

DEVELOPING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL  
QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF)



**GUIDELINE**

**05**

**Quality assurance in the context of ACQF**

**Synthesis Guideline**

**ACQF**  
African Continental  
Qualifications Framework

African  
Union 

THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP  
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE



## Table of contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
ACRONYMS.....	2
1 SYNTHESIS GUIDELINES SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACQF .....	2
1.1 SYNTHESIS GUIDELINE 5: QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF ACQF.....	3
2 SOURCES.....	10
3 GLOSSARY .....	14

## Acronyms

ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
ACTS	African Credit and Transfer System
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
ASG-QA	African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CATS	Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
EAC	East Africa Community
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance for Vocational Education and Training
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority for Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NQF	national qualifications framework
NQS	national qualifications system
QA	quality assurance
REC	regional economic communities
RPL	recognition of prior learning
RQF	regional qualifications framework
TVET	technical vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## 1 Synthesis Guidelines supporting implementation of the ACQF

All Guidelines are accessible on the ACQF Website: <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines>.

The ten Synthesis Guidelines are an integral part of the ACQF Policy and Technical Document. The Synthesis Guidelines are high-level summaries of the respective Technical Guidelines, listed below. The ten ACQF Guidelines are the technical foundations of the ACQF, and are conceived to support implementation of the goals, principles, functions, and actions of the ACQF.

Moreover, the 10 ACQF Guidelines and the supporting Training Modules provide all African countries, institutions and stakeholders with a comprehensive and practical reference and methodological framework useful for development, implementation, improvement, and review of national qualifications frameworks (in a systemic view) including the key dimensions, components and instruments listed below.

The ten ACQF Guidelines are:

- Guideline 1: Learning outcomes in the context of NQFs and ACQF
- Guideline 2: Levels and level descriptors in the context of ACQF
- Guideline 3: Referencing to ACQF
- Guideline 4: Validation and recognition of learning
- Guideline 5: Quality assurance in the context of ACQF
- Guideline 6: Registers / databases of qualifications
- Guideline 7: Monitoring and evaluation in the context of NQF and ACQF
- Guideline 8: Communication and outreach in the context of NQF and ACQF
- Guideline 9: Innovation and technology in the context of NQF and ACQF
- Guideline 10: Qualifications and Qualifications Frameworks – the systemic view

The ACQF Guidelines are directed to various stakeholders at continental, regional and national levels in Africa, and is especially relevant in the context of ACQF. Target users are the ACQF implementation team, ACQF Advisory Group and other ACQF instances; national qualifications and recognition authorities; quality assurance agencies; competent authorities involved in curriculum development; education and training providers; assessment and certification entities; sector qualifications / skills committees / councils; career guidance, employment agencies; and other stakeholders involved in the management of qualifications.

## **1.1 Synthesis Guideline 5: Quality assurance in the context of ACQF**

### **Objectives and scope of the Guideline 5**

This Synthesis Guideline is a summary of the Technical Guideline 5 on quality assurance in the context of ACQF.

This Guideline is conceived as a reference document on quality assurance of qualifications, with emphasis on application in the context of implementation of ACQF. To this end, the Guideline provides the explanatory elements on the application of criterion 4 (on quality assurance) of referencing to ACQF. Moreover, the Guideline provides an initial proposal for a common continental quality assurance framework for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in a lifelong learning perspective.

### **Purpose and concepts**

#### Quality assurance

Quality assurance within the context of a qualifications system aims to build trust in, and transparency of, qualifications. 'Quality assurance includes the processes and procedures for ensuring that qualifications, assessment and programme delivery meet certain standards.' Source: Tuck 2007

Transparency and trust in qualifications is key in a context of widespread international learner and labour mobility, and rapid transformation of types of qualifications and credentials for different needs and contexts of lifelong learning.

