Annex 2: NQF case study

The following is a selective extract of a NQF, not within the African Continent.

Rationale:

1. The NQF shall help set out the relationship between the tertiary education system, the technical and vocational education and training, and the school system.
2. It defines the learning outcomes of academic levels and credit system based on academic load. This facilitates comparison of programmes among school, technical and vocational institutes, monastic and tertiary education institutes, which will promote the mobility and portability of these qualifications.

Objectives:

1. Accommodates the diversity of purposes of education and training that citizens avail in and outside the country
2. Supports and enhances the national and international mobility of graduates and workers through recognition of the value and comparability of the country's qualifications.
3. Supports the development and maintenance of pathways, which provide access to qualifications and assist students for lateral movement.

Scope

1. The NQF is a transparent system that shall serve as a point of reference for all qualifications
2. The NQF enables the process of international recognition and cross-border mobility of students, which shall promote accessibility as well as employment through standardization and linkages.

Level	School education	Vocational education	University Education	Monastic education
8			Doctoral	XXXXX qualification title
7			Masters	XXXX qualification title
6			Bachelor	XXX qualification title
5		ND1 and ND2	Diploma	XX qualification title
4	HSEC	NC2 and NC3		
3	CSE	NC1		X qualification title
2	LSE			
1	PE			

Note: PE = Primary Education, LSE = Lower secondary education, CSE = Certificate for Secondary Education, HSEC = Higher Secondary Education Certificate, NC = National Certificate, ND = National Diploma.

Annex 3: Summary of the QA principles and indicators – UNESCO Asia Pacific (UNESCO 2017b)

#	Principles	Indicators	
		Qualitative	Quantitative
1.	There is a clear vision for how QA of TVET qualifications operates across the TVET qualifications system.	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A vision for QA of TVET qualifications is communicated through legislation, blueprints or similar documents. ● A roadmap is documented and communicated for the future development or enhancement of the TVET qualifications system (and its quality assurance) in the medium and long term. 	<p><i>Evidence that there is a clear vision for QA of TVET qualifications is measured by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adoption of a legal framework, a blueprint or similar document for QA of TVET qualifications. ● The roadmap is endorsed by all key stakeholders.
2.	Organizations involved in QA of TVET qualifications operate with clear and transparent governance arrangements.	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organizations involved in QA of TVET qualifications have appropriate governance arrangements documented through protocols and practices to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guide their work in a transparent way ○ Ensure independence of decisions ○ Avoid conflicts of interest ○ Identify clear roles and lines of responsibility and accountability ○ Ensure accountability through public reporting ● Organizations have made their protocols and practices public and have implemented them. ● Organizations have undertaken internal and/or external evaluation to inform their practice. 	<p><i>Evidence of effectiveness of implemented protocols and practices is measured by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proportion of organizations that have made public their protocols and practices in relation to QA of TVET qualifications. ● Proportion of organizations that have undergone internal and/or external evaluation that demonstrate appropriate governance arrangements are in place and are systematically implemented. ● Proportion of organizations that have made the findings of internal and/or external evaluations public.

#	Principles	Indicators	
		Qualitative	Quantitative
3.	QA of TVET qualifications practice is appropriately financed.	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual plans for budget allocations are documented, communicated and made public. • Budget allocations support and are aligned with QA of TVET qualifications policy goals and practices. 	<p><i>Evidence of effectiveness of budget allocation and appropriateness of expenditure is measured by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of investment in assessment resources, services and facilities. • Level of investment in assessor capacity and capability, including professional development. • Level of investment in quality assurance staff capacity and capability, including professional development. • Level of investment in monitoring, review and continuous improvement.
4.	QA of TVET qualifications practice is based on clear and transparent quality standards.	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality standards are documented, communicated and made public. • Quality standards are applied to QA of TVET qualifications practice. • Quality standards are applied to evaluation processes. • Quality standards are reviewed and refined in response to evaluation. • Quality standards enable comparisons to be made between qualifications systems, both within the country and externally. • Level of transparency and stakeholder awareness of quality assurance objectives and standards in relation to TVET qualifications. 	<p><i>Evidence of effectiveness of quality standards and their application is measured by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of assessment providers (e.g. education institutions, TVET providers, assessment centres, certifying/awarding bodies) that meet quality standards. • Proportion of TVET qualifications that meet accreditation quality standards. • Proportion of TVET qualifications that have been re-evaluated against quality standards. • Proportion of assessment providers that have been re-evaluated against quality standards.
5.	QA of TVET qualifications practice addresses conception and formation	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p>	<p><i>Evidence of effectiveness of QA practices is measured by:</i></p>

