Registration of Qualifications on the NQF – SAQA

Session 4

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Overview

1. Registration of Qualifications

2. National Verifications

3. Evaluation of Foreign Qualifications

4. Automation Project

5. Validation Tool – NLRD

Registration of Qualifications

SAQA RESPONSIBILITIES

OVERSEE
NQF implementation and co-ordinate NQF Sub-Frameworks

ADVISE
the Minister of Higher Education and Training on NQF matters

DEVELOP
and implement NQF policies and criteria

MAINTAIN
a National Learners' Records Database

REGISTER
qualifications and professional designations on the NQF

RECOGNISE
professional bodies

PROVIDE
evaluation and advisory services for foreign qualifications

PROVIDE
verification services for national qualifications

CONDUCT
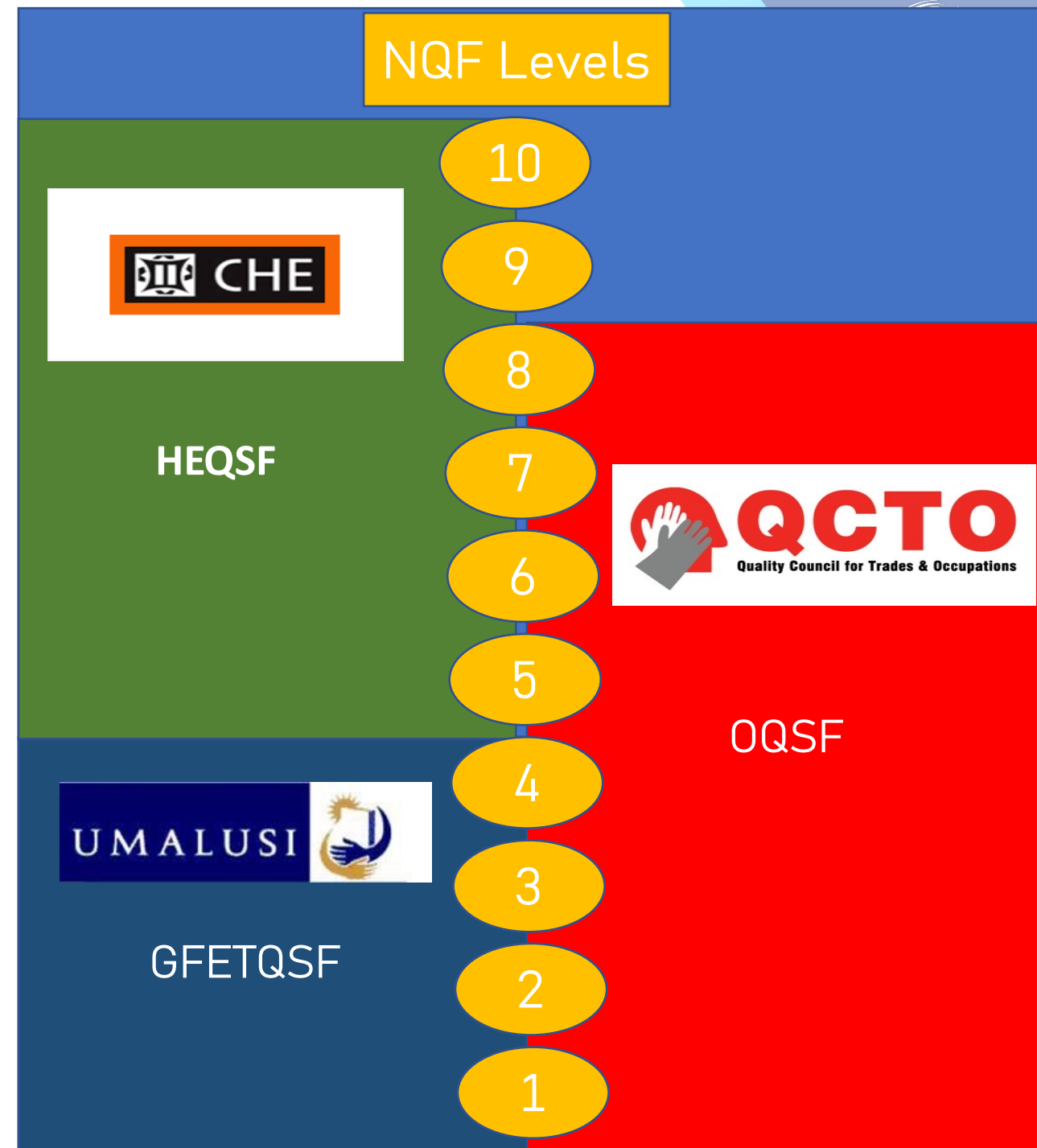research and collaborate with international counterparts
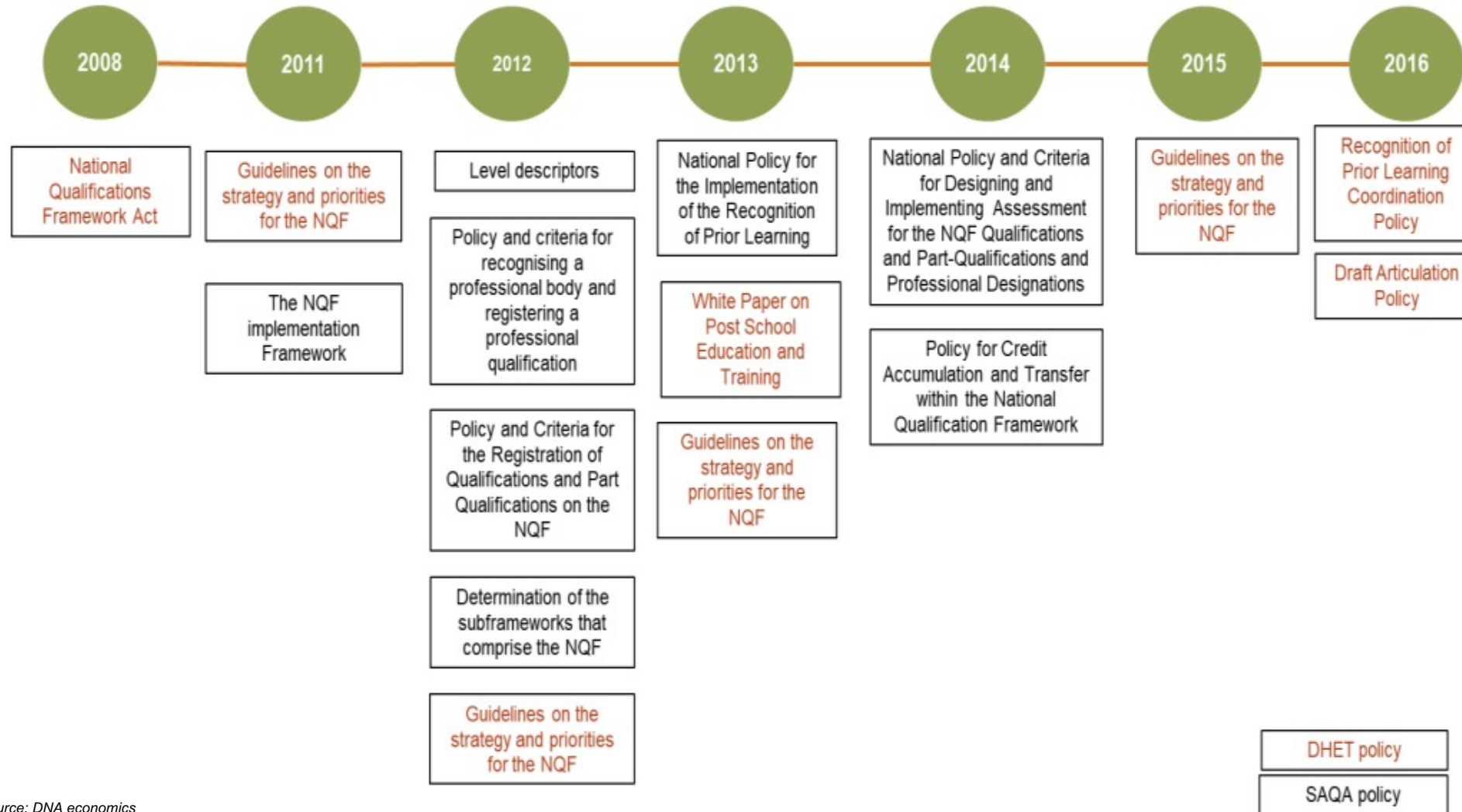
INFORM
the public about the NQF

The South African NQF

- Single integrated, 10-level framework

- Comprises three (3) co-ordinated Sub-Frameworks:
  - General and Further Education and Training (schooling)
  - Trades and Occupations
  - Higher Education

- Each Sub-Framework managed by a Quality Council

Policies and Guidelines

Source: DNA economics

- Range of policies developed anchored on the NQF act and developed between 2011 and 2016, with subsequent reviews and amendments

Key elements

- Policy and criteria first published in 2013.

- Reviewed and amended in 2020.

- Positive impact on quality and recognition of qualifications.

Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part-qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework (As amended, 2022)

Registration requirements:

- Title, Field and Sub-field
- Level
- Credits
- Rationale and Purpose
- RPL and Entry Requirements
- Rules of Combination
- ELOs and AACs
- Integrated Assessment
- International Comparability
- Articulation

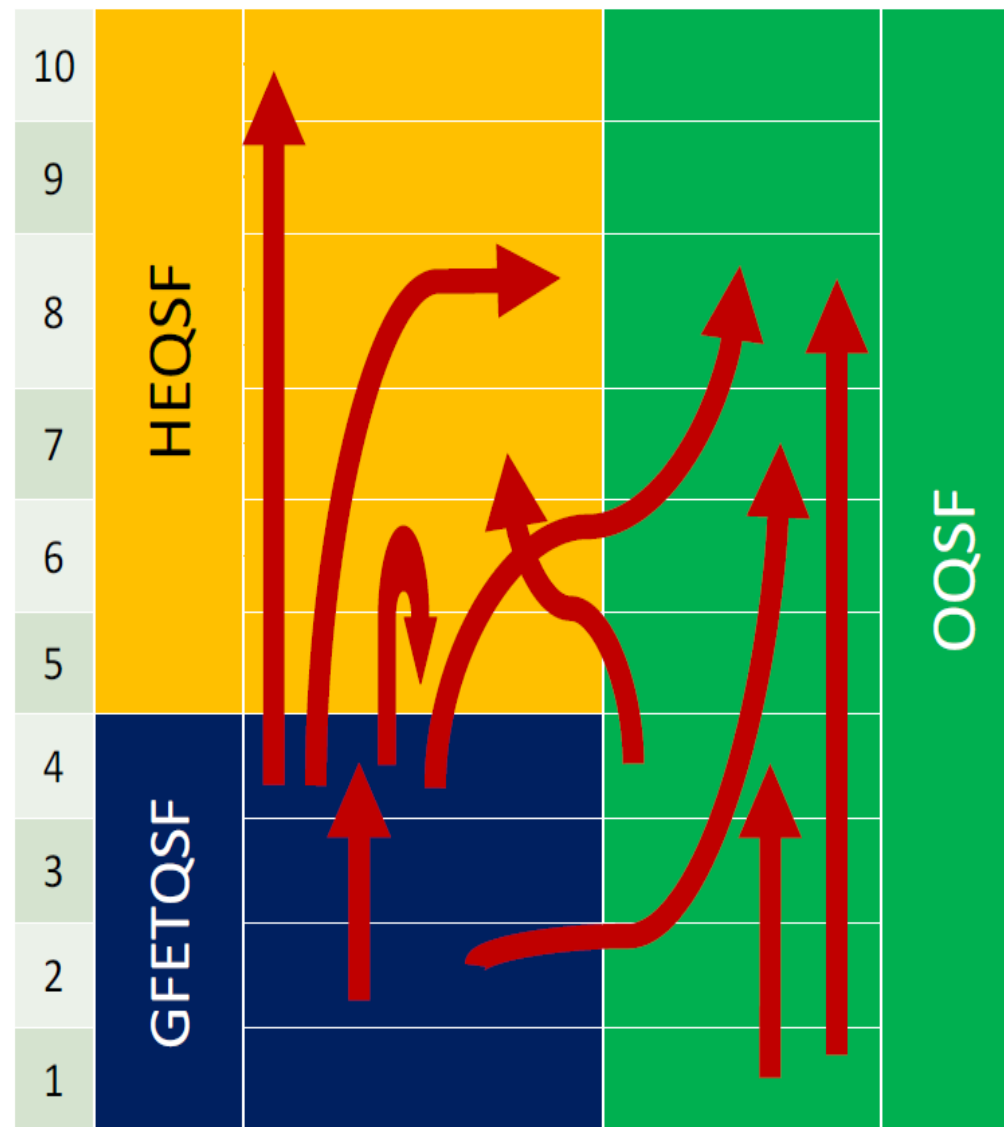| 2013 Policy	2020 Policy
Sets out the requirements for <u>registering</u> qualifications and part qualifications on the NQF	Sets out the requirements for **developing** and <u>registering</u> qualifications and part-qualifications on the NQF
Applies to the development, registration and publication of qualifications and part qualifications	Applies to the development , <u>evaluation</u>, registration and publication of qualifications and part-qualifications
	Includes information on **re-registration and de-registration** of qualifications and part-qualifications
	Includes criteria for the publication of qualifications and part-qualifications

Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part-qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework (As amended, 2022)

Title, Field and Sub-field

Level

Credits

Rationale and Purpose

RPL and Entry Requirements

Rules of Combination

ELOs and AACs

Integrated Assessment

International Comparability

Articulation

Articulation

- Articulation is an important requirement in terms of registering qualifications. 3 types:
  - ❖ Systemic, specific and individual articulation

- SAQA is involved in some articulation initiatives including:
  1. The **Unfurling Post-School Education and Training (UPSET) project :**
     a) Looking at jointly developed and offered qualifications between Colleges and HEIs (e.g., Diploma, Higher Certificate, other)
     b) tracking transitioning learners and
     c) documenting good practice, amongst others.

  2. Working with different sectors to develop and strengthen learning and work pathways in these sectors.

Achievements

- Embedded Quality Assurance in the system

- Integrated approach with QCs

- Improved communication and collaboration with stakeholders, NQF partners

- RPL embedded in policy and practice

Challenges

- Debates and perceptions: e.g., development of Part qualifications vs unit standards, 'perceived' proliferation of qualifications

- Historically registered qualifications not aligned to NQF

- Overlapping mandates of SAQA and QCs

- Delays in accreditation/registration processes

- Funding constraints

Reflections

- SAQA plays a vital role in the continuous and further development of the South African NQF

- Policy development and implementation have been strengthened over time, but there is always room for improvement

- Technology and its impact on advancing registration of qualifications (e.g automating a workflow system that tracks and monitors applications for registration)
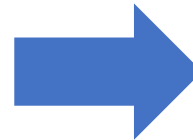
- Further improvements: Microcredentials

National Verification

Verifications: What and Why

'**Verification**' = *the process followed by SAQA to determine the **authenticity** of a qualification or part-qualification in terms of the relevant SAQA policy and procedures.*
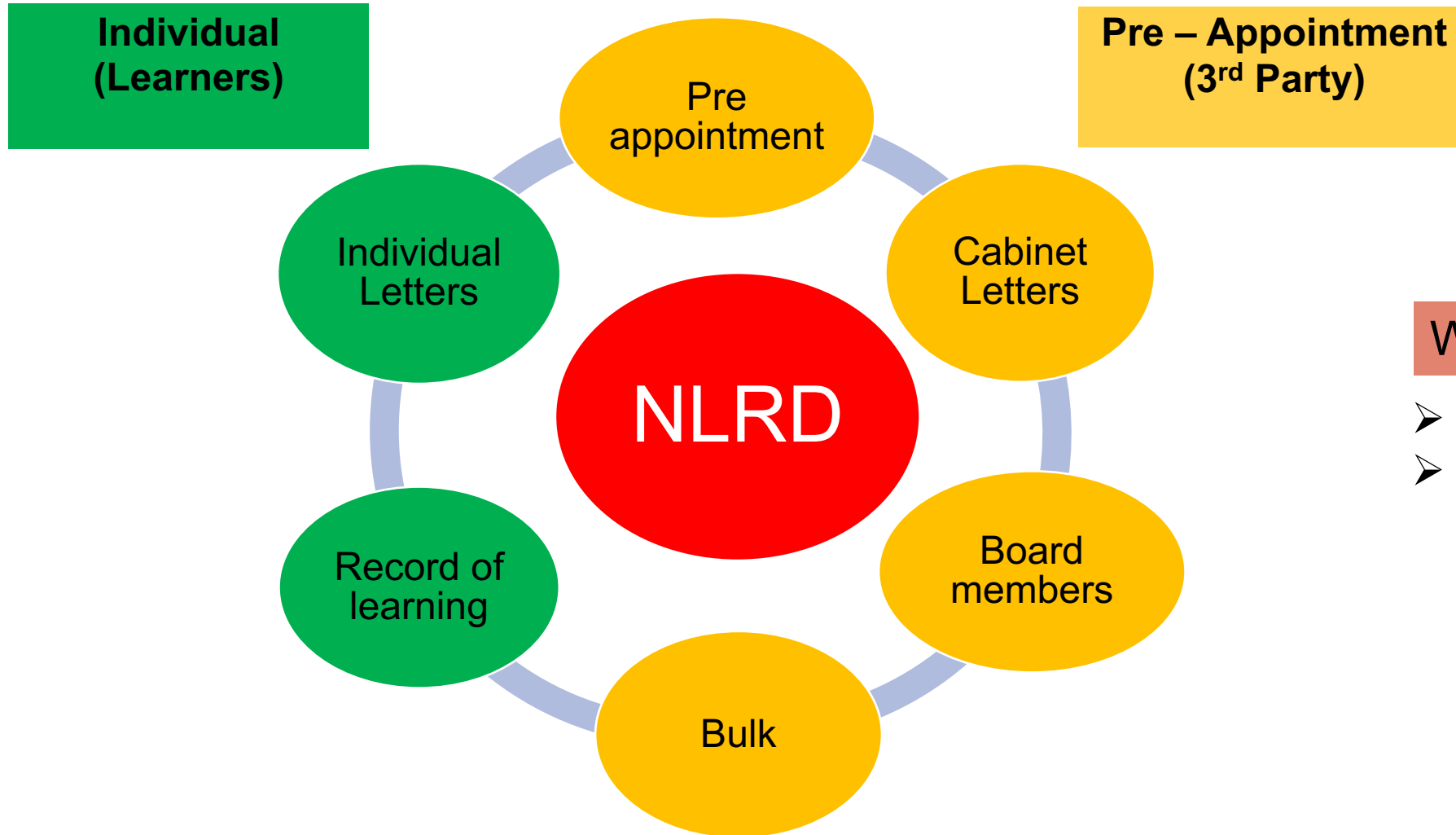
SAQA checks that qualification is:

(i) registered on the NQF;

(ii) offered by a registered, established, declared or merged and accredited education institution or skills development provider in terms of relevant legislation;

(iii) lawfully obtained.