Quality assurance – as part of a range of measures by governments and institutions – increases transparency and should underpin trust in the relevance and quality of learning outcomes (that is, learners’ knowledge, skills, autonomy, and responsibility, as certified by qualifications). Such trust in learning outcomes is, in turn, based on trust in the quality of the institutions and providers of education and training at all levels and in all subsectors.

Referencing to the ACQF is a process of transparency, self-assessment and continuous improvement. The referencing criteria provide the framework for comparability between countries, of the analytical process and results, and the robustness of the final report.

#### **Quality assurance is the subject of Criterion 4 of referencing to the ACQF**

##### **Criterion 4:**

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 African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF).

To clarify the interplay between quality assurance and referencing, the following principles are recommended:

Quality assurance – a criterion for ACQF referencing: the referencing to the ACQF of national qualifications frameworks or systems demonstrates the degree to which quality assurance of national qualifications:

- addresses the qualifications quality chain, from design of standards underpinning qualifications to learning, assessment, and certification;
- addresses the application of the learning outcomes approach;
- includes feedback instruments and processes supporting continuous quality improvement;
- addresses internal and external quality assurance, and the regular review of quality assurance agencies;
- is based on measurable objectives, standards, and guidelines for quality assurance;
- is supported by resources; and
- provides transparent information-sharing on results of evaluation.
- takes account of African Union policy orientations such as African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (for higher education), to which both internal and external quality assurance adhere.

#### **Synergy and complementarity between quality assurance and NQFs**

The intersection between quality assurance systems and qualifications frameworks (continental, regional, national) holds promise in a number of areas, especially with regard to improving governance and holistic approaches for renewal of the ecosystem of education, training and qualifications.

#### **Synergy and coherence with AU policies, standards and guidelines related to quality assurance in education and training**

In the context of the African Union policies, quality of education and training is an important priority. References and orientations concerning quality of education and training and quality assurance are integrated in several strategic objectives of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016–2025).

The African Union’s Plan of Action for the African Decade for Technical, Professional, Entrepreneurial Training and Youth (2019–2028) sets nine focus areas for action, the second of which is focused on ‘improving quality and relevance of TVET in Africa for an ever-changing world of work’.

The African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education have been developed to ‘support higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies in Africa in implementing good quality assurance practices by guiding them in the application of standards and guidelines in higher education’ (ASG-QA: 10). The ASG-QA is thus a major reference for this ACQF Guideline (and Training Module) on quality assurance, especially with regard to the application of the criteria for referencing of national qualifications or systems to the ACQF. The ASG-QA is the composite of three interconnected parts addressing (a) internal quality assurance, (b) external quality assurance and (c) internal quality assurance for quality assurance agencies. Each part is composed of standards and each standard is composed of guidelines.

### Quality assurance of qualifications

Qualifications are the outcome of learning assessed by competent entities against given standards. Quality assurance of qualifications needs to address all dimensions that determine the trustworthiness (quality) of different forms and types of awards certifying achieved learning outcomes.

Quality assurance of qualifications is concerned with four dimensions: a) quality qualifications: concepts and characteristics, quality cycle; b) minimum criteria for the quality of qualifications; c) quality assurance elements from a qualification system perspective: qualification standards, assessment and certification; d) qualifications quality chain: from standards to awards.

Qualifications are the outcome of learning assessed by competent entities against given standards. Quality assurance of qualifications needs to address all dimensions that determine the trustworthiness (quality) of different forms and types of awards certifying achieved learning outcomes. In the context of this guideline reference is made to the European Training Foundation’s toolkit (2016) [Getting organised for better qualifications](#).

Quality assurance of qualifications is concerned with four dimensions:

- A. quality qualifications: concepts and characteristics, quality cycle;
- B. minimum criteria for the quality of qualifications;
- C. quality assurance elements from a qualification system perspective: qualification standards, assessment and certification; and
- D. qualifications quality chain: from standards to awards.