#	Principles	Indicators	
		Qualitative	Quantitative
	of qualifications, assessment, validation and certification processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documented QA of TVET qualifications practice addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conception and formation of qualifications that are based on learning outcomes and are linked to labour market needs. ○ Assessment and validation of assessment outcomes, ensuring that valid and reliable assessment decisions are made in accordance with clear outcomes-based standards. ○ Certification processes, to confirm that the outcomes of the predetermined standards have been met and an accurate record of achievement is issued. ● Implementation of QA of TVET qualifications practice. ● A plan for evaluation of the effectiveness of QA of TVET qualifications practices is agreed upon and undertaken (refer to Principles 10, 11, 12). ● Findings and reports of evaluations are made public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proportion of TVET qualifications that meet accreditation quality standards. ● Proportion of TVET qualifications aligned to labour market needs. ● Proportion of TVET qualifications with professional association approval. ● Proportion of assessors that meet quality standards or have assessment qualifications. ● Proportion of assessors participating in professional development. ● Level of activity related to evaluation and review of assessment outcomes. ● Evidence of improvements to assessment practice as a result of evaluation and review. ● Proportion of quality assurance staff participating in professional development. ● Proportion of quality assurance staff with quality assurance qualifications. ● Level of satisfaction of participants and employers with qualification outcomes. ● Proportion of graduates employed or who have progressed to further study.
6.	Key stakeholder groups are involved in key aspects of QA practice (e.g. conception and formation of TVET qualifications, assessment, validation and certification).	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documented processes for the QA of TVET qualifications include the roles of the key stakeholders. ● The roles of the key stakeholders are clear and made public. 	<p><i>Evidence of the commitment and engagement of key stakeholders is measured by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proportion of key stakeholders participating in the conception and formation of TVET qualifications, assessment, validation, and certification processes (refer to Principle 5).

#	Principles	Indicators	
		Qualitative	Quantitative
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of key stakeholders participating in reviews of QA of TVET qualifications practice (refer to Principle 10).
7.	Economic, social and environmental dimensions are explicit in QA of TVET qualifications practice to: maximize access, social inclusion, pathways, articulation, participation of vulnerable groups, and participant retention and completion rates; and prioritize key industry sectors.	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public policy documentation links quality TVET provision with facilitating the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the country. Information is provided to stakeholders about access and social inclusion schemes. Information is provided to stakeholders about credential evaluation services. Number and range of schemes implemented. Participant demographics are linked to quantitative measures. 	<p><i>Evidence that QA management includes economic, social and environmental dimensions is measured by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number enrolled in TVET qualifications as a proportion of total enrolments in the formal education system. Retention and completion rates by TVET qualification type, industry sector and field of study, and participant demographics. Withdrawal rates by TVET qualification type, industry sector and field of study. Level of investment in strategies to maximize access and social inclusion. Proportion of participants from vulnerable groups. Range of pathways/articulation for each qualification and field of study within the TVET sector and for other education sectors within the country, e.g. basic education, higher education. Proportion of participants moving between and into TVET qualifications and/or other education sectors. Proportion of TVET qualifications that address priority sector areas. Proportion of TVET qualifications aligned to labour market needs. Proportion of TVET qualifications with a formal workplace learning component. Proportion of participants that have achieved all or part of a TVET qualification through the recognition

#	Principles	Indicators	
		Qualitative	Quantitative
			<p>of prior learning, e.g. assessment of non-formal or informal learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of applications for credential evaluation, e.g. of international qualifications.
8.	Barriers to assessment, including for non-formal and informal learning, are minimized.	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions are informed by research into barriers to assessment. • Barriers to assessment, including for non-formal learning, are documented, and preventative strategies or schemes have been proposed. • Schemes and communication of the schemes are implemented. • Document guidelines for assessors, related to undertaking recognition of prior learning. 	<p><i>Evidence of effectiveness of implemented strategies is measured by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of schemes to reduce barriers to assessment of non-formal and informal learning. • Proportion of TVET qualifications offering recognition of prior learning or agreed credit. • Proportion of successful applications for recognition of prior learning or credit. • Proportion of participants that achieved all or part of a TVET qualification through the recognition of prior learning, e.g. assessment of non-formal or informal learning. • Proportion of TVET qualifications that include formal credit arrangements with other relevant qualifications within TVET or in other sectors. • Non-formal and work-based participation rates.
9.	Professionalization of staff underpins QA of TVET qualifications practices.	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection, recruitment and remuneration of QA staff and/or assessors are documented. • Professional development strategies for QA staff and/or assessors are documented. • Budget allocations support and align with the professional development needs of QA staff and/or assessors. 	<p><i>Evidence that QA practice is maintained over time is measured by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of investment and allocations for assessor capacity and capability, including professional development. • Proportion of investment and allocations for quality assurance staff capacity and capability, including professional development.

