ACQF
African Continental Qualifications Framework

Session 2: ACQF Policy Document Validation
11 July 2023

Validation of the ACQF Policy Document

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President of CNAQ

Mozambique

Validation meeting of ACQF Policy Document: welcome

- **Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.**

  Nelson Mandela. Speech, Madison Park High School, Boston, 23 June 1990

Decision on development and implementation of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF)

- Access to quality education and lifelong learning, and acquisition of skills and qualifications are at the heart of the African Renaissance. This is reflected in the first aspiration of African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 with the call for "*Well educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation for a knowledge society* (…)." In addition, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025) emphasises that "*harmonized education and training systems are essential for the realization of intra-Africa mobility and academic integration through regional cooperation*".

- Against this backdrop, an African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) is a key policy initiative to achieve these objectives.

- The African Union Commission, the African Union member states and the regional economic communities (REC) have developed and validate this ACQF Policy document, and pledge to jointly implement and nurture the ACQF with support of the relevant African stakeholders and the international partners in the period 2023-2026 and beyond.

- ACQF is a policy and instrument of continental scope to deliver on the objectives of enhanced transparency and comparability of qualifications and mutual trust between qualifications frameworks and systems for lifelong learning in Africa. The ACQF is inclusive, open to innovation to address new demands from the digital and green transformation, enables stakeholder participation and learning from relevant national, regional and global experiences.

- The ACQF is defined as an overarching reference qualifications framework of ten levels, serving as a connector and translation device between different qualifications frameworks or systems and their levels. The ACQF will deliver on the areas of activity defined in this policy document, namely: a) referencing between qualifications frameworks; b) recognition of prior learning campaign; c) digital qualifications database; d) common profiles of qualifications; e) capacity development and support to national qualifications frameworks; f) networking, communication, and advocacy; g) analysis, monitoring, and evaluation.

- The ACQF is underpinned by strategic commitments and policies of the AU, as mentioned in this document. The ACQF is designed to work in coordination and complementarity with these and other relevant policies, with African standards and guidelines and UNESCO conventions listed in Annex 4, and with national and regional policies related with qualifications and certification.

- This ACQF Policy document is validated by the AU and its member states.

Objectives and scope of ACQF policy document

ACQF Policy Document defines the vision, policy objectives and technical features of the ACQF, proposes the set of ACQF implementation modalities and instruments, and is accompanied by technical annexes.

The ACQF is designed to work in coordination and complementarity with other relevant policies mentioned in chapter 2, and with **African standards and guidelines** and UNESCO conventions listed in Annex 5.

Development process

A. Based on analysis and evidence:

➢ACQF Mapping study of NQFs in Africa

➢ACQF Feasibility Study

➢Global literature on developments and trends in NQF and RQFs

➢Information from 20 Peer Learning Webinars

B. Developed in dialogue and collaboration with ACQF AG chaired by AUC:

➢Initial concept and 2 versions submitted to AUC and discussed in 3 meetings of the ACQF AG.

➢Version of May 2022 submitted via online survey to AG - final recommendations, changes and improvements

➢June-Sept 2022: review and comments H.E. AU Commissioner for ESTI; endorsed in Nov 2022 at this level, and instruction to organise the validation meeting.

Structure of the ACQF Policy Document

- 3 chapters
    1. Introduction: scope and objectives of the ACQF Policy Document
    2. Political and legal basis
    3. Establishment of ACQF
- Sources
- Annexes
    - Glossary
    - ACQF referencing criteria
    - Recommendation on minimum elements in qualifications design and structure
    - Other reference documents supporting ACQF Implementation

AU Political and legal basis

- Agenda 2063 and its First Ten Year Implementation Plan

- CESA 16-25

- AfCFTA

- AU Free Movement Protocol

- PAQAF

Focus on CESA 16-25

The ACQF is mentioned in strategic objective 4 of CESA 16-25. (African Union. CESA 16-25. pg 23).