#### A. Quality qualifications: Concepts and characteristics, quality cycle

Table 4: Comparing key features of quality assurance of providers with quality assurance of qualifications

Quality assurance (QA) of providers	Quality assurance (QA) of qualifications
QA measures are focused on institutions	QA measures are focused on the candidates
Making sure the providers are capable of delivering training programmes based on educational standards	Making sure standards behind qualifications are relevant, based on identified needs, validated by stakeholders
Providers are focused on delivering outcomes (getting people to a qualification, getting people into employment)	Making sure everybody who is assessed and will be certified meets the learning outcomes in the standard
QA is focused on the planning, implementation, feedback and improvement within institutions, combined with external verification	QA is focused on assessment and certification, including the assessors, who issues the certificate and who externally regulates/provides QA of awarding bodies

QA is based on the assumption that 'good' learning processes lead to good results

QA is based on actual measurement of what has been learned by the candidate

B. Minimum criteria for the quality of a qualification

Figure 2: Key areas for minimum criteria for the quality of a qualification



How to understand and use the proposed minimum criteria for the quality of qualifications (Figure 1)? Each area is related to specific minimum criteria, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Key areas and related minimum criteria for the quality of qualifications

Area	Minimum criteria
1. Relevance for the labour market and individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of labour market actors in defining needs for a qualification</li> <li>• Justification that the sector and the occupation has a relevance for a country</li> </ul>
2. Standards behind a qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All standards are (learning) outcome-based</li> <li>• All standards behind a VET qualification should relate to skills and competence requirements for an occupation or a group of occupations</li> <li>• Involvement of labour market actors in defining the standards of a qualification</li> </ul>
3. The learning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The learning outcomes relate to the standards behind a qualification (skills and competence requirements for an occupation or a group of occupations)</li> <li>• The learning process has a substantial practical component for students to acquire skills and competences and not only theoretical knowledge</li> </ul>
4. Assessment for certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment is based on the standards behind a qualification (skills and competence requirements for an occupation or a group of occupations)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment has a substantial practical component for students to acquire skills and competences and not only theoretical knowledge</li> <li>• Trained professionals are involved in assessment of skills and competences</li> </ul>
5. Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A numerical level is allocated to the qualification in order to compare the level with related qualifications from other countries</li> <li>• The certification has national value and is awarded by a competent body (ministry, federation, and so on)</li> <li>• The qualification allows for progression to further education or training</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from ETF (2017).

### Micro-credentials

Globally the number and diversity of micro-credential offerings have expanded substantially in recent years, accelerated by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Micro-credentials hold promises and challenges. Trust and quality are fundamental requirements of policymakers, qualifications bodies and end-users towards micro-credentials.

Micro-credentials certify the learning outcomes following a small learning experience (a short course or training). They offer a flexible, targeted way to help people develop the knowledge, skills and competences they need for their personal and professional development. A micro-credential is the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined standards.

On quality assurance of Micro-credentials: they are subject to internal and external quality assurance by the system producing them (the education, training or labour market context in which the micro-credential is developed and delivered). Quality assurance processes must be fit for purpose, be clearly documented, accessible, and meet the needs of learners and stakeholders.

### Towards a quality assurance framework for TVET and adult learning at continental level

This overview of a framework for TVET quality assurance complements the existing African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA), whose scope is delimited to one subsector of education – higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies.

Proposed principles:

#### 1. Holistic and systemic view

- The quality assurance system contributes to the lifelong learning and articulation purposes of the national qualifications framework, that is, the transparency of learning outcomes, mutual trust between the subsectors of education and training, vertical and horizontal mobility of learners, and recognition of prior learning and qualifications.
- Intersections and complementarities: The holistic approach clarifies and strengthens the complementarities and intersections between the NQF, quality assurance, recognition of prior learning and recognition of qualifications to support lifelong learning, progression, and mobility.
- Culture of continuous quality improvement: Quality assurance of qualifications should enable a culture of continuous quality improvement, not limited to quality control mechanisms.