#	Principles	Indicators	
		Qualitative	Quantitative
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proportion of quality assurance staff with quality assurance qualifications. ● Proportion of assessors that meet quality standards or have assessment qualifications. ● Rate of staff assessor retention/turnover. ● Proportion of quality assurance staff participating in professional development. ● Rate of quality assurance staff retention/turnover.
10.	Continuous improvement underpins QA of TVET qualifications practice; decisions are informed by data and research.	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data standards and data sets, and research strategies to inform continuous improvement of TVET qualifications decisions are agreed upon and used. ● Monitoring and continuous improvement processes are implemented. ● Outcomes of monitoring and continuous improvement activities are communicated and made public. 	<p><i>Evidence of effectiveness of continuous improvement on QA practice is measured by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consistency and completeness of data sets. ● Proportion of use of data sets in research and decision-making. ● Number of reviews of QA of TVET qualifications practice.
11.	Organizations involved in QA of TVET qualifications commit to internal evaluation and cyclical external evaluation, as well as to making public the findings of external evaluations.	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal evaluation and external methods are documented. ● Internal evaluation is implemented and findings are actioned. ● External evaluation is undertaken; independent findings in relation to the QA of TVET qualification are communicated and made public, and findings are actioned. 	<p><i>Evidence of the effectiveness of self-assessment and external evaluation is measured by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proportion of organizations applying internal evaluation and making public findings and improvements. ● Proportion of organizations applying cyclical external evaluation and making public the findings of external evaluations.

#	Principles	Indicators	
		Qualitative	Quantitative
12.	QA of TVET qualifications practice remains fit for purpose and is sustainable.	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QA of TVET qualifications practice is documented, demonstrating that practices are proportional to the context. • There is a plan for sustainable QA practices. • QA of TVET qualifications practice is reviewed to evaluate fitness for purpose, potential sustainability, and for continuous improvement (refer to Principles 10 and 11). • QA of TVET qualifications practice remains stable and is consistently applied over time. 	<p><i>Evidence that QA practice is maintained over time is measured by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of system reviews of QA of TVET qualifications practice (refer to Principle 10). • Key stakeholders' satisfaction and confidence levels in QA of TVET qualifications practice remain consistent or improve over time. • Key stakeholders' satisfaction and confidence levels in TVET qualification outcomes remain consistent or improve over time.
13.	QA of TVET qualifications practice is enhanced through national and international linkages and cooperation.	<p><i>Implementation is demonstrated by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy for harmonizing the QA practices of TVET qualifications with other education sectors within the country, e.g. higher education and basic education, is documented, communicated and made public. • TVET quality standards are benchmarked to other education sector QA systems within the country. • The internationalization and cooperation strategy is documented, communicated and made public. • TVET quality standards are benchmarked to other countries' QA qualifications systems. • Joint projects (nationally and internationally) are undertaken related to QA of TVET qualifications. • Establishment and involvement in a community of practice. 	<p><i>Evidence that QA practice is maintained over time is measured by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of benchmarking and harmonization activities with other education sector QA systems within the country that have been undertaken and made public. • Number of benchmarking activities with other countries' QA systems that have been undertaken and made public. • Number and level of participation in collaborative projects related to QA of TVET qualifications, nationally and internationally. • Level of participation in community of practice activities.

Annex 4: EQAVET Framework

Source: Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020H1202%2801%29>

Part A. EQAVET indicative descriptors

This annex proposes indicative descriptors aiming to support Member States and VET providers, as they deem appropriate, when implementing the EQAVET Framework. They are structured by phases of the quality cycle: Planning – Implementation – Evaluation – Review. They can be applied to both initial and continuing VET and are applicable to all learning environments: school based provision and work based learning including apprenticeships schemes.

