









ACQF-II Project

Training Support Note Qualifications Frameworks level descriptors: uses, key principles, development methods

31 October 2023

Author: Coleen Jaftha

Reviewer: Eduarda Castel-Branco

Contents

1.	Objective of this Note 5	3
2.	Introduction and context	3
3.	Role and place of levels and descriptors in NQF conceptualisation	4
3.1	NQF conceptualisation	5
4.	Place of level descriptors in referencing	7
5.	Development of level descriptors	8
5.1	Key principles	8
5.2	Horizontal and vertical logic	8
6.	Summary	12
7.	Sources	12
List of	Tables	
Table 1	L: Defining NQFs and RQFs	3
	2: Difference between NQF descriptors and RQF descriptors	
	3: Definitions of ACQF domains	
Table 4	l: Descriptors for ACQF Levels 1 to 5 with key words underlined	9
	5: Using Level 1 keywords to show horizontal logic	
Table 6	5: Extract from ACQF Glossary to describe keywords at Level 1	.10
Table 7	7: Sub-domains of ACQF Skills domain	.11
Table 8	3: Extract from ACQF Glossary to show vertical logic in "types of problems" in the skills domain	.11

1. Objective of this Training Support Note

The <u>project ACQF-II</u> (2023-2026) supports implementation of the ACQF Policy Document and its Guidelines, through a combination of actions and methods, and dissemination of knowledge products such as guidelines, training modules, analyses and reports. The new series of "Technical Notes" elaborated by the ACQF-II follows on the series of "<u>Thematic Briefs</u>" initiated in 2021 in the context of the first ACQF project.

This **Training Support Note** addresses level descriptors, a core feature of Qualifications Frameworks (QFs) (whether sectoral, regional or national) that signal the complexity of the learning at a particular level of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) or Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF).

Since they are written as a hierarchy of learning complexity based on learning outcomes, they are typically referred to as learning outcomes-based level descriptors. To improve transparency and recognition of qualifications, the learning outcomes approach must be fully embedded i.e., qualifications need to be expressed in terms of learning outcomes, linked to NQF level descriptors/ qualifications levels, and be fully quality assured.

2. Introduction and context

Level descriptors are presented as a matrix of learning outcomes (preferably including formal, non-formal and informal learning) structured over several levels and domains that are important to a country/ region. The descriptors define and clarify the vertical and horizontal logic of the national/ regional learning outcomes.

 Learning outcomes are the results of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do upon completion of a learning process. They indicate, not what the graduate did to get the qualification but what the graduate can do now that s/he has the qualification.

Level descriptors relate to a specific level of a QF and:

- o Signal the learning outcomes orientation of the QF being presented
- Enable the allocation of qualifications/ qualification types to specific levels in a National Qualifications Framework (NQF). A qualification (ibid) is defined as 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
- Signal what a qualification holder will be able to know, understand and do at the end of a successful learning process.
- Enable the inking of national level descriptors or national qualifications levels to levels of a Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF)
- o Is further strengthened when compared to another set of level descriptors in another QF and the transparent information shared because of the comparison.

Table 1 provides definitions for an NQF and an RQF.

Table 1: Defining NQFs and RQFs

NQF	RQF
Policy and instrument for developing and classifying qualifications according to a continuum of agreed	Broad structure of levels of learning outcomes agreed by countries in a defined geographical location, that
levels of learning achievement defined by learning outcomes statements of what a learner must know, understand and be able to do no matter how the	can enable one national framework of qualifications to relate to another and, subsequently, for qualifications to be compared between countries.
learning was obtained: in a classroom, on the job, or less formally	An RQF may relate and cooperate with several NQFs.

Level descriptors are common to both NQFs and RQFs and are defined as statements, describing learning achievement at a particular level of a Qualifications Framework, that provide a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are appropriate to learning at that level.