2. Quality assurance for quality qualifications consists of two broad processes:

- ensuring that qualifications are relevant and have value; and
- ensuring that the people who are certified meet the requirements of the qualification.

The processes, or steps, in the qualifications quality chain target these aspects more closely. The qualifications quality chain encompasses a) standards behind qualifications; b) inclusion of the qualification in the NQF; c) learning pathways; d) assessment; e) certification.

3. Quality must be assured and maintained

Achieving and sustaining quality in TVET requires a systemic and holistic quality assurance approach, which combines measures at various levels: policy and system; providers and awarding bodies; governance; qualifications standards; teachers and trainers; assessment, validation, and certification; and eventually, data and knowledge creation. Quality assurance system requires a set of processes, procedures, tools, and capacities, and monitor them to ensure that the outcomes of TVET meet expectations and demand.

In addition, quality assurance systems need to consider and adapt to specificities of different models and structures of TVET systems.

4. Qualification standards are:

- underpinned by reliable evidence defining the skills needs;
- based on learning outcomes;
- developed in partnership by state and social-economic partners, professional sectors, teachers and trainers;
- monitored and reviewed regularly; and
- used to underpin quality-assured programmes, curricula, and assessment.

5. Quality assurance processes and mechanisms can be aided by digital tools and new data sources to monitor indicators and inter-operate with other relevant national and continental databases and analytical systems. National, regional, and continental qualifications databases and registers can be harnessed to provide relevant data.

6. The role of certification in safeguarding confidence and trust is crucial. A transparent and quality-assured certification process has become even more important nowadays, with qualification systems increasingly allowing qualifications to be acquired through different learning pathways and assessment modes.

For the critical stage of assessment, validation, and certification of qualifications:

- The place of certification in the quality assurance of qualifications is not always explicit, holistic, and articulated in many qualifications systems. Certification must be clearly included in quality assurance of qualifications.
- To this end, it is important to foster a common understanding of certification among stakeholders and involve them in quality assurance processes.
- The use of appropriate and reliable standards and instruments of certification contributes to enhance quality of certification.

7. Quality cycle and stages: in defining and building the quality assurance framework and tools for TVET system and TVET providers, the specificities of each stage and the links between stages must be taken into account. The stages are: 1. Plan; 2. Implement; 3. Evaluate/monitor; 4. Review and renew.

- Planning stage: Set up clear, appropriate and measurable goals and objectives in terms of policies, procedures, tasks and human resources.
- Implementation stage: Establish procedures to ensure the achievement of goals and objectives, such as the development of partnerships, involvement of stakeholders, allocation of resources, and organisational and operational procedures.



- Evaluation phase: Design mechanisms for the evaluation of achievement and outcomes by collecting and processing data in order to make informed assessment.
  - Review phase: Develop procedures in order to achieve the targeted outcomes and/or new objectives, after processing feedback and analysis.
8. Minimum quality criteria: Develop a common approach to minimum quality criteria covering the key components of the TVET system (formal, non-formal), the qualifications quality chain and the national qualifications framework.
  9. Indicators: Develop a set of indicators to measure and monitor quality and support quality assurance, articulated, and coordinated with the main performance indicators of the TVET system.
  10. Capacity development, networking, and mutual learning: Establish and support networking and collaboration involving all TVET providers and key stakeholders. Supported by online platform, to organise joint activities, disseminate good practice, and strengthen a culture of peer learning.
  11. Align the national quality assurance framework (all subsectors) with other relevant regional frameworks (qualifications, recognition).
  12. Anticipate the future – how changing and emerging roles, tasks, occupations, and new skills will affect qualifications profiles, and the supply and demand for qualifications.