Quality Criteria	Indicative descriptors at VET-system level	Indicative descriptors at VET-provider level
Planning reflects a strategic vision shared by the relevant stake holders and includes explicit goals/objectives, actions and indicators	<p>Goals/objectives of VET are described for the medium and long terms, and linked to European and Sustainable Development Goals taking into account environmental sustainability considerations</p> <p>Social partners and all other relevant stakeholders participate in setting VET goals and objectives at the different levels</p> <p>Targets are established and monitored through specific indicators (success criteria)</p> <p>Mechanisms and procedures have been established to identify the training needs of the labour market and society</p>	<p>European, national and regional VET policy goals/objectives are reflected in the local targets set by the VET providers</p> <p>Explicit goals/objectives and targets are set and monitored, and programmes are designed to meet them</p> <p>Ongoing consultation with social partners and all other relevant stakeholders takes place to identify specific local/ individual needs</p> <p>Responsibilities in quality management and development have been explicitly allocated</p> <p>There is an early involvement of staff in planning, including with regard to quality development</p>
	<p>An information policy has been devised to ensure optimum disclosure of quality results/outcomes subject to national/ regional data protection requirements</p> <p>Standards and guidelines for recognition, validation and certification of competences of individuals have been defined</p> <p>VET qualifications are described using learning outcomes</p> <p>Mechanisms are established for the quality assurance of the design, assessment and review of qualifications</p> <p>VET programmes are designed to allow flexible learning pathways and to respond quickly to changing labour market needs</p>	<p>Providers plan cooperative initiatives with relevant stakeholders</p> <p>The relevant stakeholders participate in the process of analysing local needs</p> <p>VET providers have an explicit and transparent quality assurance system in place</p> <p>Measures are designed to ensure compliance with data protection rules</p>
Implementation plans are devised in consultation with stakeholders and include explicit principles	Implementation plans are established in cooperation with social partners, VET providers and other relevant stakeholders at the different levels	<p>Resources are appropriately internally aligned/assigned with a view to achieving the targets set in the implementation plans</p> <p>Relevant and inclusive partnerships, including those between teachers and trainers, are</p>

	<p>Implementation plans include consideration of the resources required, the capacity of the users and the tools and guidelines needed for support</p> <p>Guidelines and standards have been devised for implementation at different levels. These guidelines and standards include assessment, validation and certification of qualifications</p> <p>Implementation plans include specific support towards the training of teachers and trainers, including for digital skills and environmental sustainability</p>	<p>explicitly supported to implement the actions planned</p> <p>The strategic plan for staff competence development specifies the need for training for teachers and trainers</p> <p>Staff undertake regular training and develop cooperation with relevant external stakeholders to support capacity building and quality improvement, and to enhance performance</p>
	<p>VET providers' responsibilities in the implementation process are explicitly described and made transparent</p> <p>A national and/or regional quality assurance framework has been devised and includes guidelines and quality standards at VET- provider level to promote continuous improvement and self-regulation</p>	<p>VET providers' programmes enable learners to meet the expected learning outcomes and become involved in the learning process</p> <p>VET providers respond to the learning needs of individuals by using a learner – centred approach which enable learners to achieve the expected learning outcomes</p> <p>VET providers promote innovation in teaching and learning methods, in school and in the workplace, supported by the use of digital technologies and online-learning tools</p> <p>VET providers use valid, accurate and reliable methods to assess individuals' learning outcomes</p>
<p>Evaluation of outcomes and processes is regularly carried out and supported by measurement</p>	<p>A methodology for evaluation has been devised, covering internal and external evaluation</p> <p>Stakeholder involvement in the monitoring and evaluation process is agreed and clearly described</p> <p>The national/regional standards and processes for improving and assuring quality are relevant and proportionate to the needs of the sector</p> <p>Systems are subject to self-evaluation, internal and external review, as appropriate</p>	<p>Self-assessment/self-evaluation is periodically carried out under national and regional regulations/frameworks or at the initiative of VET providers, covering also the digital readiness and environmental sustainability of VET institutions</p> <p>Evaluation and review covers processes and results/outcomes of education and training including the assessment of learner satisfaction as well as staff performance and satisfaction</p>
	<p>Early warning systems are implemented</p> <p>Performance indicators are applied</p> <p>Relevant, regular and coherent data collection takes place, in order to measure success and identify areas for improvement. Appropriate data collection methodologies have been devised, e.g. questionnaires and indicators/metrics</p>	<p>Evaluation and review includes the collection and use of data, and adequate and effective mechanisms to involve internal and external stakeholders</p> <p>Early warning systems are implemented</p>
Review	<p>Procedures, mechanisms and instruments for undertaking reviews are defined and</p>	<p>Learners' feedback is gathered on their individual learning experience and on the learning and teaching environment. Together</p>

	used to improve the quality of provision at all levels	with teachers', trainers' and all other relevant stakeholders' feedback this is used to inform further actions
	Processes are regularly reviewed and action plans for change devised. Systems are adjusted accordingly	Information on the outcomes of the review is widely and publicly available
	Information on the outcomes of evaluation is made publicly available	Procedures on feedback and review are part of a strategic learning process in the organisation, support the development of high quality provision, and improve opportunities for learners.
		Results/outcomes of the evaluation process are discussed with relevant stakeholders and appropriate action plans are put in place