Although NQF and RQF descriptors are similar in design and logic, there are key differences as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Difference between NQF descriptors and RQF descriptors

Table 2: Difference between NQF descriptors and NQF descrip	
NQF level descriptors	RQF level descriptors
Are fit for purpose and capture the complexities of	Will not capture complexities of national systems but
the national system, national policy, vision,	are typically embedded in regional policy, vision,
aspirations, purpose, scope, quality assurance (QA)	aspirations, purpose, scope, QA, and governance
and governance arrangements	arrangements
Statements describe the complexity of learning in	Statements describe regional, generic, broad
qualifications/qualification types and are often linked	statements of the complexity of learning outcomes
to features of existing qualifications in the country	that can accommodate, and value all forms of
	learning (formal, non-formal and informal), and can
	be applied across several countries and education
	and training sectors
Serve as a benchmark for levels of learning	Provide an orientation towards common minimum
achievement recognised at national level:	benchmarks for regional learning outcomes:
o Indicates the allocation of a national	 Enables linking of NQFS/ national qualifications
qualification to an NQF level	levels/ descriptors to levels of learning
	complexity at a regional level
Describe the generic competencies that must be	Describe the generic competencies applicable to a
achieved by all NQF qualifications:	region:
o Purpose: to locate a qualification at an NQF level	o Purpose: to reference NQFs to a RQF level; to
	compare with other qualifications frameworks.
Enable a positioning of two or more qualifications on	Identify a general, central regional reference point
the same NQF level, indicating that the qualifications	that can enhance transparency as it supports the RQF
are broadly comparable in terms of generic	as translation device that can compare different
complexity at that level of the NQF, regardless of	countries and their systems
where or how the qualification was obtained	

All related concepts and definitions can be found in Thematic Brief 1 (ACQF, 2021a).

3. Role and place of levels and descriptors in NQF conceptualisation

Development of QFs is pervasive on the African continent- Information on the ACQF database indicate that there are over 45 QFs in Africa, at different stages of development, the majority of which are ten-level QFs (See Thematic Brief 3.1 (ACQF, 2021d) for an overview of <u>level descriptors of 24 African QFs</u>), as well as <u>Guideline 2</u> (ACQF, 2022c and 2022g) on Levels and level descriptors; <u>Guideline 1</u> (ACQF, 2022b and 2022f).

Level descriptors are at the heart of development of QFs and signal a learning outcomes orientation: They:

- Provide a common language for describing and comparing qualifications
- o Provide understanding of what will be learned and how best to achieve it
- They set expectations, guide teaching and learning, and assessment
- Enable a learner-centred approach: Enable learners to be clearer about learning expectations, and encourage learners to take initiative and responsibility for their own learning
- o Promote personal achievement, mobility and recognition.
 - Achievement (through formal, non-formal and informal pathways) of assessed learning outcomes signals that an individual has achieved certain learning outcomes, and usually culminate in a qualification award
- o Support credit systems to create flexible ways for individuals to gain access to qualifications
- o Allow stakeholders to have a better understanding of what to expect from a qualification holder

Allow evaluation/ comparison of the qualification for work or study purposes (local and international)
 of the qualification for work or study purposes (local and international).

Education, Work, Personal

Education and training Work Reforms of education and training o Level descriptors of QF o Skills/competencies in occupational/professional o Classification of qualifications in the NQF standards Qualification descriptors, qualification standards o Classifications / taxonomies of occupations and o Diplomas, certificates and related supplements skills (ISCO, ESCO, O*Net) o Registers, catalogues of qualifications o Recruitment, job vacancies; matching job seekers' o Quality assurance of education and training o Coherence between curricula, modules, subjects, o Job descriptions and performance appraisals assessment, certification Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) Recognition of prior learning (RPL) o Comparison of qualifications between countries **Personal** (supporting recognition, portability, convergence); Evaluation of foreign qualifications o CVs; Description of experience; Achievements RPL portfolios Career guidance

Figure 1: Uses of levels and descriptors

3.1 NQF conceptualisation

They have a key role to play in NQF conceptualisation, particularly in pegging/ registering a qualification at a specific NQF level. In this regard, they guide all related elements of NQF policy and qualifications development: purpose and rationale, credits, certification, assessment, RPL, entry requirements, articulation and quality assurance, etc. (See Figure 1)

- Classification of qualifications in the NQF
- o Qualification descriptors, qualification standards
- o Diplomas, certificates and related supplements
- Registers, catalogues of qualifications
- Quality assurance of education and training
- Coherence between curricula, modules, subjects, assessment, certification
- Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT)
- Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

Inter-relationships

There is a reciprocal relationship between level descriptors and qualifications descriptors:

- The generic outcomes in the level descriptors cascade into the more specific outcomes found in the more contextualised qualification descriptors
- The qualification descriptors are aligned to the level descriptors.