#### **Quality assurance in TVET at system and providers' level**

Quality assurance policies and mechanisms are central to the effective functioning of education and training systems, as they include the processes that ensure that education and training institutions are acting as per the identified standardised procedures and general principles as established by quality assurance authorities or agencies. Quality assurance activities are conducted with the goal of ensuring that processes are consistent and effective at producing their desired outcome. The quality assurance system adopted by the NQF is to safeguard the integrity of the framework and the registered qualifications.

Quality Assurance in TVET and qualifications systems should address several levels:

- a) The system level: Underpinning the TVET policy cycle, supporting the culture of continuous improvement, contributing to policy monitoring and review, and engaging the stakeholders.
- b) The providers' level:
  - Internal quality assurance
  - External quality assurance

Internal and external quality assurance policies and procedures are complementary.

All education and training providers must take primary responsibility for the quality of education and training, suitability of their education and training programmes, qualification level of staff recruited, learning infrastructure and other services provided, thus ensuring their internal quality assurance system. Quality assurance is essential for all education and training providers, and the overall objective is to establish a quality system for systematic self-evaluation and follow-up at provider level.

External agencies can ensure quality of the education and training provider through external quality assurance measures, and evaluations conducted on site.

#### **Quality assurance of work-based learning**

Work-based learning programmes are designed and developed in partnership with employers, learners, and other stakeholders (where appropriate) and contain learning outcomes that are relevant to work objectives. They are meant to enable learners to apply and integrate areas of subject and professional knowledge, skills, and behaviours to enable them to meet education and training programme learning

outcomes. Work-based learning programmes are designed, monitored, evaluated, and reviewed in partnership with employers.

To quality assure the work-based learning system, the following criteria need to be met at the organisation site: focus on learners, characteristics and conditions for work-based learning, monitoring and assessment, work-based learning trainers/teachers, resources, and communication and agreements between the employers and education and training providers.

## 2 Sources

ACQF website. <https://acqf.africa/>

ACQF Guidelines: <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines>

ACQF Training Modules: <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules>

ACQF Training and Peer learning webinars: <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/webinars>

ACQF Thematic Briefs: <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs>

ACQF Mapping Study collection: <https://acqf.africa/resources/mapping-study>

ACQF Inventory: <https://acqf.africa/resources/nqf-inventory>

ACQF Feasibility Study report: <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/feasibility-study>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021a. Towards the African Continental Qualifications Framework – Mapping report. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: J. Keevy, A. Bateman, E. Castel-Branco, L. Mavimbela, J. Adotevi, L. Sutherland, R. Matlala, U. Kyari and T. Sibiyi. <https://acqf.africa/resources/mapping-study/acqf-mapping-report-comprehensive>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021b. Towards the African Continental Qualifications Framework – Synthesis. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: J. Keevy, A. Bateman, E. Castel-Branco, L. Mavimbela, J. Adotevi, L. Sutherland, and R. Matlala. <https://acqf.africa/resources/mapping-study/acqf-mapping-report-synthesis>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021c. Brief overview of progress – 2021. Author: Eduarda Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/webinars/2021-progress-report-acqf-development-project>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021d. Feasibility report. Rationale, scenarios and plan. Authors: E. Castel-Branco, E. Mukhwana, et al. <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/feasibility-study>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021e. Thematic Brief 1. Concepts and definitions on qualifications and qualifications frameworks. Author: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-1-concepts-and-definitions>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021g. Thematic Brief 3.1. Level descriptors in qualifications frameworks. Overview from 24 African qualifications frameworks. Author: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-3-1-level-descriptors>

ACQF. (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021f. Thematic Brief 4.1: Regional Qualifications Frameworks. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-4-1-regional-qualifications-frameworks-rgf>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021h. Thematic Brief 6.1. Quality assurance for technical vocational- education and training (TVET). Overview of approaches or regional/ international organisations. Author: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-6-1-tvet-quality-assurance>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021i. Thematic Brief 11. Governance of NQF / NQS. Author: E. J. Mukhwana. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-11-governance-of-nqfs-nqs>