Part B. The reference set of EQAVET Indicators

This section proposes a set of reference indicators which can be used to support the evaluation and quality improvement of national/regional VET systems and/or VET providers when implementing the EQAVET framework.

Indicator	Type of Indicator	Purpose of the Policy
Overarching Indicators for Quality Assurance		
Number 1		
Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers:	Context/Input indicator	Promote a quality improvement culture at VET-provider level
a)share of VET providers applying internal quality assurance systems defined by law/at own initiative		Increase the transparency of quality of training
b) share of accredited VET providers		Improve mutual trust on training provision
Number 2		
Investment in training of teachers and trainers:	Input/Process indicator	Promote ownership of teachers and trainers in the process of quality development in VET
a)share of teachers and trainers participating in further training		Improve the responsiveness of VET to changing demands of labour market
b)amount of funds invested, including for digital skills		Increase individual learning capacity building
		Improve learners' achievement
Indicators supporting quality objectives for VET policies		
Number 3		
Participation rate in VET programmes:	Input/Process/Output indicator	Obtain basic information at VET-system and VET-provider levels on the attractiveness of VET
Number of participants in VET programmes (1), according to the type of programme and the individual criteria (2)		Target support to increase access to VET, including for disadvantaged groups
Number 4		
Completion rate in VET programmes:	Process/Output/Outcome indicator	Obtain basic information on educational achievements and the quality of training processes
Number of persons having successfully completed/abandoned VET programmes, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria		

		Calculate drop-out rates compared to participation rate Support successful completion as one of the main objectives for quality in VET Support adapted training provision, including for disadvantaged groups
Number 5		
Placement rate in VET programmes: a) destination of VET learners at a designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria (3) b) share of employed learners at a designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria	Outcome indicator	Support employability Improve responsiveness of VET to the changing demands in the labour market Support adapted training provision, including for disadvantaged groups
Number 6		
Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace: a) information on occupation obtained by individuals after completion of training, according to type of training and individual criteria b) satisfaction rate of individuals and employers with acquired skills/competences	Outcome indicator (mix of qualitative and quantitative data)	Increase employability Improve responsiveness of VET to changing demands in the labour market Support adapted training provision, including for disadvantaged groups
Context information		
Number 7		
Unemployment rate (4) according to individual criteria	Context indicator	Background information for policy decision-making at VET-system level
Number 8		
Prevalence of vulnerable groups: a) percentage of participants in VET classified as disadvantaged groups (in a defined region or catchment area) according to age and gender b) success rate of disadvantaged groups according to age and gender	Context indicator	Background information for policy decision-making at VET-system level Support access to VET for disadvantaged groups Support adapted training provision for disadvantaged groups
Number 9		
Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market: a) information on mechanisms set up to identify changing demands at different levels b) evidence of the use of such mechanisms and their effectiveness	Context/Input indicator (qualitative information)	Improve responsiveness of VET to changing demands in the labour market Support employability
Number 10		
Schemes used to promote better access to VET and provide guidance to (potential) VET learners: a) information on existing schemes at different levels b) evidence of their effectiveness	Process indicator (qualitative information)	Promote access to VET, including for disadvantaged groups

		Provide guidance to (potential) VET learners Support adapted training provision
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(1) For IVT: a period of 6 weeks of training is needed before a learner is counted as a participant. For lifelong learning: percentage of population admitted to formal VET programmes.

(2) Besides basic information on gender and age, other social criteria might be applied, e.g. early school leavers, highest educational achievement, migrants, persons with disabilities, length of unemployment.

(3) For IVT: including information on the destination of learners who have dropped out.

(4) Definition according to ILO: individuals aged 15-74 without work, actively seeking employment and ready to start work.

