



ACQF

African Continental
Qualifications Framework

The SADC-CATS Guidelines



12th March 2024

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What is SADC-CATS?

- “A learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer in SADC region based on the principle of transparency in the learning, teaching and assessment processes.
- Its objective is to facilitate the planning, delivery and evaluation of study programmes and student mobility by recognising learning achievements and qualifications and periods of learning”.

Rationale of the SADC-CATS Guidelines

- The implementation of the **Southern African Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (SADC-CATS)** is a critical point of departure toward full implementation of the SADCQF.
- Against this background, SADC has developed the CATS Guidelines to **facilitate greater student mobility in the region**, providing a **framework for establishing credit transfer arrangements** and, in this way, **expanding opportunities for mobility for SADC citizens, not only between countries but also between various institutions and education levels.**
- **All SADC Member States are therefore encouraged to adopt these Guidelines and develop national CATS policies, principles and guidelines.**
- The adoption of CATS at national level will serve as a **valuable reference for education and training providers** in developing and implementing their own CATS at institutional level.

ACQF Purposes/ Specific Objectives of the SADC-CATS

- a) Support the development of **national policies** on CATS in SADC countries.
- b) Enable **enhanced learner/student mobility** in the Region.
- c) Provide a framework for **establishing credit transfer arrangements** in the Region.
- d) Serve as a valuable reference for education and training providers in developing and implementing their own CATS at institutional level.
- e) Support the design, description and delivery of **programmes, making possible the integration of different types of learning in a lifelong learning perspective.**
- f) Achieve greater harmonisation of education and training within the Region to promote **mobility, recognition and transparency of qualifications.**
- g) Promote regional integration especially in relation to quality education.
- h) Achieve a possible reduction in the circulation of fraudulent qualifications in the Region.
- i) Contribute to the realisation of. the objectives of the SADC Protocol, the Addis Convention and the SADCQF.
- j) Achieve **easier comparability and verification of qualifications that students obtain from different countries in the Region.**
- k) Improve articulation **within the different NQFs and the world of work;** and
- l) achieve easier movement of students from one programme to another or from one institution to another within the same country, and between countries.

ACQF **Scope of the SADC-CATS Guidelines**

The SADC-CATS applies to:

- All sectors of education and training systems in SADC capable of articulating with other educational sectors such as general education, TVET and higher education;
- All public and private education institutions and skills development providers, assessment bodies, professional bodies and workplaces in SADC Member States that are recognised and/or accredited in the home countries;
- Any organisation that provides formal, non-formal or informal learning, such as universities, education institutions, continuing education units, training providers, enterprises, companies, professional bodies and labour unions, and others;
- All forms and modes of learning, including face-to-face, open and distance learning (ODL), e-learning, blended or mixed-mode learning; and
- All education and training systems in SADC Member States.

For learners:

- a) support student/learner mobility (across geographies and institutions) which in turn can improve life chances and social mobility of under-represented groups in general education, TVET or higher education;
- b) reduce the risk of student drop-out by reducing the time commitment required (as students do not have to restart their studies from the beginning, and thus avoid repeating learning already undertaken) and creating re-entry possibilities;
- c) make general education, TVET, or higher education more attractive and accessible to under-represented and disadvantaged groups (e.g. encouraging part-time study, and facilitating entry for those without formal qualifications through RPL);
- d) offer greater choice and flexibility in choosing courses and institutions, allowing mixing of educational programmes (vocational, work-based and academic), which may result in better career decisions and choices. Indeed, a credit framework provides a 'route map' showing potential progression routes;
- e) allow learners to track their progress towards a qualification and reward learning achieved if learners do not/cannot complete the full programme of study, this can build confidence and encourage further learning.

For education and training institutions:

- a) Credit as a tool is thought to provide institutions with a common language and helps compare learning achieved, which assists in the design of modules and programmes between and within institutions, and recognising learning achieved in different institutions and in different contexts.
- b) It helps institutions to create customised learning opportunities for students and employers.
- c) Institutions can be more responsive, particularly to the student market, and as such increase opportunities for additional income generation.
- d) Credit-based modular systems can help institutions design and deliver curriculum in a more economic and efficient way leading to resource savings.
- e) Credit transfer is thought to contribute to higher student retention and completion rates.
- f) It can promote and facilitate inter-institutional partnerships (such as progression pathways between TVET and higher education).
- g) Credit transfer can support and facilitate student mobility and exchange across country borders, and also labour mobility in relation to the recognition of professional qualifications.

Benefits of the SADC-CATS Guidelines...

For employers:

- SADC-CATS may help with recruitment as it enables employers to have a clearer and more accurate picture of the amount and level of learning achieved by potential employees.
- Credit transfer may support foster labour mobility in relation to the recognition of professional qualifications.