- Strategic objective 4 c) and d) explicitly refer to the establishment of qualifications frameworks, notably a continental qualifications framework linked with national and regional qualifications frameworks:

- Strategic objective 4: "*Ensure acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills as well as improved completion rates at all levels and groups through harmonization processes across all levels for national and regional integration*".

a) **Set up national qualification frameworks (NQFs) and regional qualification frameworks (RQFs) to facilitate the creation of multiple pathways to acquisition of skills and competencies as well as mobility across the sub-sectors**

b) **Develop continental qualifications framework linked to regional qualifications and national qualification frameworks to facilitate regional integration and mobility of graduates**

African context

➤ Africa has the youngest population in the world. High potential of the demographic dividend for sustainable growth, innovation, jobs. But countries struggle to create jobs and equip young people with skills and qualifications required for national economies and for cross-country integration.

➤ Mobility of learners and workers is essential for economic integration and improved matching of demand – supply of skills and qualifications across borders.

➤ The transformation of work, technology, and learning calls for future-proof qualifications, skills for resilience and adaptability and responsible NQFs.

➤ The panorama of NQFs in Africa has improved in the last years – new NQFs approved, new NQFs started development and consultation, and all countries with NQFs in advanced implementation are rethinking and improving them. These dynamics are favourable factors for a vibrant ACQF.

Global context

- ACQF responds to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, which provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. ACQF is especially relevant for **Goals 4 and 8** of the Agenda for Sustainable Development, which target respectively: quality education and decent work and economic growth.

- ACQF is coherent with the ***Declaration on Transforming Education in Africa: Past, Present and Future*, adopted on 20th September 2022 at the High-Level Side Event on Transforming Education in Africa** in the Margins of Transforming Education Summit in New York (esp. on: partnerships, synergies between education and labour market data and matching skills with job opportunities).

- Call for Action by the **SD4 High-level Steering Committee "*Following up on the transformative commitments made at the Transforming Education Summit***" (United Nations, September 2022) (esp. on: initiatives related with greening education to get every learner climate-ready, connecting to digital solutions, addressing foundational learning, and supporting inclusive learning opportunities)

Establishment of ACQF

1

Considering the political and legal basis, the ACQF is established as a policy and instrument of continental scope to deliver on the **objectives of enhanced transparency and comparability of qualifications and mutual trust between qualifications frameworks and systems for lifelong learning in Africa.**

2

The ACQF is defined as an **overarching reference qualifications framework of ten levels, serving as a translation device** between different qualifications frameworks or systems and their levels.

3

Governance of the ACQF builds on the political support and steering of the AU, the participation of all AU countries and regions, partnerships with stakeholders from the world of education, training, qualifications and work and sustainable implementation capacity.

4

The ACQF is a holistic and indivisible policy instrument.

5

ACQF **cooperates with national and regional qualifications frameworks and systems** and is not intended to change or supersede existing national or regional legal-regulatory frameworks, guidelines, and practices, but to complement and contribute to development and implementation of qualifications frameworks and to relevant innovations.

Conceptual technical design

Comprehensive and inclusive scope: all levels, modes of learning

10 levels: whole continuum of qualifications of education and training systems

Level descriptors expressed as **learning outcomes**

Domains of learning: Knowledge, Skills, Autonomy and Responsibility

Supported by Quality Assurance

Learning outcomes orientation supports:

- ✓ Improve **transparency and comparability** of qualifications of different national systems

- ✓ **Transparency and credibility of RPL** and validation of outcomes from experience, access to quality RPL

- ✓ **Application of credit accumulation and transfer systems** in different academic and vocational pathways.
  - Access, learning progression, lifelong learning, flexibility,
  - In design of qualifications: facilitate transfer of components of qualifications

Conceptual-technical design

Contribution to facilitate recognition of foreign qualifications

- The transparency, information-sharing and mutual trust resulting from referencing levels of NQFs to ACQF levels contribute to transparency of recognition of foreign qualifications in the context of Africa and other continents.
- The ACQF and the national information bodies involved in the recognition of qualifications will share information on learning outcomes, levels and other characteristics of qualifications frameworks referenced to the ACQF.