Annex 5: Governance models and stakeholder engagement of an NQF

Country	Overview of governance and stakeholder engagement	Overview of functions
Hong Kong	<p>Education Bureau</p> <p>The Bureau is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formulating, developing and reviewing policies, programmes and legislation in respect of education from pre-primary to tertiary level • overseeing the effective implementation of educational programmes. <p>The Bureau monitors the services provided by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the University Grants Committee, the Student Finance Office, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications and the Vocational Training Council. <p>Source: https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/about-edb/info/our-work/index.html</p> <p>The Bureau has set up Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs) or Cross-Industry Training Advisory Committee (CITAC), consisting of representatives of employers, employees, professional bodies and regulatory bodies of the relevant industries. Their key function is developing competency standards but also are key players in promoting QF in the industry sector.</p> <p>https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/itac/index.html</p>	<p>The Education Bureau is responsible for the formulation of policy, strategy and direction on the development of the Hong Kong QF. A Secretariat was set up by the Bureau in June 2009, and serves as its executive arm to develop, implement and promote the QF. The Secretariat’s major functions and responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisting EDB in the development of the infrastructure of QF, with a view to building a more effective platform for life-long learning • implementing the QF in various industries and sectors • enhancing the recognition of QF and QF-recognised qualifications locally and internationally. <p>Source: https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/overview/gov_admin/index.html</p>
Kenya	<p>Kenya National Qualifications Authority</p> <p>Kenya National Qualification Authority (KNQA) Act 2014 + Regulation 2018</p> <p>Management of KNQA is via a Council comprising a Chair appointed by the Cabinet Secretary, 3 Principal Secretaries (education, labour,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-ordinate and supervise the development of policies on national qualifications • develop a framework for an accreditation system on qualifications • develop a system for assessment of national qualifications

Country	Overview of governance and stakeholder engagement	Overview of functions
	<p>finance), 6 persons (from Commission for University Education, TVETA Authority, Education Standards and Quality Assurance Council, a professional association, employer groups, unions) and Director-General.</p> <p>Source: https://www.knqa.go.ke/index.php/background/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and review inter-relationships and linkages across national qualifications • maintain a national database of national qualifications • publish manuals, codes and guidelines on national qualifications • advise and support any person, body or institution which is responsible for the award of national qualifications • set standards and benchmarks for qualifications and competencies including skills, knowledge, attitudes and values • define the levels of qualifications and competencies • provide for the recognition of attainment or competencies including skills, knowledge, attitudes and values • facilitate linkages, credit transfers and exemptions and a vertical and horizontal mobility at all levels to enable entry, re-entry and exit • conduct research on equalization of qualifications • establish standards for harmonization and recognition of national and foreign qualifications • build confidence in the national qualifications system that contributes to the national economy • provide pathways that support the development and maintenance of flexible access to qualifications • promote the recognition of national qualifications internationally
Namibia	<p>Namibia Qualifications Authority</p> <p>Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) Act 1996; Regulation: 2006</p> <p>NQA is managed by a Council consisting of Permanent Secretary, Vice Chancellor of the University of Namibia, Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia, Direct NQA, Permanent Secretaries of another 10 other ministries, 21 other members appointed by the Minister (9 invited from employer organisations, employee organisations, organisations representing disabled persons, and organisations representing the private sector, as well as another 6 persons within various ministries, and also members representing professional bodies [architects,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to set up and administer an NQF • set occupational standards for any occupation, job, post or positions • set curriculum standards for achieving the occupational standards • promote the development of, or analyse, benchmarks of acceptable performance norms for any occupation, job or position • accredit persons, institutions and organisations providing education and courses of instruction or training • evaluate and recognise competencies learnt outside formal education • be a forum on matters pertaining to qualifications

Country	Overview of governance and stakeholder engagement	Overview of functions
	<p>engineers, surveyors, health and social services, legal education] and the national vocational training board.</p> <p>Source: https://www.namqa.org/about-us/Legislation/129/, http://www.namqa.org/about-us/Executive-Management/127/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish facilities for the collection and dissemination of information related to qualifications • enquire into whether any particular qualification meets the national standards • advise any person, body, institution, organisation or interest group on matters pertaining to qualifications and national standards for qualifications.
New Zealand	<p>New Zealand Qualifications Authority</p> <p>Crown Entity as defined by the <i>Crown Entities Act 2004</i>, and created under Subpart 2 of Part 5 of the Education and Training Act 2020.</p> <p>The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is headed by a Board (known as the Tertiary Education Commission), which is appointed by the Minister of Education. The Commission represents industry, community and education interests, with between 6, but not more than 9 members.</p> <p>Source: https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managing the New Zealand Qualifications Framework • administering the secondary school assessment system • independent quality assurance of non-university tertiary education providers • qualifications recognition • standard-setting for some specified unit standards.
Scotland	<p>SCQF Partnership</p> <p>The SCQF Partnership, created in November 2006, is a company limited by guarantee and a Scottish registered charity.</p> <p>The SCQF Partnership (SCQFP) is governed by a Board of Directors from member organisations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Development Network • Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education • Universities Scotland • Scottish Qualifications Authority. <p>All of those bodies represented on the Board have a prominent role within lifelong learning in Scotland.</p>	<p><u>Aims:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that, where appropriate, all assessed learning and qualifications in Scotland are included on the Framework • extend the recognition of informal and non-formal learning • develop and promote the Framework as a Lifelong Learning tool • develop relationships with other frameworks internationally

