

SADCQF Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA)

First Meeting 2026

Johannesburg, 17-19 June 2026

The SADC Handbook for RPL Practitioners

Patrick Werquin, ETF ACQF II Team

Agenda

- Context
- (I won't talk about RPL as such (definition, purpose))
- Content of the SADC Handbook for RPL Practitioners
- Some ideas after listening to the first day yesterday

Context

- RPL Guidelines (2015, 2025):
 - Policy and system-design document for SADC and Member States
 - Normative
 - For policymakers
 - Macro/meso level
 - Regional and national framework
 - Policy (governance, financing, QA, M&E, harmonisation)



Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

SADC Secretariat Gaborone, Botswana

Document prepared in the context of
the project African Continental Qualifications Framework Phase II (ACQF II)
7 May 2025 (revisions after the TCCA, based on the 19 March version)

Context

- SADC Handbook for RPL Practitioners:
 - Practice-oriented implementation document for RPL practitioners
 - Operational
 - Understand what practitioners should do
 - Support applicants
 - Organise each phase of the process
 - Apply good practice
 - Provide examples used in implementation
- With some overlaps (benefits, definition, outcomes)
- In a way: demand vs. supply

Context

- ACQF Handbook for RPL Practitioners (2024) ➔
- The SADC version (for validation today):
 - Lighter (50 pages less)
 - Focused on implementation
 - Focused of the work/role of practitioners
 - A tool (detailed process, risks, examples...)



Support implementation of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF-II)

www.acqf.africa



Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
Handbook for RPL Practitioners



August 2024

Content of the SADC Handbook

- Content:
 - Conceptual clarification
 - Principles and rules
 - Step-by-step
- Centre of gravity is now Section 4: a step-by-step practitioner process from initial information to certification of all learning outcomes
- Guide for workshops, pilots, national adaptation and practitioner training (same ethical foundation, but wording is easier to translate into training messages)

The Revised Principles Read More Like Operational Rules for Practitioners

Guidance

Applicant-centred

Fair

Private

Inclusive

Accessible

Flexible

Outcome-based

Transparent

Explain decisions

Appeals

Alternatives

M&E

Legal

QA

Post-RPL

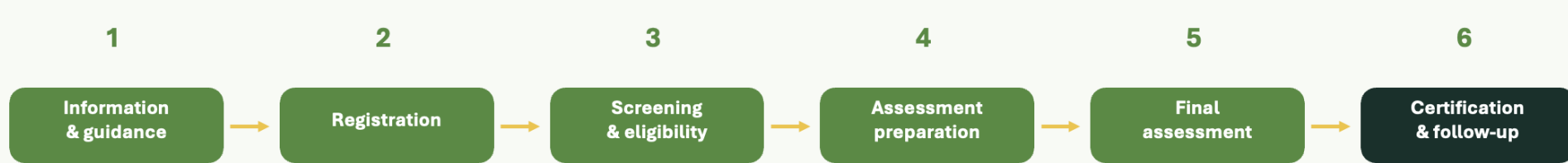
Content of the SADC Handbook

- Key messages still there:
 - Learning outcomes
 - Standards
 - Quality assurance
 - Target groups
 - Possible outcomes
 - **RPL = a policy tool** 😊 😊 😊
- New messages:
 - Potential hindering factors
 - The need for a toolkit (with examples: links + annexes)

System Improvement & System Design

- For countries with an RPL system already in place and
- For countries where a system is still being designed
- A shared regional language for RPL (less ambiguity when countries adapt the handbook nationally)

Complete Clear Operational Pathway



- The RPL process is presented as a pathway applicants and practitioners can both understand (the move from applicant to candidate is emphasised)
- The 6 steps also help identify where capacity building, tools, risk management and quality assurance are needed

Phase 1. Initial Information and Guidance

Information to Provide to all Applicants	Description	Main Messages	Key Clarification/ Check	Alternative Approach	Hindering Factors	Tools and Tricks
--	-------------	---------------	--------------------------	----------------------	-------------------	------------------

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1.1. Introduction to RPL | 1.8. Addressing Concerns |
| 1.2. Benefits of RPL | 1.9. Initial Guidance Session |
| 1.3. RPL Process Overview | 1.10. Follow-up |
| 1.4. Roles and Responsibilities | 1.11. Initial Consultation |
| 1.5. Initial Assessment, for eligibility and identifying the target qualification | 1.12. Portfolio Development |
| 1.6. Evidence Requirements for the final assessment | 1.13. Final Assessment Preparation |
| 1.7. Support and Resources | 1.14. Post-assessment Support |
| | 1.15. Continuous Improvement |

Phase 2. Administrative Registration

Information to Provide to all Applicants	Description	Main Messages	Key Clarification/ Check	Alternative Approach	Hindering Factors	Tools and Tricks
--	-------------	---------------	--------------------------	----------------------	-------------------	------------------