ACQF. 2022a. 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. 2022b. 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. 2022c. 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. 2022d. Guideline 4: Validation and recognition of learning. Authors: M. Chiyaba, M. Hamalabbi, F. Cheelo, J. Mwewa. <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines/acqf-guideline-3-validation-of-learning>

ACQF. 2022e. Guideline 5: Quality assurance in the context of ACQF. Authors: E. Castel-Branco, K. Allgoo. <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines>

ACQF. 2022f. Guideline 6: Registers / databases of qualifications. Authors: M. Chiyaba, M. Hamalabbi, F. Cheelo, J. Mwewa. <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines/acqf-guideline-6-registers-and-databases-of-qualifications>

ACQF. 2022g. Guideline 7: Monitoring and evaluation in the context of NQF and ACQF. Authors: E. Hazell, Z. MacDonald. <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines/acqf-guideline-7-monitoring-and-evaluation-in-the-context-of-national-qualifications-frameworks-and-acqf>

ACQF. 2022h. Guideline 8: Communication and outreach in the context of NQF and ACQF. Author: C. Jaftha. <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines/acqf-guideline-8-communication-and-outreach-in-the-context-of-qualifications-frameworks-and-acqf>

ACQF. 2022i. Guideline 9: Innovation and technology in the context of NQF and ACQF. Authors: K. Shiohira, P. Molokwane et al. <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines/acqf-guideline-9-innovation-and-technology-in-the-context-of-national-qualifications-frameworks-and-acqf>

ACQF. 2022j. Guideline 10: Qualifications and Qualifications Frameworks – the systemic view. Author: A. Bateman. <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines/acqf-guideline-10-qualifications-and-national-qualifications-frameworks-systemic-view-1>

ACQF. 2022k. 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. 2022l. 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. 2022m. 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. 2022n. 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. 2022o. Training module 5: Quality Assurance in the context of ACQF. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: E. Castel-Branco, K. Allgoo.

<https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-5-quality-assurance-in-the-context-of-the-acqf>

ACQF. 2022p. Training module 6: Registration and databases of qualifications. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: M. Chiyaba, M. Hamalabbi, F. Cheelo and J. Mwewa. Contributor: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-6-registers-databases-of-qualifications>

ACQF. 2022p. Training module 7: Monitoring and evaluation in the context of qualifications frameworks or systems. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: Eleanor Hazell, Zahraa McDonald et al. Contributor: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-7-monitoring-and-evaluation-the-context-of-nqfs-and-acqf>

ACQF. 2022r. Training module 8: Communication and outreach in the context of NQF and ACQF. 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-8-communication-and-outreach-in-the-context-of-nqf-acqf>

ACQF. 2022s. Training module 9: Innovation and technology in the context of qualifications systems. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: K. Shiohira, P. Molokwane. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-9-innovation-and-technology-in-the-context-of-qualifications-and-nqfs>

ACQF. 2022t. Training module 10: Qualifications and qualifications frameworks: the systemic view. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Author: A. Bateman. Contributor: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-10-qualifications-and-qualifications-frameworks-a-systemic-view>

ACQF. 2022u. Thematic Brief 8: Qualifications Frameworks in a changing world. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-8-qualifications-frameworks-in-a-changing-world>

ACQF. 2022v. Thematic Brief 9. Competence-based training – a brief overview Author: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-9-competence-based-training-cbt-a-brief-overview>

ACQF. 2022x. 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. 2022z. 12 NQFs in Africa: key features. <https://acqf.africa/resources/mapping-study/12-nqfs-in-africa-key-features-2022>

ACQF. 2022aa. Progress report ACQF project presented to 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of Advisory Group ACQF (26/05/2022). <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/webinars/progress-report-of-acqf-development-project-presented-to-acqf-ag-5-meeting-26-05-2022>