Country	Overview of governance and stakeholder engagement	Overview of functions
	<p>In addition, the Board has an independent Chair and two co-opted Directors, one representing employer interests and the other is the Chair of the SCQFP Quality Committee.</p> <p>Source:</p> <p>https://scqf.org.uk/the-scqf-partnership/</p> <p>https://scqf.org.uk/the-scqf-partnership/the-scqf-partnership-board/</p> <p>https://www.sfc.ac.uk/access-inclusion/articulation/articulation.aspx</p>	
South Africa	<p>South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)</p> <p>National Qualifications Framework Act 2008</p> <p>SAQA is governed by a Board comprising 12 members appointed by the Minister in consultation with the Minister of Labour (via a nomination process), the CEO of SAQA and the CEO of each Quality Council. The Minister must appoint members in the nomination process to ensure the functions are performed according to the highest standards. Nominations are to be from persons involved in education and training, organisations involved in education and training, professional bodies, organised labour, organises business and organisation representing community and development interests. Nominations must give consideration to representativity of the board, such as race, gender and disability.</p>	<p>The role of SAQA is to advance the objectives of the NQF, oversee the further development and implementation of the NQF, and co-ordinate the Sub-Frameworks. SAQA’s functions are set out in section 13 of the NQF Act, which, in summary, mandates SAQA to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee NQF implementation and collaborate with the Quality Councils • Develop and implement NQF policies and criteria • Register qualifications and part-qualifications on the NQF • Recognise professional bodies and register professional designations • Undertake research and collaborate with international counterparts • Maintain the National Learners’ Records Database • Provide an evaluation and advisory service with respect to foreign qualifications • Inform the public about the NQF • Provide advice to the Minister of Higher Education and Training <p>Source: https://www.saga.org.za/about-saga</p>

Annex 6: Recognition of prior learning case study

The following case study is an extract from *Recognition of prior learning gives us wings* (ACQF 2022, Author Eduarda Castel-Branco). Source: <https://acqf.africa/resources/recognition-of-prior-learning/recognition-of-prior-learning-gives-us-wings>

Kenya¹³

The [Kenya National Qualifications Authority \(KNQA\)](#) was established in 2015 as set out in the [Kenya National Qualifications Framework \(KNQF\) act no. 22 of 2014](#).

[KNQF Regulations, 2018](#) stipulate the regulations concerning all domains of the NQF (certification; recognition, equation and approval of foreign qualifications and RPL; structure of the NQF – national qualifications assessment systems, national database. Levels, volume of learning, accumulation of credits towards qualifications, transfer of credits, award of qualifications).

Through the KNQA, the Kenya Government has published in June 2021, the '[Recognition of Prior Learning Policy Framework](#)' and the '[Guidelines for Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning in Kenya](#)'. This is in line with the KNQF Act No.22 of 2014, which promotes RPL in the following sections of the law;

- Section 4(c): Mandates KNQA to develop a system of competence, life-long learning and attainment of national qualifications;
- Section 8(1)(k): Provides for the recognition of attainment of competencies including skills, knowledge, attitudes & values - regardless of where and how individuals acquired them.

A pilot phase to test the new RPL Guidelines started in 2021 with focus on qualifications for occupation in three areas: textiles, car mechanics and welding. Candidates are mostly workers from the informal sector (JUA KALI). Qualified informal sector workers, artisans, small businesses will have improved opportunities to enter and participate in the formal economy.