Location/ pegging/ registration

Level descriptors provide a benchmark for pegging/ locating and registering, reviewing and renewing qualifications on the QF:

- The wording in the level descriptors is very important to pitching the qualification outcomes at the correct level of complexity on an NQF, no matter how many NQF levels there are
- The level descriptor competencies are intended to have a positive, progressive and cumulative effect on the holistic development of learners as these competencies are applicable to all areas of learningin learning institutions, the workplace and in everyday living.

Purpose and rationale of the qualification

The level descriptors guide the learning outcomes/ graduate attributes that are reflected in the purpose and rationale of the qualification and ensures that the qualification reflects the correct level of complexity of learning according to the NQF level:

- The learning outcomes shape the purpose of the qualification: who are the target learners, why they would want to complete the qualification, how the qualification will benefit the learner, what is the learning pathway (academic, vocational, occupational, professional, etc). Stakeholders involved in determining the need for the qualification have an opportunity to work together to enhance lifelong learning possibilities (personal development, social, community and industry needs). To ensure consistency, the learning outcomes/ graduate attributes, purpose, teaching and learning, modules and assessment are aligned.
- The purpose guides the assessment techniques. The intention is to ensure that the learners are assessed in the modes in which they must demonstrate competence.

Assessment, credits, certification, RPL

The level descriptors guide the complexity of assessment that will result in the qualification holder receiving the relevant credits at the correct NQF level at the end of a learning process which further enables access to the workplace and or further learning.

- A variety of assessment techniques may be used to determine a learner's applied competence and successful achievement of qualification outcomes including:
 - formative assessment (during learning, developmental in nature and used to inform summative assessment)
 - summative assessment (at the end of learning, usually associated with certification of some type of award like credits or qualifications)
 - practical demonstrations of competence, experiential learning, work-based learning, work integrated learning, where relevant
- The level outcomes also provide a way to assess recognition of prior learning (RPL) for achievement of credits towards qualifications.

Entry requirements including alternative entry requirements through RPL

Level descriptors provide an indication of entry requirements to qualifications at specific levels. Since the entry-level competencies are assumed to be in place, it will not be covered in the qualification. In this regard the level descriptors can be used to assess RPL for access to qualifications.

Articulation/ progression

By placing more than one qualification on the same NQF level, from the same or different sectors (general, TVET, occupational higher education), an NQF creates a framework for articulation/ progression made possible by the level descriptors. Qualifications should open new learning pathways for learners and never be a dead end. Learning offerings must be designed with horizontal, vertical, and diagonal articulation/progression pathways to allow learners to work towards their desired learning and work destinations.

Quality assurance

The participation of key stakeholders involved in ensuring the integrity and credibility of the QF and its related descriptors, is fundamental to the ensuring trust in the QF and relevance of the descriptors. It is important that the level descriptors encapsulate the benefit to the sector, society, industry and the economy. In this regard, it is important that there is room for feedback from industry, to review and strengthen learning outcomes.

Education reforms

A shift to a learning outcomes orientation is a fundamental reform technique.

Career guidance

Qualification levels and descriptors add value to CVs through description of experience and achievements and also support RPL portfolios. They also play a key role in recruitment, job vacancies; matching job seekers' CVs to job vacancies; job descriptions and can support performance appraisals

In the workplace

- Skills/ competencies in occupational/ professional standards
- Classifications / taxonomies of occupations and skills (ISCO, ESCO, O*Net)

Comparison

Comparison of qualifications between countries (supporting recognition, portability, convergence); Evaluation of foreign qualifications

4. Place of level descriptors in referencing

The ACQF is a framework of QFs/ systems, however, national qualifications cannot be registered on the ACQF because they are registered in their own respective NQFs/ systems. ACQF referencing is a way of comparing qualifications levels across the continent, using the ACQF and its level descriptors as a common reference point and then linking qualifications frameworks (QFs) to the ACQF. Referencing should be done through the national qualifications frameworks or, where these do not exist, national qualifications systems.

The ACQF will act as a reference point/ translation device that will encourage recognition of qualifications between countries. To ease the comparison between qualifications frameworks/ systems and the ACQF, countries/ regions participating in referencing are encouraged to use learning outcomes approaches to describe their qualifications and related standards. In this way, referencing will act as a tool to strengthen learning outcomes orientations throughout the continent. It is envisaged that the ACQF level descriptors will bring together the ACQF community of countries and regions to:

- facilitate the referencing of national qualifications levels to the ACQF levels
- create a transparent relationship and correspondence between levels of different NQFs / NQS.