– NQF Amendment Act (2019)

➢ **Trust**

➢ **Integrity**

➢ **Quality**

➢ **Mobility**

    ➢ *Emigration*

    ➢ *Further studies*

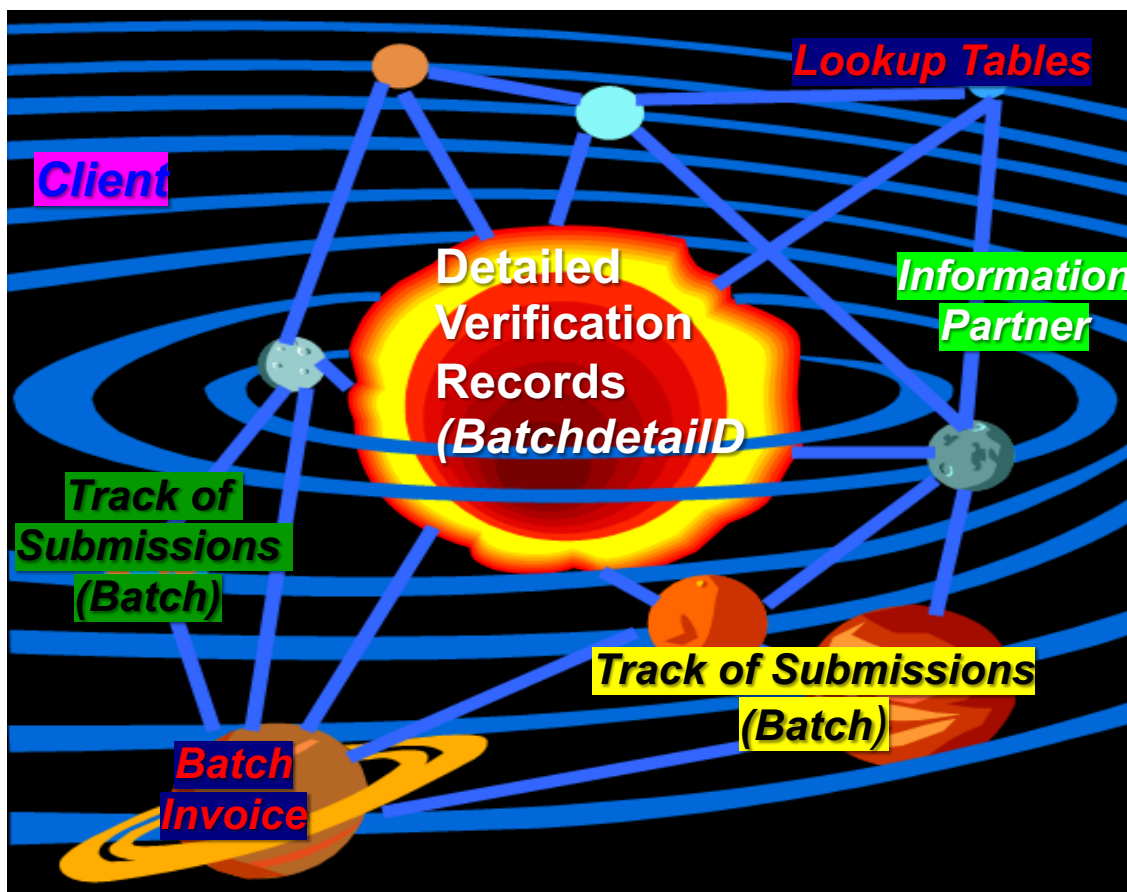   ➢ *Professional registration*

    ➢ *Employment*

Verifications Products and Services

SAQA

Individual (Learners)

Pre – Appointment (3rd Party)

- Pre appointment
- Cabinet Letters
- Individual Letters
- NLRD
- Board members
- Record of learning
- Bulk

What we don't verify:

➢ Short courses
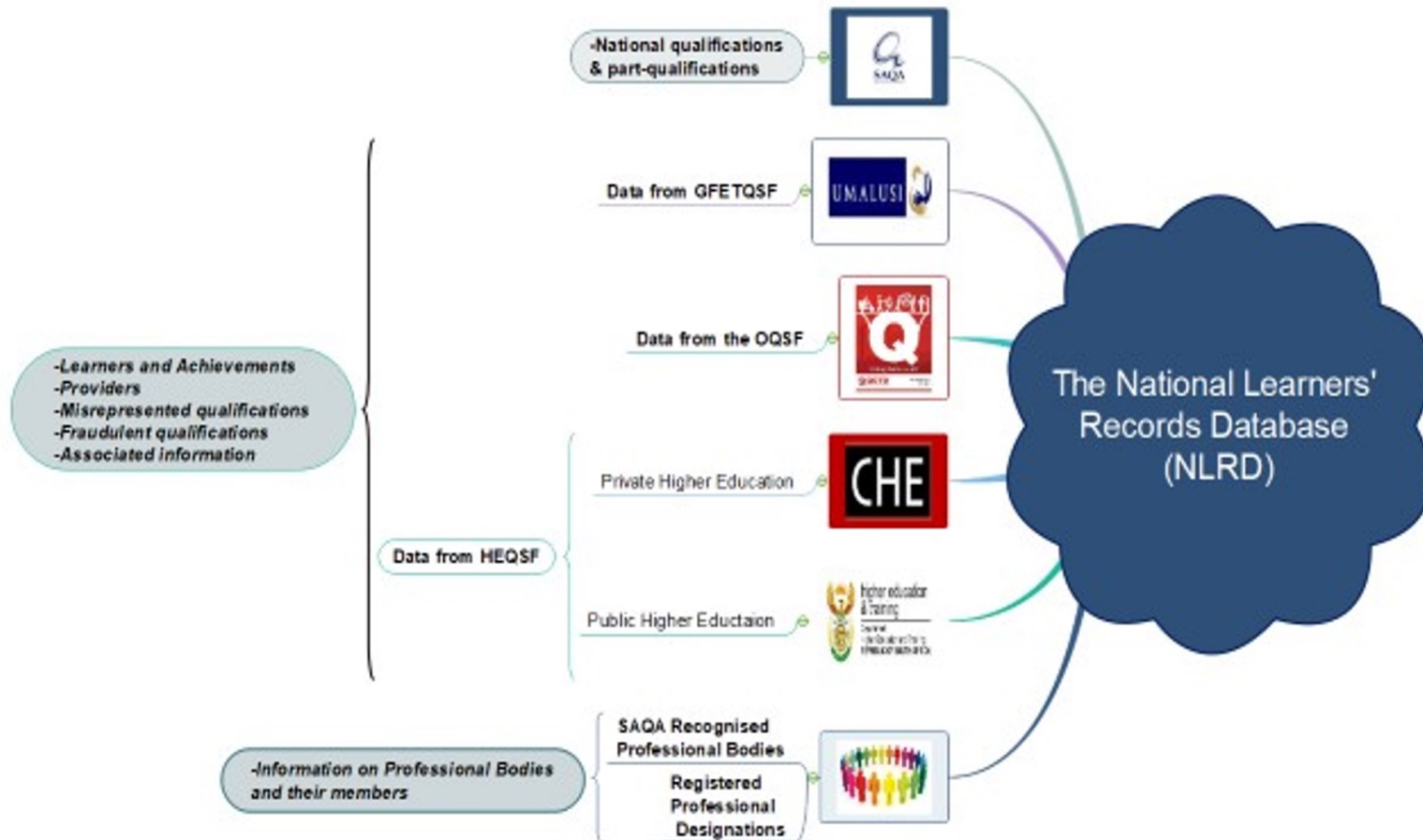➢ Professional designations

Verifications Database

Relational Database (in MS SQL)

Best practice design, as guided by the NLRD's design

➢ Capture records for Verifications

➢ Tracking system - operates in real time

➢ Register of verification submissions, clients and information sources

➢ Automated nightly downloads to SAQA VeriSearch

➢ Verification reports: statistics; trends; requests for invoices

National Learner's Records Database(NLRD)

The NLRD: Data Sources

- ➤ Primary source of information for the Verification of South African Qualifications

- ➤ Bi- Annual loads

- ➤ Over 22 million records loaded on the NLRD

Verifications

Two main 'types' of verifications provided to learners with SA qualifications:
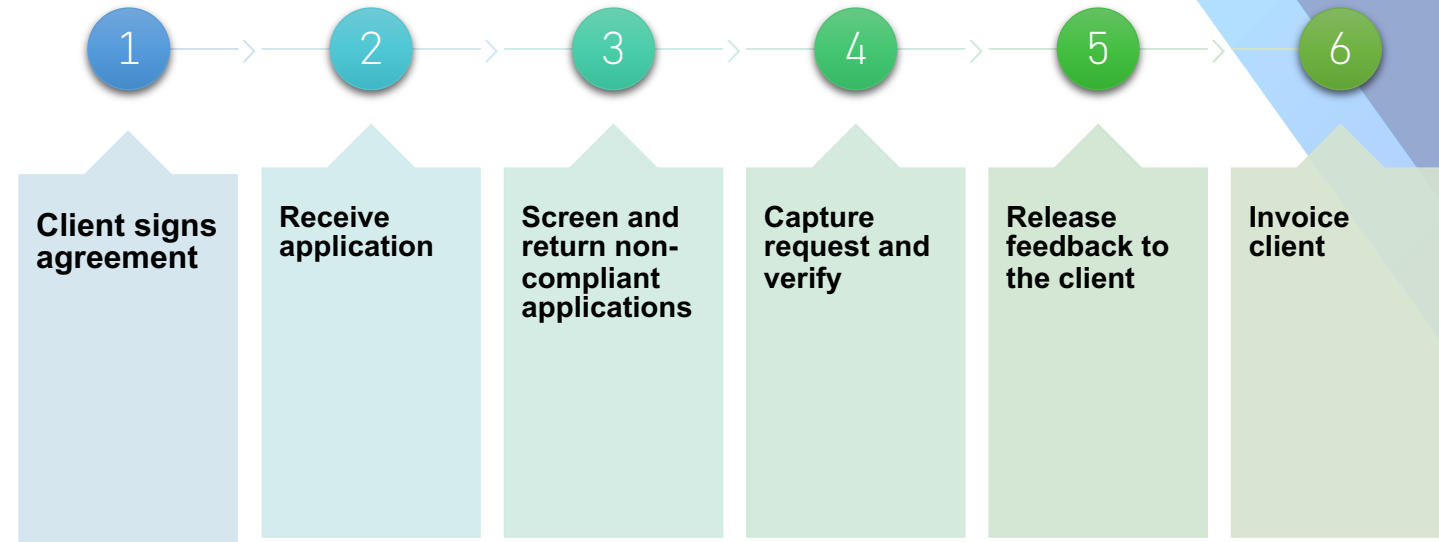
1. Pre-appointment Verifications
- ➢ For employment or further study
- ➢ Bulk requests from public sector