The RPL policy

- Aims at providing a coordinated framework for implementing all RPL related activities in Kenya;
- Integrates RPL into the existing legal and policy frameworks in the education, training and employment sectors;
- Aligns RPL activities to the Kenya National Qualifications Framework (KNQF);
- Spells out the objectives, expected outcomes and Quality assurance mechanisms for carrying out RPL in Kenya;
- Defines the various institutional frameworks and their specific roles in the RPL process;
- Outlines the process of carrying out RPL in Kenya
- Promote access, employability, mobility, progression and fair chances to the disadvantaged, discouraged and traditionally marginalized groups;
- Enables the national coordination of RPL focusing on integrating RPL into existing Educational, Training and employment policies and legal frameworks;
- Supports expanded acceptance of workers that have been trained in various ways including use of RPL especially by employers; and encourages employees to further their careers using RPL', and training institutions to recognize and admit students that would like to use RPL to further their studies;
- To develop human and technological capacity to implement and manage RPL in the country;
- Support the implementation of the Credit Accumulation and Transfer system (KCATs) in Kenya;

¹³ Acknowledgements to Dr Eusebius Juma Mukhwana. for drafting the section on RPL Kenya

- To support Internationalization of Kenyan Qualifications and facilitate mobility of Kenyans who would like to go and work in other countries;

The RPL ecosystem system in Kenya identifies four sectors of the education and training system where RPL can be practiced and implemented:

- The Basic Sector;
- The industrial sector (workers in employment);
- The Technical, Vocational, Education and Training (TVET) sector;
- The University sectors.

How Does RPL Work?

RPL practitioners work with candidates to ensure that:

- Skills and competencies are assessed
- Discuss the candidates' goals and help them choose the right qualification that matches the skills for recognition of prior learning (RPL) and explain the actions and steps needed to achieve the goals;
- Portfolio of Evidence
 - o Gather evidence such as: current resume, reference letters, work examples/samples, photos/videos, certificates and transcripts and overseas qualifications and learning experiences;
- Skills and competencies Check
 - o Once RPL assessors have gone through your portfolio, they will call you in for a competency conversation and a practical observation, if required;
- Qualified/ Issuance of Certificate
 - o If candidates found to be competent and meet the standards set for the level that has been assessed, then they are certified competent and issued with a certificate;
 - o All certificates are nationally recognized and issued by a Qualifications Awarding Institution (which must be accredited by the KNQA);
 - o The Assessor may also find the candidate not competent or recommend refresher training for help meeting the standards set;
- Are candidates satisfied with RPL Process?
 - o If not satisfied with the outcome of the assessment there is the right of appeal!
 - o In which case candidates are entitled to one more assessment (at their cost).

What are the benefits of RPL

- RPL for credit transfer or harmonization (national and foreign credits);
- RPL for recognition of experiential learning;
- RPL for upgrading of skills or qualifications; and
- Regulatory requirements of some sectors in terms of employing qualified persons.

Who qualifies to assess and award RPL Certificates?

Within the Kenyan Context, the following institutions qualify to assess candidates and award an RPL certificate:

- Any institution recognized or accredited in accordance with KNQF Act. By the KNQA as a qualification awarding institution (this could be a basic, TVET, industrial and University sector examination body/institution);
- A university accredited in accordance with the Universities Act (No. 42 of 2012);
- National Polytechnics with a legal Notice;

Example of RPL assessment tool used in Kenya

KNQF level	Portfolio of evidence	Minimum requirements
2	Samples of work / photos / video / audio files The materials or tools used by the candidate at work Referees	Compulsory Samples of work Accept any three
3	Samples of work / photos / video / audio files The materials or tools used by the candidate at work Referees Roster and time sheet	Compulsory Samples of work Accept any three
4	Samples of work / photos / video / audio files The materials or tools used by the candidate at work Referees Roster and time sheet Logbooks and other records of performance Curriculum vitae of resume	Compulsory Samples of work Accept any three
5	Samples of work / photos / video / audio files The materials or tools used by the candidate at work Referees Roster and time sheet Logbooks and other records of performance Budgets of work done Workplace training records Curriculum vitae of resume	Compulsory: - Samples of work - Curriculum vitae Accept any five

The RPL Assessment process

RPL assessment processes and procedures may consist of the following stages:

- a. Counselling and facilitation.
 - b. Establishing the purpose of the assessment.
 - c. Identifying the evidence required.
 - d. Using appropriate evidence gathering methods.
 - e. Interpreting evidence and making a judgement;
 - f. Recording the outcome.
 - g. Reporting to key stakeholders.
 - h. Successful candidate issued with Certificate.
 - i. Appeal process.
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