ACQF. 2022bb. Rapport d'avancement du projet ACQF présenté à la réunion du Groupe Consultatif ACQF (26/05/2022). <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/webinars/rapport-davancement-du-projet-acqf-presente-a-la-reunion-do-groupe-consultatif-de-lacqf-26-05-2022>

ACQF. 2022cc. Relatório de progresso do projeto ACQF apresentado à reunião do Grupo Consultivo do ACQF (26/05/2022). <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/webinars/relatorio-de-progresso-do-projeto-acqf-ate-17-maio-2022>

ACQF. 2022dd. Brief ACQF Handbook – the 10 Synthesis Guidelines. <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/brief-acqf-handbook>

African Union. 2013. Agenda 2063. <https://au.int/en/agenda2063>

African Union. Agenda 2063, First Ten-Year Implementation Plan 2023. <https://www.nepad.org/agenda-2063/publication/agenda-2063-first-ten-year-implementation-plan-2014-2023-0>

- African Union. 2015. CESA 16-25 - Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025. [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/29958-doc-cesa\\_-\\_english-v9.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/29958-doc-cesa_-_english-v9.pdf)
- African Union. 2018. Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36437-treaty-consolidated\\_text\\_on\\_cfta\\_-\\_en.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36437-treaty-consolidated_text_on_cfta_-_en.pdf)
- African Union. 2018. Protocol to the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment. <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/african-union/1965-protocol-to-the-abuja-treaty-free-movement-of-persons-right-of-residence-and-establishment-adopted-29-january-2018/file.html>
- African Union. 2019. Plan of Action for the African Decade for Technical, Professional, Entrepreneurial Training and Youth (2019–2028). <https://edu-au.org/resources/category/42-plan-of-action-for-the-african-decade-for-technical-professional-entrepreneurial-training-and-youth-employment>
- ASG-QA (African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education). <https://haqaa2.obsglob.org/african-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-higher-education-asg-qa/>
- Bjornavold, J. 2021. Learning outcomes- some key lessons from Europe. [https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/webinars/acqf-11th-peer-learning-webinar-1/session-2\\_en\\_11th-plw\\_learning-outcomes\\_j-bjornavold.pdf/view](https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/webinars/acqf-11th-peer-learning-webinar-1/session-2_en_11th-plw_learning-outcomes_j-bjornavold.pdf/view).
- Cedefop. 2013. 'Analysis and overview of NQF level descriptors in European countries. Working paper. [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/6119\\_en.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/6119_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2015). Ensuring the quality of certification in vocational education and training. <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5551>
- Cedefop. 2016. Application of learning outcomes approaches across Europe. A comparative study. [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3074\\_en.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3074_en.pdf).
- Cedefop. 2017. 'Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes – a European handbook'. <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/sl/news-and-press/news/new-european-handbook-learning-outcomes#>
- Cedefop. 2018. 'Analysis and overview of NQF level descriptors in European countries'. Research paper. [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5566\\_en.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5566_en.pdf).
- Cedefop. 2021. Review and renewal of qualifications Towards methodologies for analysing and comparing learning outcomes. <https://acqf.africa/resources/library/publications-from-international-sources/cedefop-renewal-and-comparison-of-qualifications-2021>.
- Cedefop. 2022. Defining, writing, and applying learning outcomes. A European Handbook. Second edition. [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4109\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4109_en_0.pdf)
- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. 2015. [https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf)
- EQAVET (European Quality Assurance for Vocational Education and Training): <https://www.eqavet.eu/>
- EQAVET (European Quality Assurance for Vocational Education and Training – quality assurance cycle. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1546&langId=en>
- ETF (European Training Foundation). 2015. Promoting Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training: The ETF Approach. <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/promoting-quality-assurance-vocational-education-and>
- ETF (European Training Foundation). 2017. Getting Organized for Better Qualifications: A Toolkit. <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/getting-organised-better-qualifications-toolkit>
- European Training Foundation (2021a). Orientation note on Regional Qualifications Frameworks. Author: Bateman, A. [https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/webinars/acqf-11th-peer-learning-webinar-1/orientation-note-on-rqfs\\_final\\_20210914\\_web.pdf/view](https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/webinars/acqf-11th-peer-learning-webinar-1/orientation-note-on-rqfs_final_20210914_web.pdf/view)