The ACQF connects both to NQFs and RQFs in its ambit. The key outcome of the ACQF referencing process includes enhanced trust and mutual understanding between countries/ regions and their QFs/ systems. Comparisons between level descriptors of RQFs can produce rich conclusions that can support mobility of lifelong learning though shared transparent information about systems. An example is a comparison between the ACQF and SADCQF (See a first draft of a comparison between the ACQF and the SADCQF, ACQF, 2023a), and the comparisons undertaken by the European Qualifications Framework with QFs of other regions and continents.

Referencing to the ACQF is guided by four Referencing Criteria and a set of procedures and follow-up steps defined in the Governance Procedures and Follow-up Steps. Guideline 3 (ACQF, 2022d) and Training Module 3 (ACQF, 2022g) provides more information and training modules on referencing in the ACQF context.

There are two referencing criteria that speaks directly to learning outcomes-based level descriptors:

- ACQF Referencing Criterion 1: There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the ACQF.
- ACQF Referencing Criterion 2: The national qualifications frameworks or systems are based on learning outcomes principles and related to arrangements for recognition of prior learning (including non-formal and informal) and, where appropriate, to credit systems

Complementary methodological support for ACQF Criteria 1 and 2 can be found in <u>Guideline 2</u> (ACQF, 2022c) and <u>Training Module 2</u> (ACQF, 2022g) on Levels and level descriptors; <u>Guideline 1</u> (ACQF, 2022b) and <u>Training Module 1</u> (ACQF, 2022f) on learning Outcomes and <u>Guideline 4</u> (ACQF, 2022e) and <u>Training Module 4</u> (ACQF, 2022i) on Validation of Learning.

After successful referencing, all newly issued documents related to NQF/ NQS qualifications like certificates, diplomas, certificate supplements, diploma supplements and / or qualification registers issued by the competent authorities may contain a clear reference to the appropriate ACQF level. This labelling/acknowledgement of ACQF levels on qualifications documents will support lifelong learning by easing mobility/recognition of qualifications inside and outside Africa.

5. Development of level descriptors

5.1 Key principles

There is no set way to approach development of level descriptors but there is a large body of knowledge from which to draw. Additionally Thematic Brief 10 (ACQF, 2022i) describes the journey to engineer the ACQF level descriptors. The journey established a methodological approach using research, consultations and a builder matrix to develop and shape the ACQF descriptors. This approach can be used as complementary orientation and can be adapted for countries wishing to develop or review their own level descriptors.

To ease the use and application of level descriptors (see ACQF, 2022c and 2022g), it is recommended that they should:

- Encompass all elements of transparency:
 - A learning outcomes orientation
 - Validation of learning from all contexts whether formal, non-formal or informal
 - Placement of qualifications in NQF levels and related registers
 - Quality assurance of qualifications and NQFs
 - Stakeholder participation and endorsement
- Identify key domains/ elements to describe the principles, skills, competencies that a country/ region deems important to personal, social and economic development
 - Define the key domains and where applicable, sub-domains of learning
- Be detailed enough to capture the complexities of an NQF/ RQF including future orientation (green skills, innovation, etc)
- o Be consistently applied in the development of qualifications in the countries where they are used
- o Capture the balance between being prescriptive (allocation to levels) and being descriptive
- Be general enough to accommodate the different parts of the QFs/ systems (general, TVET, occupational qualifications, higher education, as applicable
- Be conceptually and technically clear and suitable for all contexts (not too academic, theoretical, and wordy)
- Be clear about the vertical and horizontal logic of the domains when moving from lower to high levels of complexity; be developmental and cumulative
- Preferably be accompanied by a glossary, to align terms with domain definitions and to ensure that there is consistency and no duplication nor ambiguity
- Be understandable and accessible to users through training, capacity building, workshops and leaflets.
- o Consider the regional and international context and other relevant experiences.

Level descriptors consist of verb-driven outcome statements that typically: -

- O Start with words similar to: "The individual can..." - -
- o Include an active verb/ combination of verbs/ verbal phrase
- Include an object/ objective
- o Include context (one or more indicators of quality or scope).

5.2 Horizontal and vertical logic

It is important that a country's level descriptors are vertically and horizontally coherent and makes sense. The identification of key words as well as a complementary glossary will assist key stakeholders to understand and make sense of the country's level descriptors.