Underpinned by quality assurance

- The ACQF as an overarching qualifications framework and a catalyst for NQF development is underpinned by quality assurance. Quality assurance is fundamental for trust in qualifications, and for their currency and mobility.
- **Quality assurance is the subject of Criterion 4 of referencing to the ACQF**, which states that the national quality assurance system for education and training refers to the national qualifications framework or system and is consistent with the principles of quality assurance of the ACQF.

Main areas of activity of the ACQF

1.**Referencing** of national qualifications frameworks and systems to the ACQF, following agreed criteria and procedures.

2. **Support recognition of prior learning** – for example, the development of common guidelines and approaches, updated inventory of RPL systems on the continent, a wide information and support campaign

3. **ACQF Qualifications Platform (database) and management information system**

4. **Qualifications**: Development of qualifications profiles adequate for common continental use (e.g.: related with economic integration / AfCFTA).

5. **Capacity development** in relevant areas. Online, onsite, hybrid.

6. **Advocacy, communication, networking and cooperation:** African stakeholders (education and training, employment, social partners) and other RQFs globally

7. **Analysis, monitoring and evaluation**: for continuous improvement.

African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF)

Inaugural workshop of the project ACQF-II (2023-2026)

11-13 July 2023 • Addis Ababa, Headquarters of the African Union

ACQF
African Continental
Qualifications Framework

Supporting and connecting Qualifications Frameworks
Transparency and Mutual Trust in qualifications
Facilitating lifelong learning and mobility

ACQF-II is:
1. Capacity development.
2. Support countries and regions: NQF development and implementation.
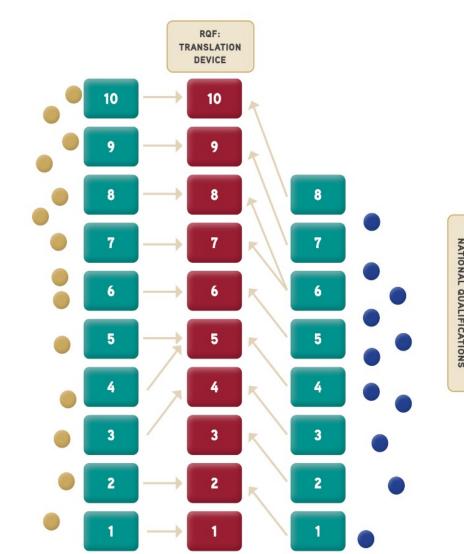3. Governance. ACQF Qualifications Platform. RPL Campaign. Referencing NQF-ACQF. Common profiles of qualifications

www.acqf.africa

Referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to ACQF

➢ ACQF aims at **connecting** the African national (and regional) qualifications frameworks. This core function is based on the process of **referencing to ACQF**.

➢ Referencing: process aimed at comparing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the ACQF following criteria and procedures (**ACQF Guideline 3**)

➢ At **national level**, referencing contributes to self-assessment of the status of the national qualifications framework or system, and to self-improvement.

➢ At **continental level and between countries**, referencing to the ACQF of a significant and increasing number of national qualifications or systems leads to the <u>creation of a common area of trusted qualifications</u> and enables the transformative potential of the ACQF for the continent.