2. Individual letters
- ➢ Service started in 2019
- ➢ Geared towards individuals emigrating to other countries for employment and study
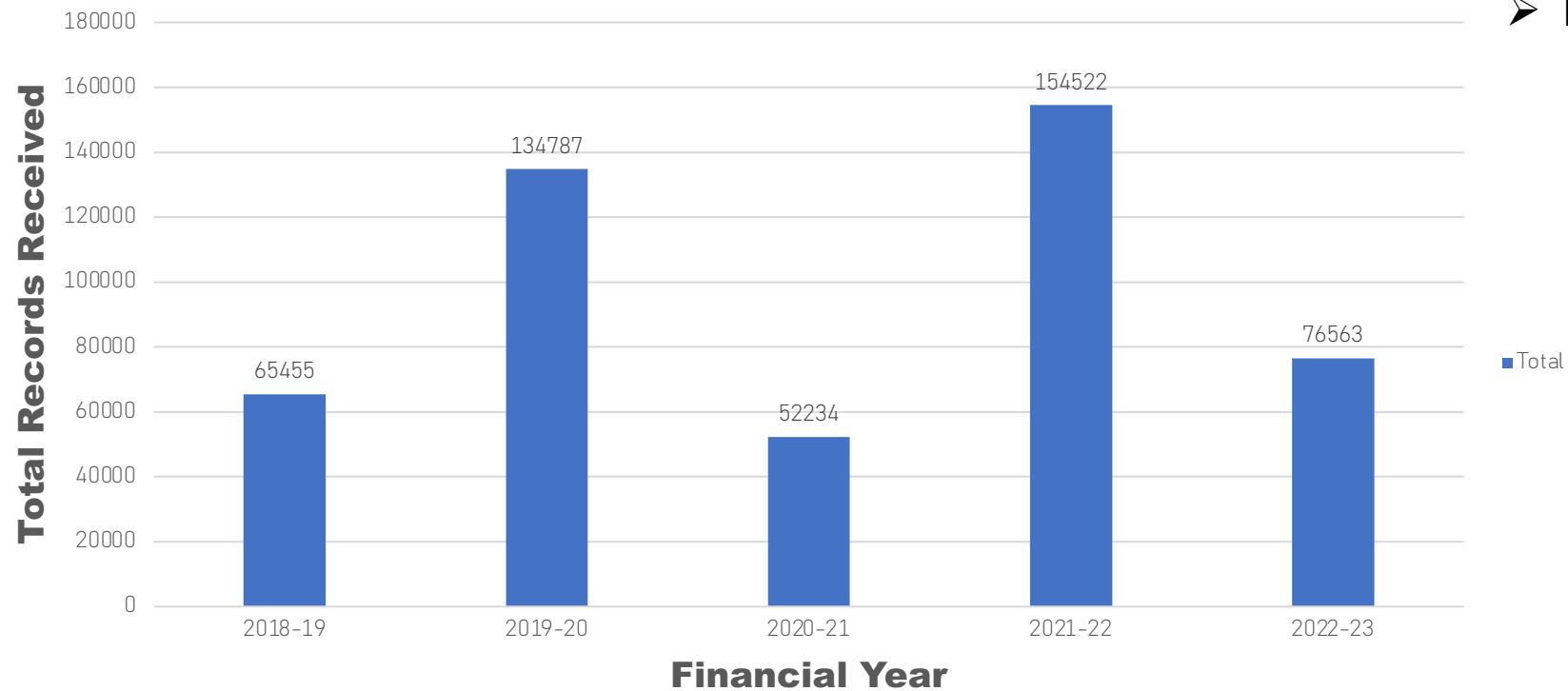- ➢ Only for higher education qualifications

Process:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Client signs agreement	Receive application	Screen and return non-compliant applications	Capture request and verify	Release feedback to the client	Invoice client

Turnaround times:

- ➢ Extra – Up to 2 working days
- ➢ Special – 3 to 5 working days
- ➢ Standard – 25 working days (**for "pre-appointments" and "individual learners"**)

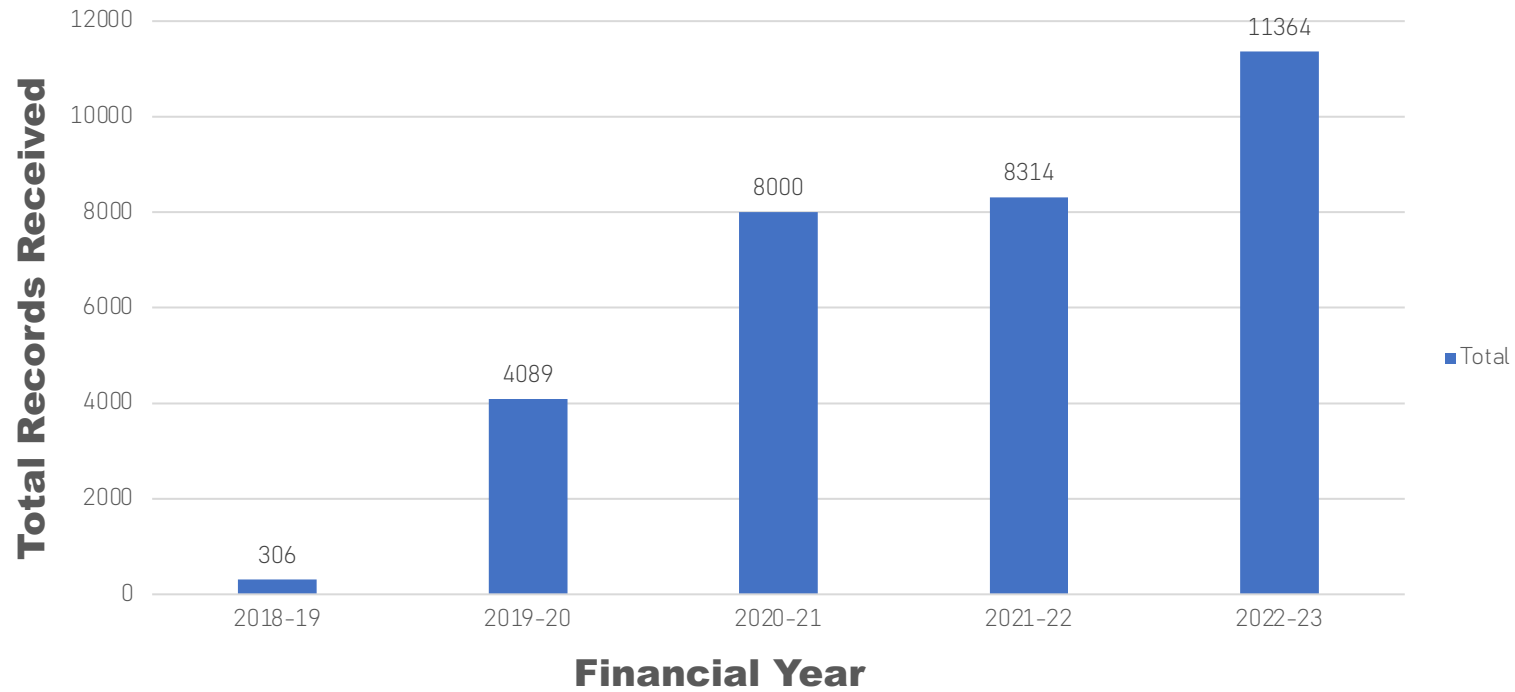# Pre-Appointment Verifications Statistics

Pre-appointment and Bulk per Financial Year
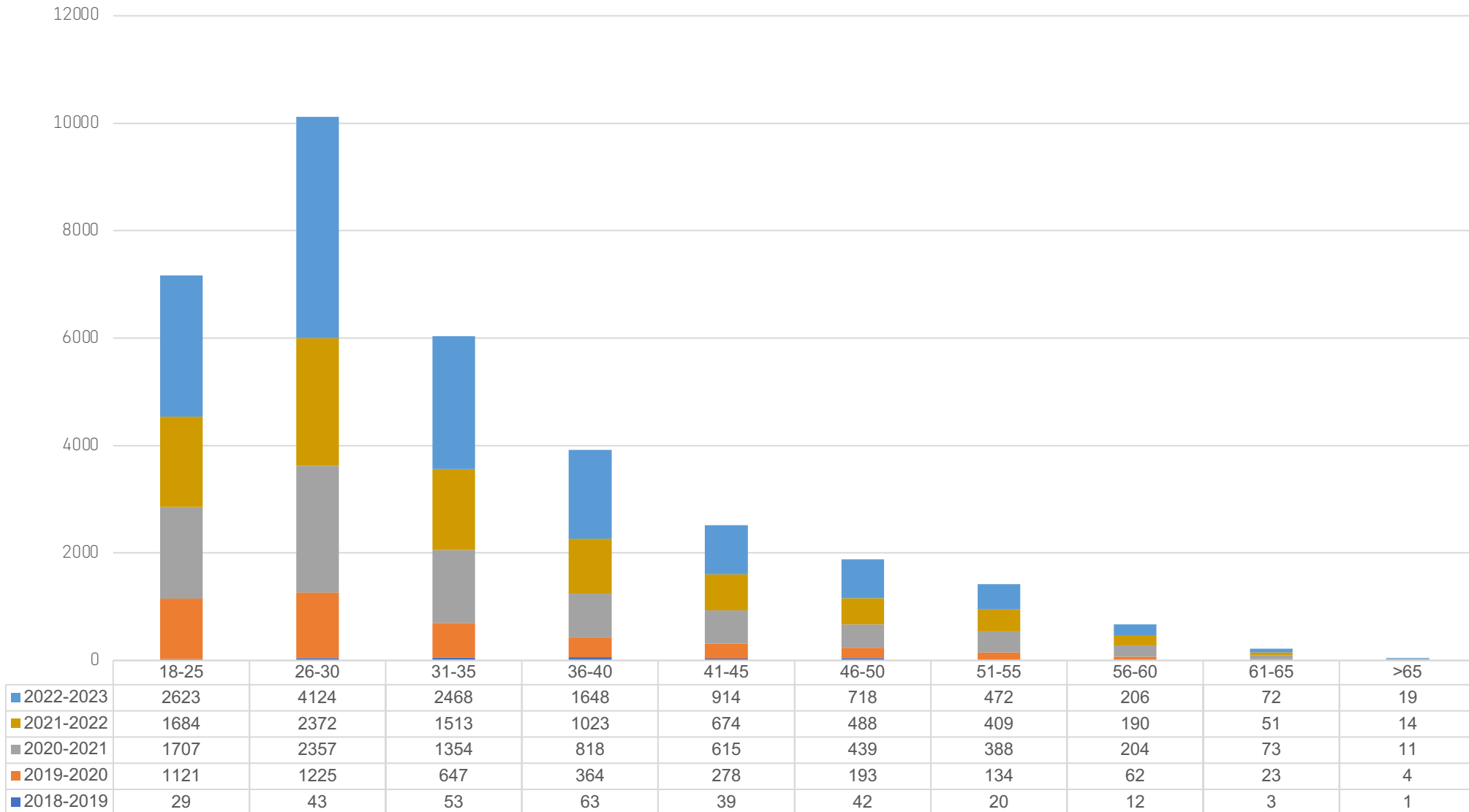