In the ACQF case, the learning outcomes at all ten ACQF levels relate to formal, non-formal and informal learning. ACQF level descriptors reflect and capture how knowledge, skills and autonomy and responsibility (A&R) increases in breadth, depth and complexity when moving from lower to higher levels. Table 1 shows the definitions of the three ACQF domains and relevant sub-domains.

Table 3: Definitions of ACQF domains

Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy and Responsibility
"Knowledge" includes facts, principles and theories in various areas.	"Skills" refer to the ability to use knowledge to respond to information and address problems/ issues. Skills include cognitive, communication, digital, green, innovation, practical and	"Autonomy and responsibility" (A&R) refers to the context and extent of the application of autonomy and responsibility.
The knowledge	social skills.	The A&R domain comprises three sub-
domain comprises		domains:
two sub domains:	The skills domain comprises three sub-	 The context in which autonomy and
 Type of 	domains:	responsibility is applied
knowledge	 Type of skills required 	 The extent to which autonomy is applied
 Scope of 	 How the skills are used to respond 	 The extent to which responsibility is
knowledge	to information	applied. Responsibility has three
	 How the skills are used to address 	elements: self, group outcomes and
	types of problems	resources

To demonstrate the horizontal and vertical logic and coherence, the ACQF level descriptors will be used, in particular Levels 1 to 5.

However, the same procedures can be applied to show the logic in Levels 6 to 10.

Table 2 below shows five ACQF levels (1 to 5), with the keywords identified in each domain. The key purpose of identifying key words in each level is to assist in establishing and following through with progression in complexity. For each keyword, a definition/glossary has been provided (see ACQF, 2022c and 2022g).

Table 4: Descriptors for ACQF Levels 1 to 5 with key words underlined

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy and Responsibility
Level 1: The learning	<u>Simple</u> knowledge,	Simple communication, cognitive	Highly structured, repetitive
outcomes related to	literacy, and numeracy	and practical skills required to	contexts under <u>close</u>
formal, non-formal,		follow simple instructions, and	supervision and guidance
and informal learning		use simple, <u>repetitive</u> solutions to	taking <u>minimal</u>
at this level include:		address simple problems	responsibility for self
Level 2: The learning	Basic knowledge	Basic communication, cognitive	Structured contexts under
outcomes related to	incorporating	and practical skills required to use	limited supervision and
formal, non-formal	comprehension and	<u>concrete</u> information, ideas and	guidance taking limited
and informal learning	recall of factual and	known solutions to address	responsibility for self and
at this level include:	operational knowledge	straight-forward problems	group outcomes
	in some areas		
Level 3: The learning	Factual and operational	A <u>range</u> of communication,	<u>Predictable</u> contexts under
outcomes related to	knowledge incorporating	cognitive, practical and technical	routine supervision and
formal, non-formal,		skills required to interpret and	guidance, with <u>initiative</u> for

and informal learning	some theoretical aspects	communicate ideas and detailed	self-responsibility and some
at this level include:	in some areas	information, and select and use	responsibility for group
		known solutions to address	outcomes
		<u>familiar</u> problems	
Level 4: The learning	Mainly factual,	Well-developed technical skills	Varied (predictable and
outcomes related to	operational, or technical	required to analyse information	unpredictable) contexts with
formal, non-formal	knowledge incorporating	and new ideas, make informed	adaptability and initiative for
and informal learning	theoretical aspects in	<u>judgements,</u> communicate	self-direction under general
at this level include:	one or more areas	outcomes and apply <u>varied</u>	guidance, taking <u>full</u>
		solutions to varied (familiar and	responsibility for self, some
		unfamiliar) problems	planning and responsibility
			for group outcomes and
			initiative for responsibility
			for others
Level 5: The learning	Mainly technical or	A <u>range</u> of well-developed	<u>Unpredictable</u> contexts with
outcomes related to	theoretical knowledge	technical skills, with some	full autonomy and <u>full</u>
formal, non-formal,	with substantial depth in	specialisation , required to	responsibility for self and
and informal learning	a discipline/area	analyse information and new	group outcomes, and some
at this level include:		ideas, construct and	responsibility for others
		communicate a <u>coherent</u>	
		argument, and apply a range of	
		solutions, often in combination,	
		to address <u>unfamilia</u> r problems	

5.2.1 Horizontal logic

To show horizontal logic and coherence, the ACQF descriptors of Level 1 is used (See Table 5).

However, the procedure can be applied to all the levels.