➢ Following referencing to ACQF: countries use ACQF levels on newly issued documents related to qualifications and in registers / databases of qualifications.
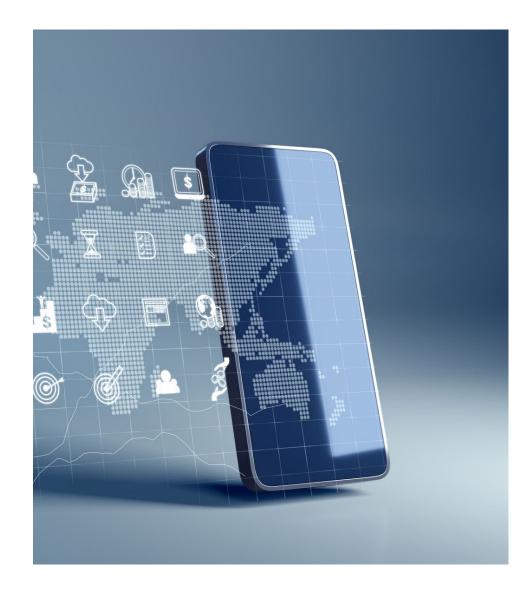
ACQF Qualifications Platform (database)

Goal: digital transparency instrument for users' information and guidance on learning and qualifications, complementing national policies and systems.

Use of ACQP QP at national level: a) information sharing on national qualifications included in NQFs that are referenced to ACQF – link national DB to ACQF; b) countries may use the technology provided by ACQF Platform as a free service to manage national qualifications.
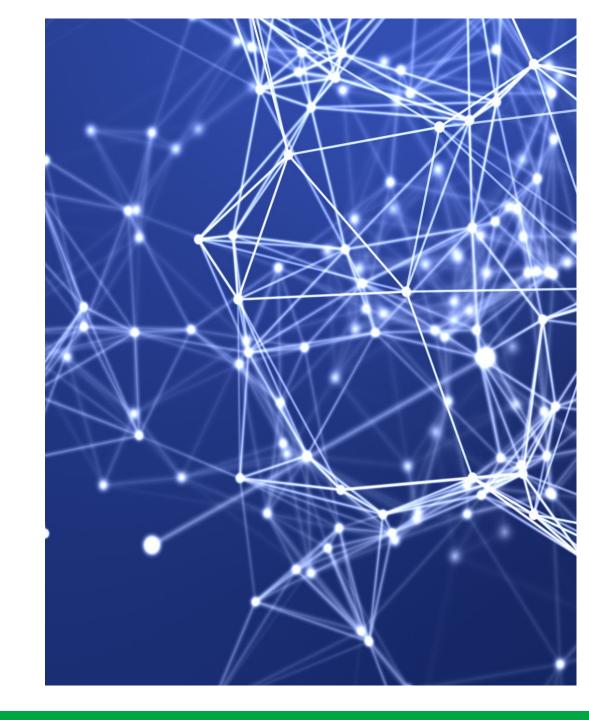
Other uses:

➤ List and share information on international qualifications with high labour market and educational value, including micro-credentials – based on criteria

➤ Common profiles of qualifications

➤ Data analysis and exchange – based on common data model (annex 4) of minimum fields of data for electronic publication of information on qualifications.

Level descriptors: process

✓ Analysis of global trends: Inventory of level descriptors – Africa, Europe

✓ Specific survey: African stakeholders

✓ Sub-group in ACQF experts' team

✓ Builder matrix – gradual development and improvement of draft

✓ Specific glossary of Level descriptors terms

✓ Consultation with international experts

✓ Systematic series of sub-group meetings: step-by-step, follow-up

✓ Read Thematic Brief 10 at:
https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-10-acqf-level-descriptors-the-story-of-the-development-journey

ACQF level descriptors (1)