➢ Effects of Covid- 19 in 2020/21

Verification Letter Statistics

Individual Letter records per Financial Year
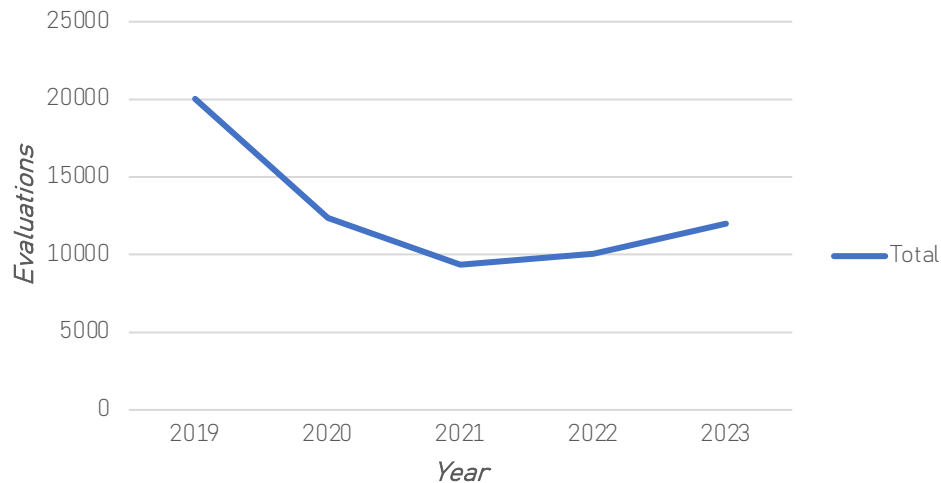
Individual Verifications Qualification Trends

Count of People by Age Group

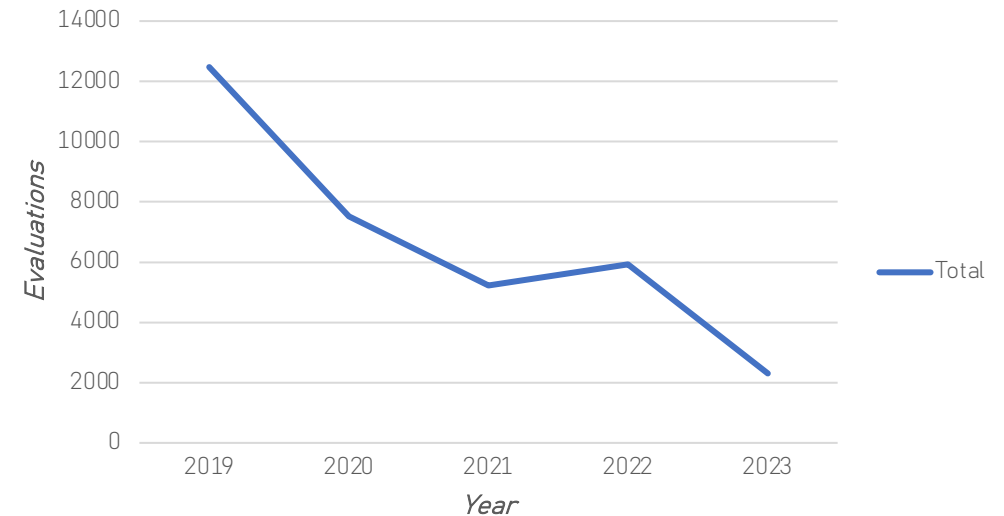|	18-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	61-65	>65
2022-2023	2623	4124	2468	1648	914	718	472	206	72	19
2021-2022	1684	2372	1513	1023	674	488	409	190	51	14
2020-2021	1707	2357	1354	818	615	439	388	204	73	11
2019-2020	1121	1225	647	364	278	193	134	62	23	4
2018-2019	29	43	53	63	39	42	20	12	3	1

Evaluation of Foreign Qualifications

SAQA evaluation of foreign qualifications from African States

Trend of FQ achievements recognised by SAQA Overall 2019 – 2023

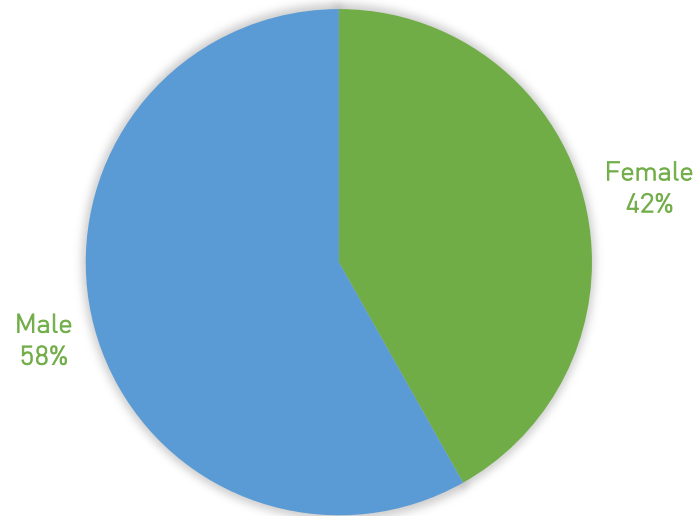Trend of FQ achievements recognised by SAQA from African states 2019 – 2023
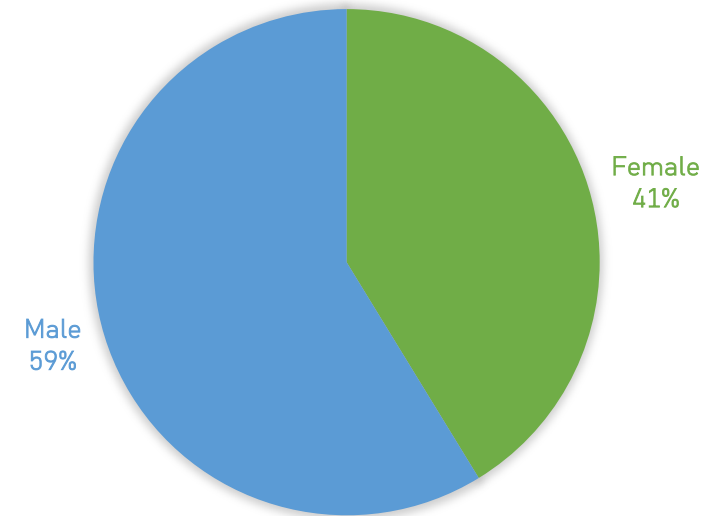
SAQA's Top 10 African countries since 2018

Country	Evaluations
Zimbabwe	16862
Nigeria	5812
Lesotho	3286
Congo, Democratic Republic of	3112
Ghana	1861
Namibia	1413
Kenya	1357
Swaziland	1316
Botswana	1093
Zambia	984
Grand Total	37096

Zimbabwe accounts for 45% of the total evaluations. Zimbabwe also tops the overall list of evaluations that we do at SAQA. Six of the overall Top 10 countries on the list are from the SADC region.

AFRICA: GENDER DISTRIBUTION

Female 42%

Male 58%

OVERALL: GENDER DISTRIBUTION

Female 41%

Male 59%

The two pie charts depicts the profile of a typical SAQA applicant. As it shows on the two charts, the typical gender is that of a male.
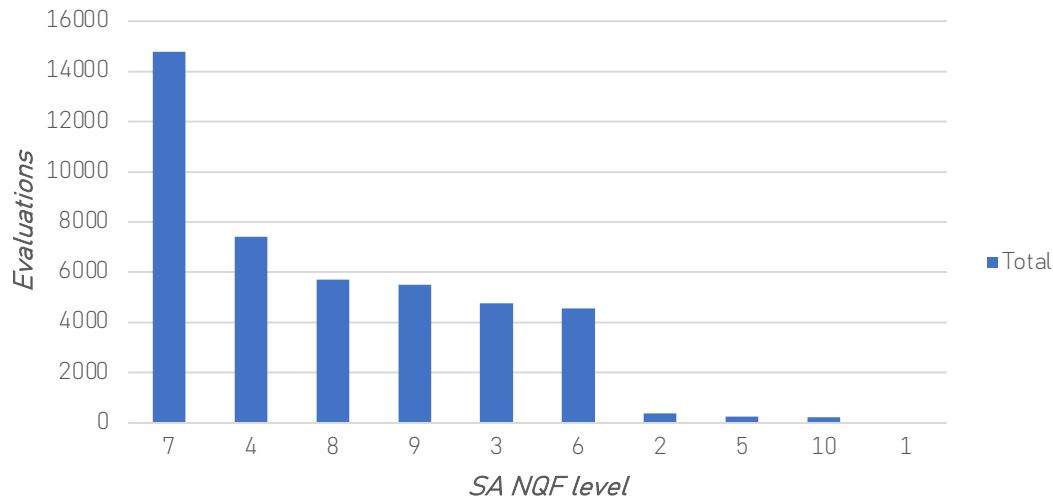
Top 10 African institutions

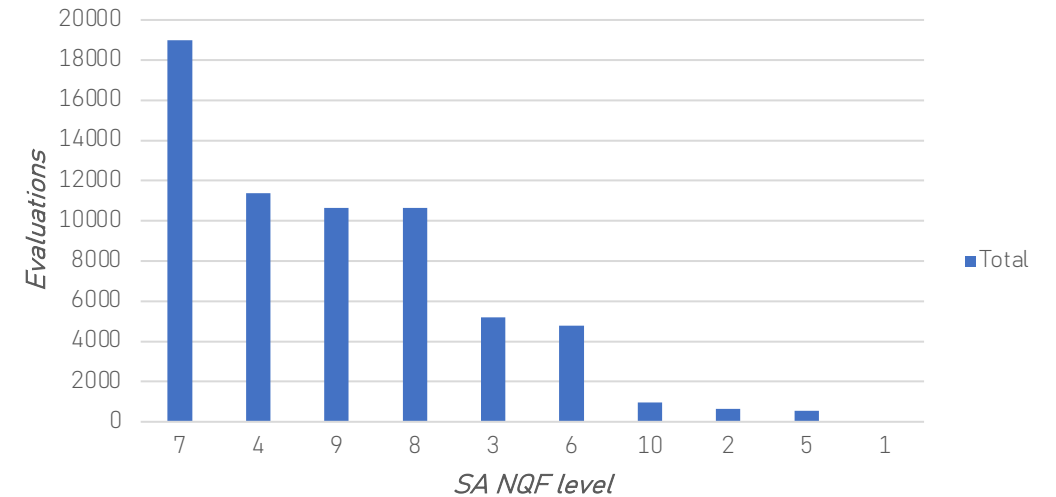| Country	Evaluations
University of Zimbabwe	3385
Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC)	3095
Midlands State University	2242
National University of Science and Technology	2028
Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel	1535
National University of Lesotho (since 1975)	1342
The West African Examinations Council	1002
Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education	984
University of Botswana	696
Great Zimbabwe University	619
Grand Total	16928

The table depicts the top 10 institutions SAQA receives the most qualifications from, of which the majority are located within Zimbabwe.