For each of the underlined keywords, a description (See Table 6) is provided, showing the horizontal logic. The purpose is to show consistency and coherence. The glossary assists in showing:

- o The term used
- O What the term means in the ACQF descriptors
- o How the term progresses in complexity. The purpose is to eliminate duplication
- o At which levels the term is found. The purpose is to eliminate ambiguity

Table 5: Using Level 1 keywords to show horizontal logic

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy and Responsibility
Level 1: The learning	Simple knowledge,	Simple communication, cognitive	Highly structured, repetitive
outcomes related to	literacy, and	and practical skills required to follow	contexts under <u>close</u>
formal, non-formal,	numeracy	simple instructions, and use simple,	supervision and guidance
and informal learning		repetitive solutions to address	taking <u>minimal</u>
at this level include:		<u>simple</u> problems	responsibility for self

Table 6: Extract from ACQF Glossary to describe keywords at Level 1

		Term In the ACQF level descriptors, the term		Progression in complexity	Levels
			means uncomplicated and easy to understand. It can be used without experience and is found at the	simple to straightforward/	L1
ı			lowest level of complexity	basic	
	Keywords at	Repetitive	means repeated or recurring		L1

	ACQF Level 1	Highly	means organised by someone else other than the	highly structured to	L1 to L2
ı		structured and	individual doing the task	structured	
ı		structured			
ı		Close	means the most direct and most frequent	close to limited to	L1
ı			supervision	routine to general to	
ı				full autonomy	
ı		Minimal	means the smallest amount	minimal to limited	L1

5.2.2 Vertical logic

Vertical logic and coherence are essential to show the consistency in progression from lower to higher levels of complexity in the QF. To show an example of vertical logic, in the case of the ACQF level descriptors, levels 1 to 5 of the Skills domain is used. Table 3 shows the Skills sub-domains: type of skills, response to information and addressing types of problems.

Table 7: Sub-domains of ACQF Skills domain

Tubic 7. Sub uc	Table 7. Sub-domains of Acq. Skins domain						
The		Skills domain					
learning		Type of skills	Response to information	Addressing types of			
outcomes	Level			problems			
related to	Level 1	Simple communication,	Follow simple instructions	Use simple <u>repetitive</u>			
formal, non-		cognitive and practical		solutions to address simple			
formal and		skills		problems			
informal learning at	Level 2	<u>Basic</u> communication,	Use <u>concrete</u> information	Use <u>known</u> solutions to			
these levels		cognitive, and practical	and ideas	address <u>straightforward</u>			
include:		skills		problems			
merauc.	Level 3	A <u>range</u> of	<u>Interpret</u> and communicate				
		communication,	ideas and detailed				
		cognitive, practical and	information	problems			
		technical skills	-				
	Level 4	Well-developed	Analyse information and	Apply varied solutions to			
		technical skills	ideas, <u>make informed</u>	address <u>varied</u> (familiar and			
			<u>judgements</u> and	unfamiliar) problems			
			communicate outcomes				
	Level 5	A <u>range</u> of well-	Analyse information and	Apply a <u>range of solutions</u>			
		developed technical	new ideas, and construct	often in combination to			
		skills <u>with some</u>	and communicate <u>coherent</u>	address <u>unfamiliar</u>			
		<u>specialisation</u>	<u>arguments</u>	problems			

To further assist in the understanding of the development of vertical logic, Table 4 shows how a complementary glossary can assist.

This example uses the ACQF skills sub-domain: Addressing types of problems, with emphasis on types of problems and provides definitions to show what the term means, how the term is used in progression in complexity, and where the term is used.

Table 8: Extract from ACQF Glossary to show vertical logic in "types of problems" in the skills domain

	Skills sub-domain		ACQF glossary of terms				
Level	Addressing types of problems	Term	In the ACQF level descriptors, the term	Progression in complexity	Levels		
Level 1	Use simple repetitive solutions to address simple problems	•	means uncomplicated and easy to understand. It can be used without experience and	straightforward/	L1		

			is found at the lowest level of complexity		
Level 2	Use known solutions to address straightforward problems	straightforward	uncomplicated but requires	simple to straightforward to familiar	L2
Level 3	Select and use known solutions to address familiar problems	familiar and unfamiliar		familiar and unfamiliar, to	L3 to L5
Level 4	Apply varied solutions to address <u>varied</u> (familiar and unfamiliar) problems		can draw on experience with familiar problems to identify an appropriate response		
Level 5	Apply a range of solutions often in combination to address <u>unfamiliar</u> problems				

6. Summary

Level descriptors are a core feature of Qualifications Frameworks (whether sectoral, regional or national). They are presented as a matrix of learning outcomes structured over several, cumulative levels and domains that are important to a country/ region. They are written as statements, describing learning achievement at a particular level of a Qualifications Framework, that provide a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes that are appropriate to learning at that level.