Level	Domains of learning		
	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy and responsibility
Definition of the domains of learning	In the context of ACQF "Knowledge" includes various kinds of knowledge such as facts, principles, and theories in various areas	In the context of ACQF "Skills" refer to the ability to use knowledge to respond to information and address problems. Skills include cognitive, communication, digital, green, innovation, practical and social skills.	In the context of ACQF "Autonomy and responsibility" refers to the context and extent of the application of autonomy and responsibility
Level 1: the learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	simple knowledge, literacy and numeracy	simple communication, cognitive and practical skills required to follow simple instructions, and use simple, repetitive solutions to address simple problems	highly structured, repetitive contexts under close supervision and guidance taking minimal responsibility for self
Level 2: the learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	basic knowledge incorporating comprehension and recall of factual and operational knowledge in some areas	basic communication, cognitive and practical skills required to use concrete information, ideas and known solutions to address straight forward problems	structured contexts under limited supervision and guidance taking limited responsibility for self and group outcomes
Level 3: the learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	factual and operational knowledge incorporating some theoretical aspects in some areas	a range of communication, cognitive, practical and technical skills required to interpret and communicate ideas and detailed information and select and use known solutions to address familiar problems	predictable contexts under routine supervision and guidance, with initiative for self-responsibility and some responsibility for group outcomes
Level 4: the learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	mainly factual, operational or technical knowledge incorporating theoretical aspects in one or more areas	well-developed technical skills required to analyse information and new ideas, make informed judgements, communicate outcomes and apply varied solutions to varied (familiar and unfamiliar) problems	varied (predictable and unpredictable) contexts with adaptability and initiative for self-direction under general guidance, taking full responsibility for self, some planning and responsibility for group outcomes and initiative for responsibility for others

ACQF level descriptors (2)

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy and responsibility
Level 5: the learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	mainly technical or theoretical knowledge with substantial depth in a discipline/ area	a range of well-developed technical skills, with some specialisation, required to analyse information and new ideas, construct and communicate a coherent argument, and apply a range of solutions, often in combination, to address unfamiliar problems	unpredictable contexts with full autonomy and full responsibility for self and group outcomes, and some responsibility for others
Level 6: the learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	highly technical or theoretical knowledge, with specialisation in a discipline/ area	highly technical and specialised skills required to collate, analyse, synthesise and communicate a range of information and new ideas, and formulate or adapt different solutions to address complex and sometimes abstract problems	highly variable contexts with well-developed autonomy and responsibility for self and group outcomes and responsibility for resources and processes
Level 7: the learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	advanced analytical and/ or specialised knowledge of a discipline/ area	advanced, specialised skills required to demonstrate advanced analysis and initiative for new insights and ideas in research and/ or innovation, and formulate advanced solutions to address complex and abstract problems	complex and variable contexts with advanced autonomy and responsibility
Level 8: the learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	highly advanced, complex knowledge of a discipline/ area	highly advanced, complex skills required to demonstrate highly advanced analysis, communicate new insights and ideas in research and/ or innovation, and formulate highly advanced solutions to address highly complex and abstract problems	highly complex contexts with some specialisation demonstrating highly advanced autonomy and responsibility
Level 9: the learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	mastery of a complex body of knowledge at the forefront of a discipline/ area	skills mastery required to demonstrate originality and new insights in research and/ or innovation and formulate and test theories to show mastery of highly complex, abstract problems	highly specialised contexts demonstrating mastery in autonomy and responsibility
Level 10: the learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	substantial and original knowledge contribution that extends the forefront of a discipline/ area and/ or at the interface between disciplines/ areas	expert skills and techniques that demonstrate innovation, interpretation and creation of new ideas required to critically evaluate, formulate and test theories to address emergent, new and critical problems	emergent new contexts demonstrating expertise in management of new ideas

ACQF implementation 2023-2026: enablers

Foundations created by ACQF-I: package of 10 guidelines, ACQF Handbook, training modules, capacity development, ACQF Network and Advisory Group, trust and cooperation with countries and RECs

Demand by countries: cooperation on NQFs development and implementation

Networking, cooperation with other RQFs, NQF (other continents): communication, comparison with other RQFs, UNESCO conventions (Addis and global)

ACQF-II project: ready to start and oriented to the 7 main areas of work

Let us celebrate our ACQF

- Thank you
- Merci
- Obrigada