Locating foreign qualifications on the SA NQF

Africa: SAQA evaluations per SA NQF level 2018 – 2023

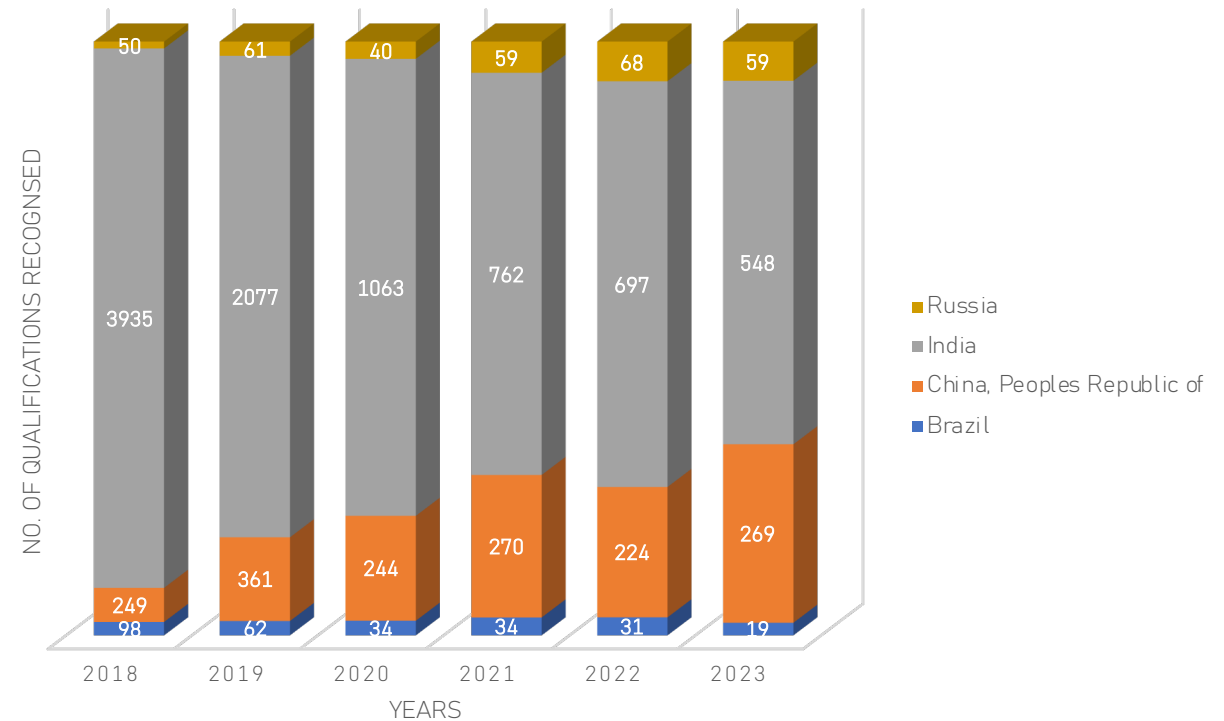Overall: SAQA evaluations per SA NQF level 2018 – 2023

Both these graphs (African vs Overall evaluations) show a similar pattern; a large majority of the foreign qualifications SAQA recognizes are located on SA NQF level 7 (first degree or undergraduate level qualifications)

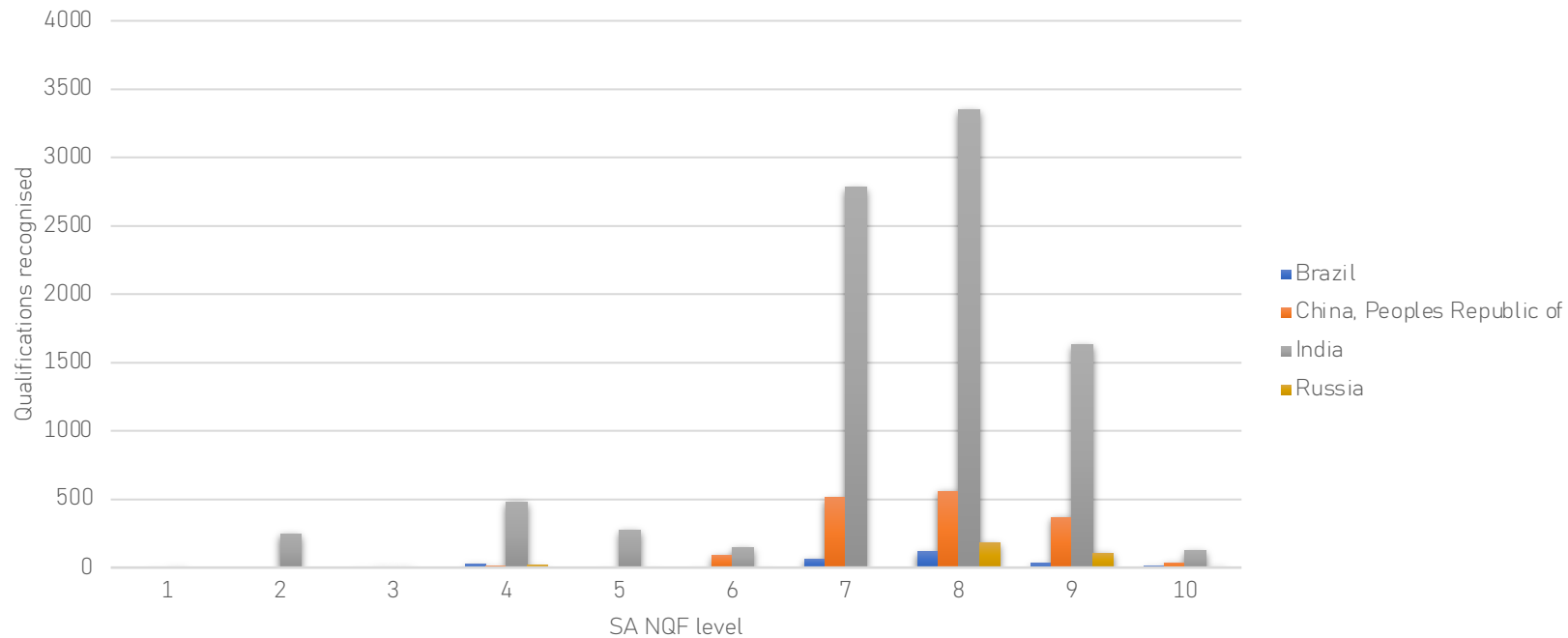# Locating foreign qualifications on the SA NQF: BRICS

Year	Brazil	China, Peoples Republic of	India	Russia	Total
2018	98	249	3935	50	4332
2019	62	361	2077	61	2561
2020	34	244	1063	40	1381
2021	34	270	762	59	1125
2022	31	224	697	68	1020
2023	19	269	548	59	895
Total	278	1617	9082	337	11314

EVALUATION OF QUALIFICATIONS FROM BRICS COUNTRIES DONE BY SAQA SINCE 2018

Locating foreign qualifications on the SA NQF: BRICS

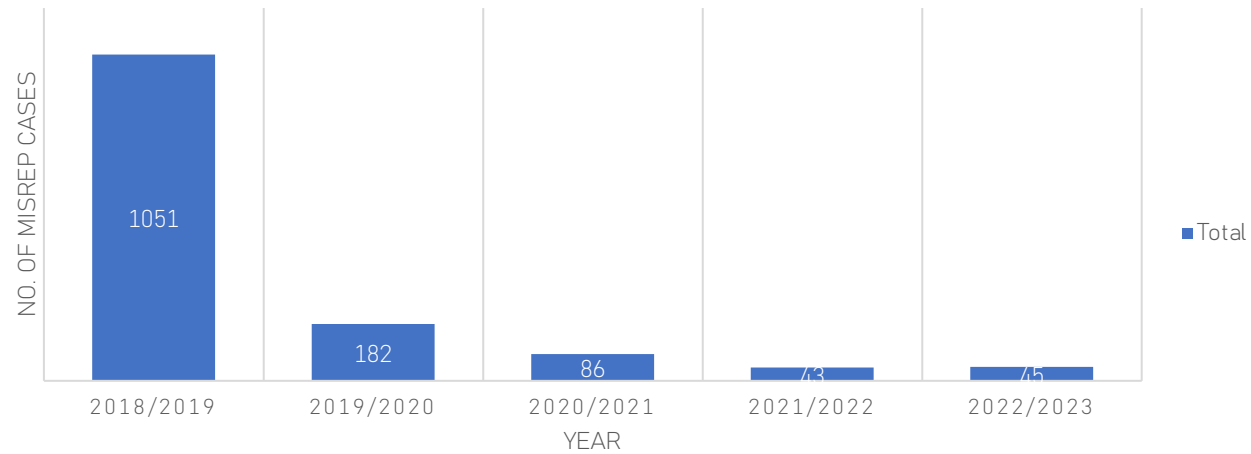Locating qualifications from BRICS countries on SA NQF 2018–2023

The graph above reflects the SA NQF levels that SAQA has been locating qualifications from Brazil, Russia, China, and India. As depicted in the graph, most of the qualifications SAQA has recognized from BRICS countries so far have been placed on SA NQF levels 7, 8 and 9.

Verification of foreign qualifications

- The foreign qualifications team determined a need to start verifying foreign qualifications as part of the evaluation process. In August 2015 a verification pilot project was launched where all qualification evaluations requests of 5 countries were verified, with continued roll-out of various countries until 100% verification was implemented in 2018.