Level descriptors are at the heart of development of QFs and play a key role in NQF conceptualisation, particularly in registering a qualification at a specific NQF level and all related elements relevant to qualifications like purpose and rationale, credits, certification, assessment, RPL, entry requirements, articulation and quality assurance, etc.

Level descriptors contribute to a decree of harmonisation and to comparability of qualifications – in a country, and beyond borders.

It is important that a country's level descriptors are guided by key principles, are clear, vertically and horizontally coherent and make sense. To enhance understanding and consistency in application of level descriptors, it is recommended to disseminate information to stakeholders and users through training, capacity building, workshops and leaflets.

7. Sources

ACQF. 2021a. Thematic Brief 1: Concepts and definitions. https://acqf.africa/capacity-development programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-1-concepts-and-definitions

ACQF. 2021b. Thematic Brief 3.1: Level descriptors. Author: E. Castel-Branco. https://acqf.africa/capacity development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-3-1-level-descriptors

ACQF. 2022a. Session 10: Learning outcomes. Level descriptors. Concepts, application, development. Facilitator: Coleen Jaftha. <a href="https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/webinars/2nd-training-week-5-9-september-2022-skills-qualifications-and-frameworks-for-mutual-trust/session-10 learn-outcomes level-descriptors final tm-1-2.pdf/view

ACQF. 2022b. Guideline 1: Learning outcomes in the context of NQFs and ACQF. Author: C. Jaftha. https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines/acqf-guideline-1-learning-outcomes-in-the-context-of-qualifications-frameworks-and-systems

ACQF. 2022c. Guideline 2: Levels and level descriptors in the context of ACQF. Author: C. Jaftha. https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines/acqf-guideline-2-levels-and-level-descriptors in-the-context-of-acqf

ACQF. 2022d. Guideline 3: Referencing to ACQF. Authors: C. Jaftha, E. Castel-Branco. https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines/acqf-guideline-1-referencing-to-acqf

ACQF. 2022e. Guideline 4: Validation and recognition of learning. Authors: M. Chiyaba, M. Hamalabbi, F. Cheelo, J. Mwewa. <a href="https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidel

ACQF. 2022f. Training module 1: Learning Outcomes in Qualifications Frameworks and Systems. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Author: C. Jaftha. https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10 english/training-module-1-learning-outcomes

ACQF. 2022g. Training module 2: Levels and level descriptors. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Author: C. Jaftha. Contributors: A. Bateman, E. Castel-Branco. https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10 english/training-module-2-levels-and-level-descriptors-in-the-context-of-acqf

ACQF. 2022h. Training module 3: Referencing to ACQF. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: C. Jaftha, E. Castel-Branco. https://acqf.africa/capacity-development programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-3-referencing-to-acqf

ACQF. 2022i. Training module 4: Validation and recognition of learning. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: M. Chiyaba, M. Hamalabbi, F. Cheelo and J. Mwewa. https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10 english/training-module-4-validation-and-recognition-of-learning

ACQF. 2022j. Thematic Brief 10. ACQF level descriptors, the story of the development journey. Author: C. Jaftha. https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-10-acqf-level-descriptors-the-story-of-the-development-journey

ACQF. 2023a. Comparison of the ACQF and the SADCQF: Initial thoughts. Author: C. Jaftha. https://acqf.africa/news/comparison-of-the-acqf-and-sadcqf-initial-thoughts-by-coleen-jaftha

ACQF. 2023b. Technical Note 1: Brief overview of the main legal-regulatory basis underlying the registration, on the NQF, of higher education qualifications in South Africa. Case of South Africa.

ACQF. 2023c. Technical Note 2. Registration of qualifications: Comparison. https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/technical-notes/technical-note-2-registration-of-qualifications-comparison

Cedefop. 2018. Analysis and overview of NQF level descriptors in European countries. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/5566

ETF. 2021. Orientation Note on Regional Qualifications Frameworks. Author: Andrea Bateman. https://acqf.africa/resources/library/publications-from-international-sources/etf-orientation-note-on-regional-qualifications-frameworks-2021