European Training Foundation. (2021b). Regional Qualifications Frameworks Initiatives Around the Globe 2020. A comparative study. <https://acqf.africa/resources/library/publications-from-international-sources/etf-regional-qualifications-frameworks-initiatives-around-the-globe-2020>

Mo Ibrahim Foundation, Africa's Youth (2021): Action needed how to support the continent's greatest asset, at: <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-08/international-youth-day-research-brief.pdf>

Tuck, R. 2007. An Introductory Guide to National Qualifications Frameworks. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---ifp\\_skills/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms\\_103623.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_103623.pdf)

UNESCO. 2014. ISCED Fields of education and training 2013 (ISCED-F 2013). <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/isced-fields-of-education-and-training-2013-en.pdf>

UNESCO. 2014. Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States. [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=49282&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html#STATE\\_PARTIES](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49282&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html#STATE_PARTIES)

UNESCO. 2019. Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education 2019. [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=49557&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49557&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

United Nations. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

### 3 Glossary

This list of definitions is not exhaustive but is complemented by the specific glossaries annexed to each of the Guidelines and are included in [ACQF Thematic Brief 1. Concepts and definitions](#).

#### **Main terms:**

#### **Qualification**

Means 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

#### **International qualifications**

International qualifications are awarded by a legally established international body (association, organisation, professional sector, or company) or by a national body acting on behalf of an international body, are used in more than one country and include learning outcomes assessed with reference to standards established by an international body.

#### **National Qualifications Framework**

A policy and instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.

#### **National Qualifications System**

This includes all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and operationalising national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, quality assurance processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems may be more or less integrated and coherent. One feature of a qualifications system may be an explicit framework of qualifications.

#### **Regional qualifications framework**

A broad structure of levels of learning outcomes that is agreed by countries in a geographical region. A means of enabling one national framework of qualifications to relate to another and, subsequently, for a qualification in one country to be compared to a qualification from another country.

### **Credit**

'Credit' means confirmation that a part of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of learning outcomes has been assessed and validated by a competent authority, according to an agreed standard; credit is awarded by competent authorities when the individual has achieved the defined learning outcomes, evidenced by appropriate assessments and can be expressed in a quantitative value (e.g. credits or credit points) demonstrating the estimated workload an individual typically needs for achieving related learning outcomes.

'Credit transfer' means the process of allowing individuals who have accumulated credit in one context to have it valued and recognised in another context.

### **Learning outcomes**

Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

### **Level descriptors**

A statement describing learning achievement at a particular level of the National Qualifications Framework (that provides a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.

### **Knowledge**

In the context of ACQF 'Knowledge' includes various kinds of knowledge such as facts, principles and theories in various areas.

### **Skills**

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.

### **Autonomy and responsibility**

In the context of ACQF 'Autonomy and responsibility' refers to the context and extent of the application of autonomy and responsibility.

### **Informal learning**

Learning resulting from daily activities and experiences which is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learners' perspective.

### **Non-formal learning**

Learning which takes place outside formal education and training through planned activities in terms of learning objectives and learning time and where some form of learning support is present.

### **Recognition of prior learning**

Confirmation by a competent authority that the learning outcomes, that an individual has acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings, has been measured against a relevant standard.

### **Recognition of foreign qualifications**

A formal acknowledgment by a competent recognition authority of the validity and academic level of a foreign education qualification, of partial studies, or of prior learning for the purpose of providing an applicant with outcomes including, but not limited to: (a) the right to apply for admission to higher education; and/or (b) the possibility to seek employment opportunities.