Understanding CATS in the SADC Context

SADC-CATS Guidelines, 2021:

- The Credit Accumulation and Transfer System of a nation or region has been defined as “the process whereby a student’s achievements are recognised and contribute to further learning even if the student has not achieved a qualification”.
- Credits may be accumulated from the same programme or from different programmes or even from different institutions if they are regarded by the awarding institution as relevant to the programme in question and contributing to the achievement of the relevant qualification.
- In terms of this, any credits earned by a student can contribute to the completion of a qualification in the same institution, or in a different institution in the same country or across the borders of the country if there is mutual recognition of the value and relevance of the credits in question between the countries concerned.

Understanding CATS in the SADC Context...

- **Credits:** The amount of learning contained in a qualification or part-qualification whereby one (1) credit is equated to ten (10) notional hours of learning. Credits are generally expressed in whole numbers.
- **Credit accumulation:** The totalling of relevant credits required to complete a qualification or a part-qualification.
- **Credit transfer:** The vertical, horizontal or diagonal relocation of credits towards a qualification or part-qualification on the same or different level, usually between different programmes, departments or institutions. Credit transfer is the key to successful study mobility. Education and training may make agreements which guarantee automatic recognition and transfer of credits.

ACQF Principles of the SADC-CATS Guidelines

- 1) Access for success – identify gaps in knowledge and/or skills, make arrangements to fill them.
- 2) Student mobility – promoting learner mobility across sectors, levels, programmes, types of qualifications, institutions and countries by minimising the duplication of learning.
- 3) Articulation – include in the design and purpose of qualifications articulation pathways; within and between the NQFs, and between learning and the world of work.
- 4) Comparison based on credible methods - determine the extent to which their curriculum properties, content and outcomes match using NQF and SADCQF.
- 5) Supplementary – supplementary work for differences in depth and breadth of curricula.
- 6) Transparency – of rules, regulations and any register of precedents.
- 7) Timely, defensible, equitable and outcomes-based decisions.
- 8) Recognition of prior learning – RPL credits = formally acquired credits.
- 9) Institutional autonomy – on decisions for CAT, but prioritise lifelong learning.
- 10) Academic integrity and quality assurance – need for rigours QA at national and institutional levels.

Application of SADC-CATS

- Based on the notional hour approach (1 credit = 10 notional hours).
- The emphasis of credit is on measuring student workload towards achieving intended learning outcomes rather than teaching load (contact hours).
- Workload is an estimation of the time (notional hours) the individual typically needs to complete all learning activities such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, work placements and individual study required to achieve the defined learning outcomes in formal learning environments.
- It is recommended that the recognition of credits for the purposes of transfer across departments, institutions, sectors and countries be determined by the nature of the qualifications involved, the relationship between them, the nature, complexity and extent of the curricula associated with the specific subjects to be recognised for exemption and/or inclusion, as well as the nature of the assessment used.

Application of SADC-CATS...

- A course may be divided into Learning Units:
 - 1 Credit = 10 notional hours
 - A full-time student typically spends 8 hours a day on learning activities by 5 days in a week by 15 weeks/ semester or 30 weeks/ academic year.
 - This translates to about 600 notional hours/ 60 credits per semester.
 - 1 academic year = 1200 notional hours/ 120 credits.

Application of SADC-CATS - Example

- Consider a semester module (based on 15 weeks) with 4 hours of lecturing per week, 2 hours of tutorials per week, 2 hours of laboratory practical work per week, 4 hours of self-directed learning per week, 10 hours of formative and summative assessment:

Formula for calculating credits (*where TC = Total Credits*):

- $TC = \frac{\text{lectures} + \text{tutorials} + \text{practical works} + \text{internships} + \text{projects} + \text{assessment}}{10}$
- $TC = (4 \times 15 \text{ (lecture)} + 2 \times 15 \text{ (tutorials)} + 2 \times 15 \text{ (practicals)} + 4 \times 15 \text{ (self-study)} + 10 \text{ (assessment)}) / 10 = 190 / 10 = \underline{\underline{19}}$

Based on the previous example, possible Scenarios are:

- a) A one year Higher Certificate (RQF Level 5): 1200 notional study hours = 120 credits.
- b) A three year Bachelors' Degree (RQF Level 7): 3600 notional study hours = 360 credits.
- c) A four year Bachelors' Degree (RQF Level 8): 4800 notional study hours = 480 credits.
- d) A five year Bachelor's Degree (RQF Level 9): 6000 notional study hours = 600 credits.
- e) A two year Masters' Degree (RQF Level 9): 3600 notional study hours = 360 credits.



GROUP EXERCISE

QUESTION:

- As part of the quality control circle on learning programme (LP) design and development in your institution, you have been tasked to allocate credits to a 3 year Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degree that was recently developed by your team. The LP has 15 core courses/modules (5 per year), and 5 electives from which 3 are to be selected (1 per year).
 - Using the SADC-CATS and imaginary courses, demonstrate how you would go about allocating credits to the LP.
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**THANK
YOU!**