2.1. Application Submission

2.2. Verification of Documents

2.3. Fee Payment

2.4. Confirmation of Registration

2.5. Creation of Applicant Record

2.6. Provision of Information Pack

2.7. Scheduling of Initial Meetings

Phase 3. Screening and Eligibility

Information to Provide to all Applicants	Description	Main Messages	Key Clarification/ Check	Alternative Approach	Hindering Factors	Tools and Tricks
--	-------------	---------------	--------------------------	----------------------	-------------------	------------------

3.1. Initial Screening

3.2. Detailed Review of Application

3.3. Eligibility Criteria Check

3.4. Verification of Evidence

3.5. Applicant Interview

3.6. Decision Making

3.7. Feedback to Applicant

Phase 4. Preparation of the final assessment

Information to Provide to all Applicants	Description	Main Messages	Key Clarification/Check	Alternative Approach	Hindering Factors	Tools and Tricks
--	-------------	---------------	-------------------------	----------------------	-------------------	------------------

4.1. Assessment Planning

4.2. Selection of Assessment Methods

4.3. Preparation of Assessment Tools

4.4. Training of Assessors

4.5. Applicant Preparation

4.6. Scheduling the Assessment

Phase 5. Final Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Information to Provide to all Applicants	Description	Main Messages	Key Clarification/ Check	Alternative Approach	Hindering Factors	Tools and Tricks
--	-------------	---------------	-----------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------	------------------

5.1. Conducting the Assessment

5.2. Evaluating Evidence

5.3. Scoring and Grading

5.4. Assessment Feedback

5.5. Documentation and Record Keeping

5.6. Decision

5.7. Appeal Process

Phase 6. Certification and Follow-up

Information to Provide to all Applicants	Description	Main Messages	Key Clarification/ Check	Alternative Approach	Hindering Factors	Tools and Tricks
--	-------------	---------------	--------------------------	----------------------	-------------------	------------------

6.1. Preparation of Qualification Documents

6.2. Verification of Assessment Results

6.3. Awarding of qualifications

6.4. Notification to Applicants

6.5. Distribution of Certificates

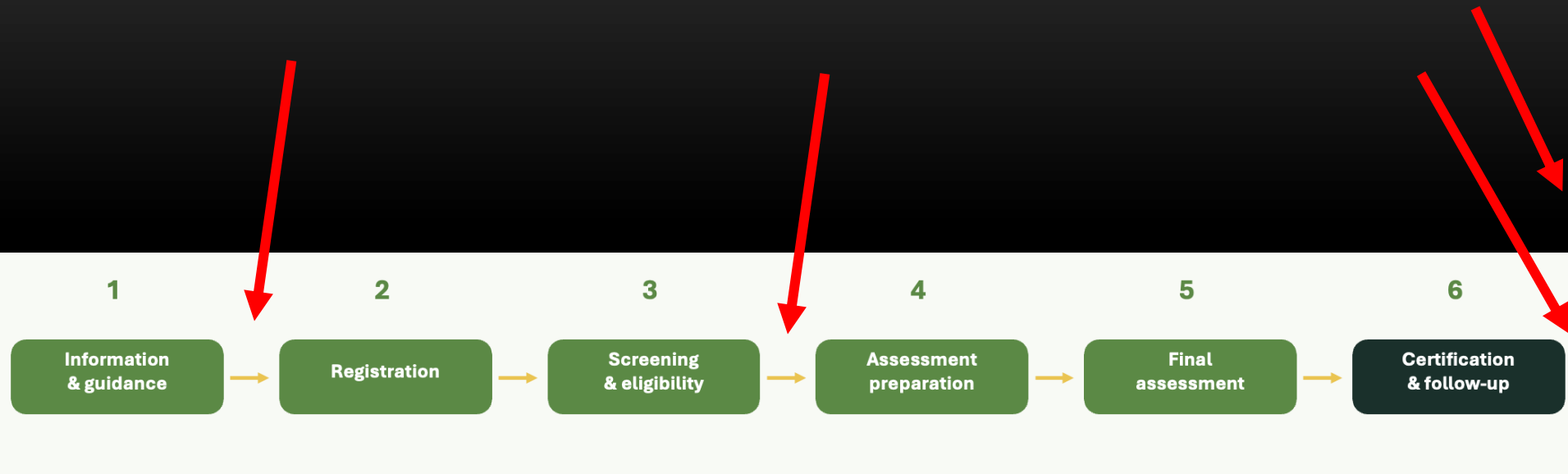
6.6. Record Keeping

6.7. Follow-up with Applicants

Some Ideas (After the First Day)

- RPL in higher education
- Catalogue (register): a bigger issue that we may think about RPL
- Because matching an experience (and the related learning outcomes) with a qualification is the key work
- A catalogue not a necessary not a sufficient condition but, without the catalogue, we don't have the menu
- Same for fragmentation of responsibility: an applicant maybe ill oriented because her/his real level is not available where s/he was greeted in the first place
- Law/legislation (Social consensus)

Where to Collect data





Or is it
“competences”?

M e r c i

Comments and question please to: patrick.werquin@gmail.com