Cases of misrepresentation

RECORDED CASES OF MISREPRESENTATION
2018 – 2023

Top 10 countries for misrepresentation

Country	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
DRC	98	13	9	2	2
India	250	6	7	2	5
Nigeria	248	6	10	1	
Cameroon	36	5	4	2	1
Pakistan	166	3	1		
Zimbabwe	54	2	5	3	4
Ghana	17	1			
China	60				
Bangladesh	46				
Ethiopia	14				
Grand Total	**989**	**36**	**38**	**10**	**13**

Misrepresentation Types

Misrepresentation Types	Number of cases recorded
MISREPRESENTATION OF QUALIFICATION	351
MISREPRESENTATION OF SAQA CERTIFICATE OF EVALUATION	1056
Grand Total	1407

Automation Project

Background

- In October 2020, the SAQA Board announced and initiated a downsizing exercise that impacted a third of SAQA's staff complement to ensure the continued existence of SAQA and their critical role as custodians of the NQF implementation and its advancement despite the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- SAQA has initiated a journey of transformation to improve organizational efficacy through digitizing and automating its business processes

- With the drastically reduced staff complement and budget, SAQA needed to rise from the ashes of its previous life to find ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its processes in delivering services to its clients and the public by initiating a journey of transformation to improve organizational efficacy through digitalizing and automating its business processes.

- SAQA embarked on this initiative, to analyse, re-engineer and streamline internal and client-facing processes, use technology-based solutions, digitalization, and automate the streamlined processes to improve process outputs and achieve efficiencies in functional activities.

- The Automation Program will focus on two projects:
  Business Automation
  Data Validation and Submission Tool

Challenges

- Limited alternatives for the public to access SAQA's services and forms
- Multiple non-integrated points of access for the SAQA customers (rather than a single access point), leading to delays in response times.
- Lack of systematic and structured capacity analysis and flexibility in work allocation
- Processes are largely manually driven by emails, resulting in the overload of the email system and server(s)
- Long lead times and backlog due to lack of process visibility, control, and progress tracking.
- Processes executed in multiple independent systems leading to manual efforts for data sharing and integration.
- Misaligned information exchange and output format between existing systems and databases
- No formalized/consistent and or system-driven data cleansing process leading to duplicated records and less than ideal data quality.
- Complex management reporting due to manual data manipulation and lack of access to preconfigured reporting data.
- Processes are largely by emails, resulting in the overload of the email system and server(s).
- Paper-based content storage leading to complex version control and data integrity issues, combined with soft copy documents.
- Processes are human error-prone

Current Infrastructure

DFQEAS system (online and admin modules) for the evaluation of foreign qualifications (JAVA platform).

Electronic SAQA Certificate of Evaluations (eSCoE) for the issuing of an evaluation certificate in real-time (AWS).

Verification System for the verification of national qualifications (MS Database).

VeriSearch (XSS- cross-site scripting & C sharp)
Online Searchable database for qualifications and part-qualifications registered on the NQF (National Learners' Records Database - Oracle).
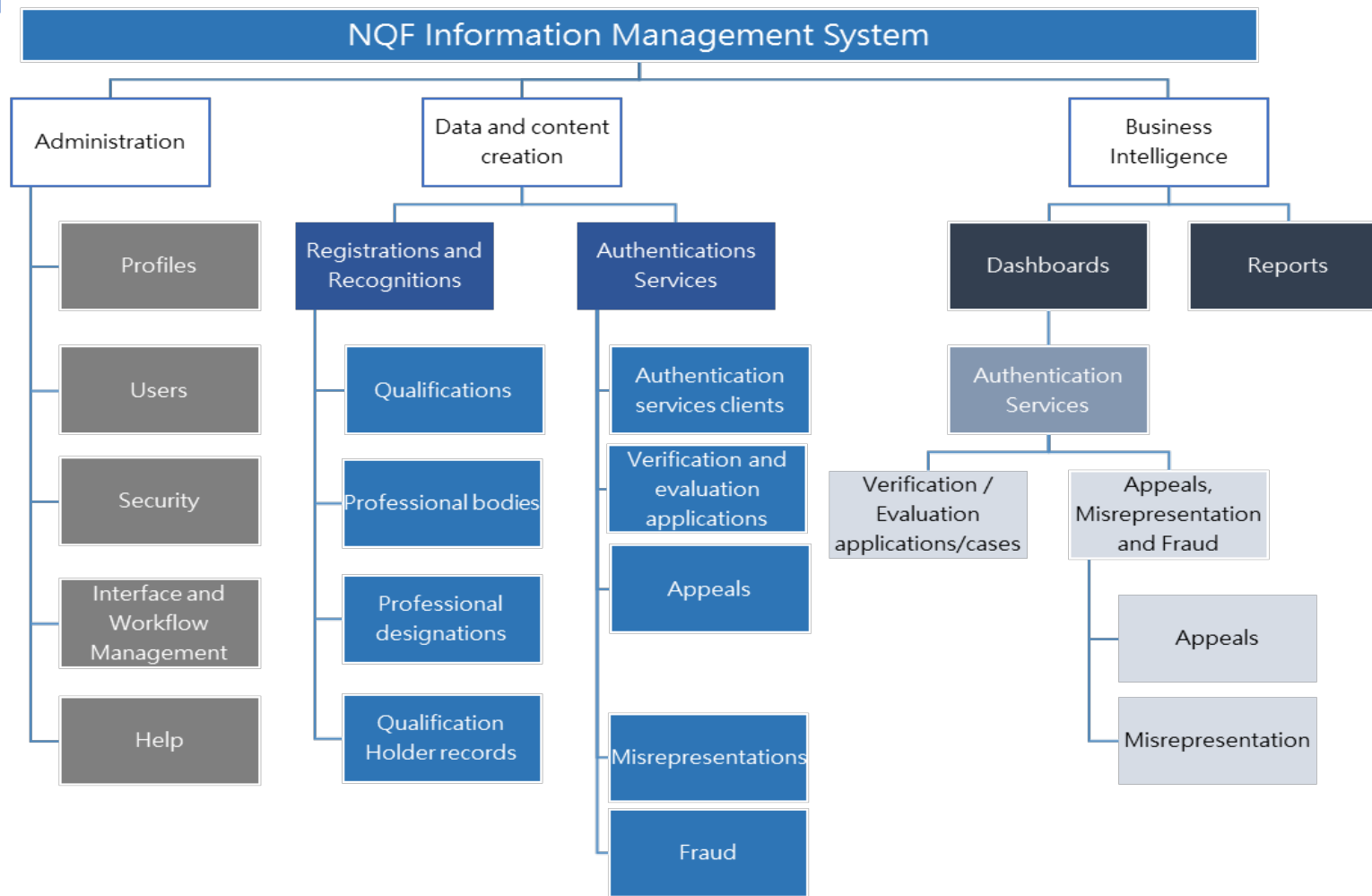
Registers for Fraudulent and Misrepresented Qualifications (Ms Excel).

Recruitment website, intranet, and the SAQA website (DRUPAL).

Online workflow tracking system for Qualifications and Part–Qualifications (in development– Microsoft . Net)
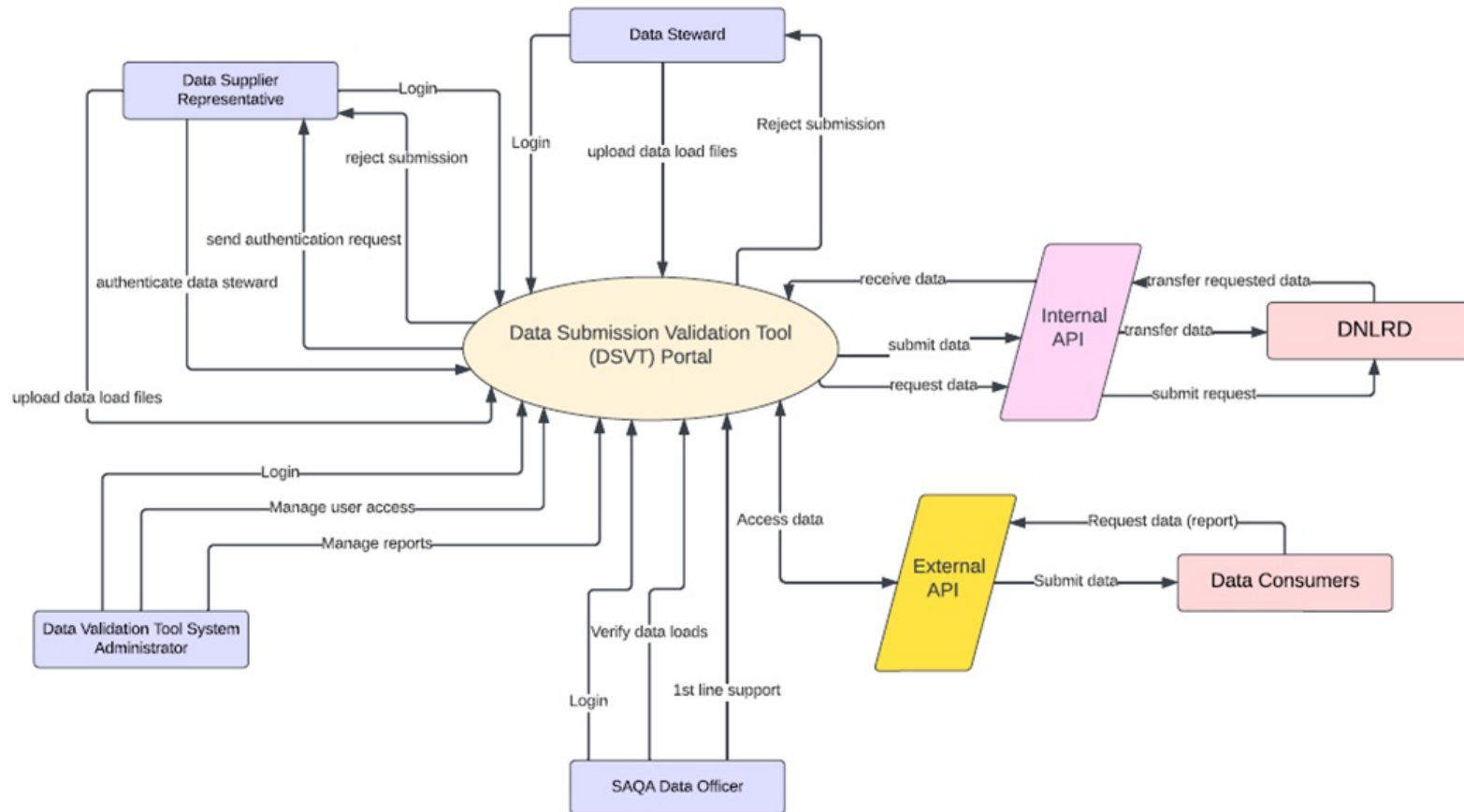
Risk tool (Development- (PHP).

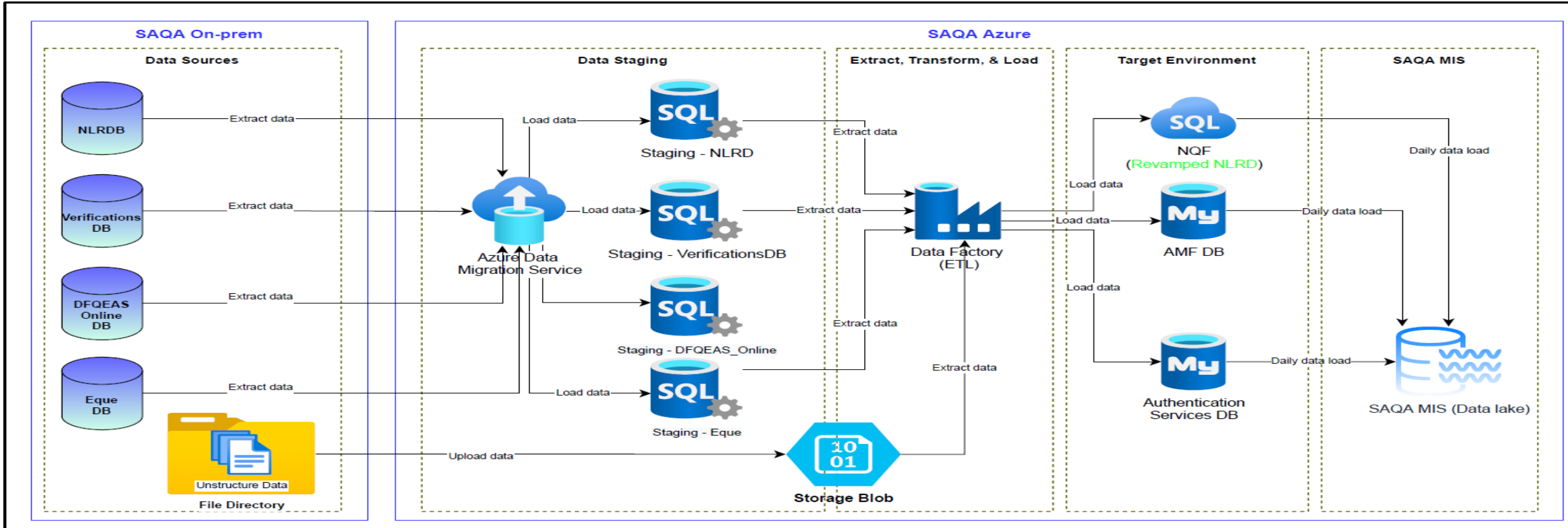# Business Automation Overview

- The current focus is on verification and evaluation applications

Data Validation and Submission Tool

- Data Validation and Submission tool will focus on data providers, professional bodies
- This is a tool for learner achievement tracking

Architecture Overview

- The SAQA databases are currently hosted on-premise and will be migrated to the cloud environment

Technical Roadmap

August 2024
National Evaluations
- Official launch

June 2024
Data Validation
- Go-to-market
- Onboarding data providers

October 2024
System Integration Review
- System performance evaluation

March 2024
Foreign Evaluation
- Official Launch
- Decomission of current system

October 2022
Registers
- Misrepresentation Registers

June 2024
National Evaluations
- Soft launch in June 2024
- Controlled Production
- Performance and Stress Testing

April 2024
Research and Recognition
- Go to Market
- On-boarding of Data suppliers

October 2023
Foreign Evaluation
- Soft launch
- Controlled Production Testing

Validation Tool – NLRD

Background on Edu.Dex & how to get started

- Edu.Dex is a tool built to ensure that data conforms to the Specifications for Load Files for the National Learners' Records Database. These load files differ for both the Professional Bodies and the Quality Councils.

- For a data supplier to get started they need to:
  - Apply for Edu.Dex License
  - Submit designations to the NLRD, if they are a professional body
  - Install and activate Edu.Dex application
  - Implement Edu.Dex updates
  - Extract data from their information system
  - Validate the extracted data
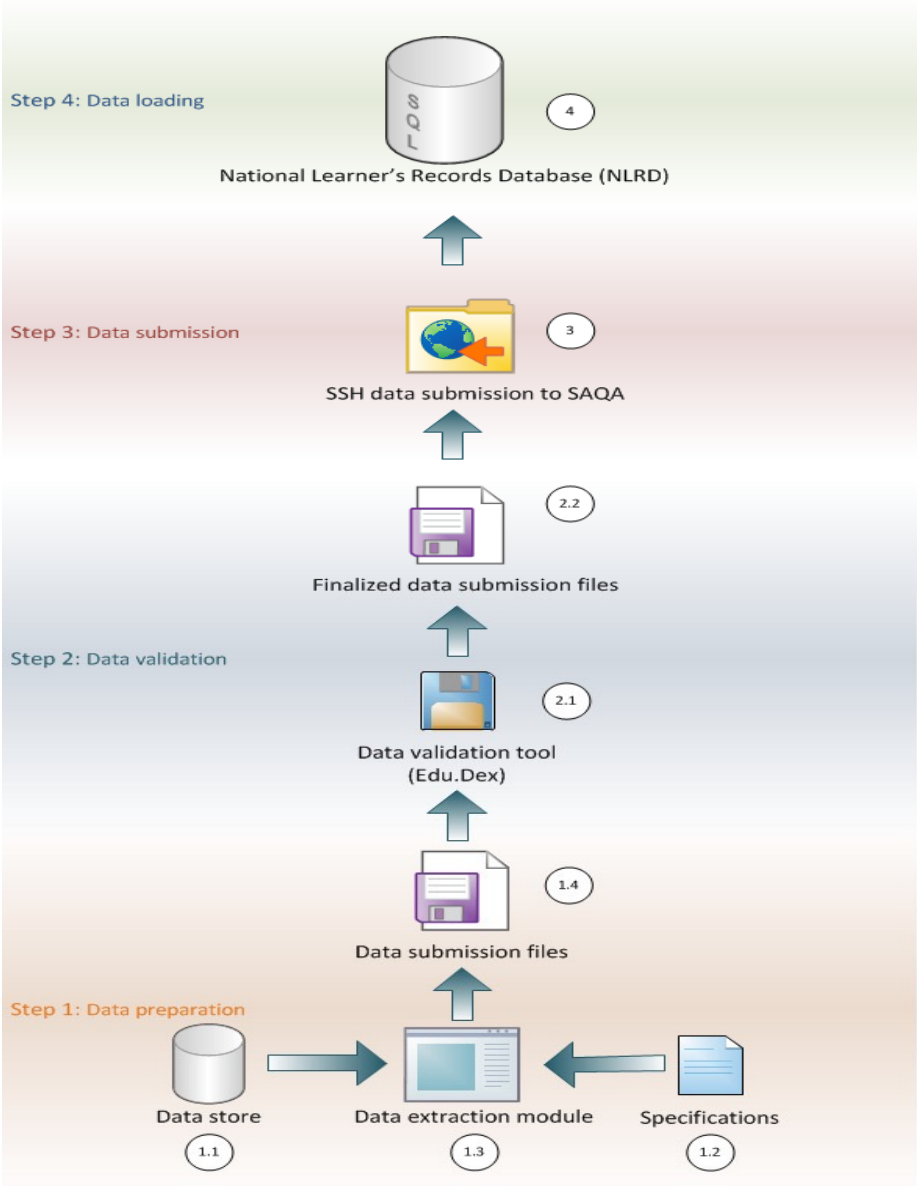 - Submit the validated data to SAQA for loading.

Automation Update on the Leaner Data Validation Tool

- The learner data validation tool is a web based, that can also function through various APIs depending on the intended functionality.
- **For data suppliers -** the tool will validate learner and professional designation data and if there are no validation issues then push the learner data through to DNLRD. All this will happen without any human intervention except in exceptional circumstances.
- The tool is not only for **data validation** and **loading**, but also for **data extraction** for organisations that seek to extract large amounts of data from the NLRD for whatever purpose they want.
- The distinction must be made between this **functionality** and the **functions** carried out by the Authentications Services.
  - ❑ the tool's functionality is different in that the users/consumers of this dataset will not be doing any verification of qualifications, instead they will be looking to extract data of all individuals that meet specified criteria. This functionality will be one of the paid for services from SAQA.

Automation Update on the Leaner Data Validation Tool

- The application is at the Technical Design Specifications (TDS) phase.

- The Function Requirements Specifications is complete and awaiting the sign-off. Once the TDS are completed and signed off, the construction starts i.e.,

  ❑ coding will take place and this will be implemented in agile manner, wherein several modules/functionalities will be delivered in sprints or iterative deliverables.

  ❑ every deliverable will go through the **planning phase**, **implementation phase** and **reviewing phase**. This approach will help SAQA to develop modules and implement the ones that are working, while reviewing the ones that have defects/bug/issues.

- It is our hope that the tool will be fully functional in the beginning of the next financial year (2024/2025).

From extraction to loading onto the NLRD

Difference between Edu.Dex and the new tool

EDU.DEX

- Requires installation and activation keys

- Single factor authentication

- Look-up tables are updated manually

- Only compatible to Windows operating system

- Stages data on physical servers

- Uses old data encryption technologies

- Requires human intervention to load data files onto the NLRD

- Can only be used to validate data files, no additional functionality

NEW TOOL

- Web based and no activation keys required

- Two factor authentication

- Automatic update of look-up tables

- Compatible to all web browsers and not operating system dependent

- Pushes data straight to the NLRD

- Uses latest data encryption technologies

- Data files are loaded automatically onto the NLRD without human intervention

- It can be used to extract large dataset

THANK YOU

SAQA
SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY