



ACQF

African Continental
Qualifications Framework

Session 7: Development of qualifications – Training Module 10

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Countries formulate, develop and approve qualifications in different ways, and this session explores some key principles and considerations.

Case Study: Lesotho

**What is a
qualification?**

Defining a 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.

Source: EQF 2017

Planned combination of learning outcomes with a defined purpose or purposes, including defined, applied and demonstrated competence and a basis for further learning and which has been assessed in terms of exit level outcomes, registered on the NQF and certified and awarded by a recognised body.

Source: SAQA 2017

Therefore a qualification is a specification of learning outcomes that is approved by an authority (accrediting body) as meeting the requirements of the NQF.

Credentials, macro-credentials and micro-credentials

Credentials verify, validate, confirm, or corroborate a person's learning achievements, knowledge and preparedness for performing tasks. Credentials are diverse with regard to their scope, status and purpose.

A large subset of credentials can be referred to as **macro-credentials**: generally, these include degrees, diplomas, certificates and licences, often awarded by accredited, recognised or regulated educational and other institutions or organisations. They indicate learning achievement of a broad body of knowledge, transferable skills or technical proficiency and may take a number of years to complete. While some are pursued for personal or general educational advancement, others are associated with qualifying to practice a particular profession or to follow a particular career path.

Another large subset of credentials can be referred to as **micro-credentials**: these are typically focused on a specific set of learning outcomes in a narrow field of learning and achieved over a shorter period of time. Micro-credentials are offered by commercial entities, private providers and professional bodies, traditional education and training providers, community organisations and other types of organisations. While many micro-credentials represent the outcomes of more traditional learning experiences, others verify demonstration of achievements acquired elsewhere, such as in the workplace, through volunteering, or through personal interest learning. Micro-credentials are often promoted as an efficient way to upskill workers across the lifespan.

A micro-credential:

- 1. is a record of focused learning achievement verifying what the learner knows, understands or can do;***
- 2. includes assessment based on clearly defined standards and is awarded by a trusted provider;***
- 3. has stand-alone value and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials, including through recognition of prior learning; and***
- 4. meets the standards required by relevant quality assurance.***

Qualification vs Programmes

- A qualification is 'divorced from' and separate to a programme, developed by a provider to meet the requirements of the qualification.

A coherent set or sequence of educational activities designed and organised to achieve pre-determined learning objectives or accomplish a specific set of educational tasks over a sustained period. Within an education programme, educational activities may also be grouped into sub-components variously described in national contexts as 'courses', 'modules', 'units' and/or 'subjects'. A programme may have major components not normally characterised as courses, units or modules – for example, playbased activities, periods of work experience, research projects and the preparation of dissertations. (Source <http://uis.unesco.org/>)

Qualification vs Programmes

- The difference between qualification approval and programme approval is that:
 - qualification approval is linked to the approval of the qualification specifications against the NQF; whereas
 - programme approval is linked to the provider's capacity/capability to design and resource a programme that leads to a NQF qualification.
- NQFs and quality assurance processes need to be aware of this distinction, although some QA processes merge the qualification and programme approval into one step.

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**Approach to quality assurance
of the formulation and
development process(QA)**

Quality assuring the formulation and approval of a qualification

Some countries use legislation (e.g. law) to define the parameters of the quality assurance system, and then use a series of cascading documents to further the level of detail of the quality assurance systems, for example:

- Regulations, which are easier to update than the law but still relatively difficult to update or change
- Rules or quality standards, which may or may not be legislated
- Policy, which is developed by the quality assurance agency or responsible body
- Procedures, guidelines, forms and templates, which are developed by the quality assurance agency or responsible body.

Format of qualifications specifications

To also ensure consistency of documentation, agencies aim to manage the format in which qualification specifications are submitted. Control of qualification specifications format may be through quality standards, forms or templates. Common themes to be addressed include:

1. Title and purpose of the qualification
2. Level and number of number of credits (or other volume measure that is relevant to the NQF)
3. Outcomes, e.g. qualification outcome statement, licensing or professional association outcomes
4. Requirement for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit transfer
5. Structure and completion rules (e.g. core, electives)
6. Suggested delivery methods and assessment methods (and process to quality assure assessor judgements)
7. Specific resources required
8. Evaluation or review processes
9. List of components (e.g. modules, units of competency)
10. Component specifications (for all those listed above).

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**Generic process for
formulation and
development**

Generic process

The Tuning Project, for higher education qualifications, outlines the process for qualification specification formulation and development (steps 1 – 6) and the translation of that information into provider programmes (steps 7 – 8). The wording has been adjusted to align with the distinction between qualification specifications and the programme.

1. **Has the social need for the qualification on a regional/national/European level been identified? Has this been done on the basis of a consultation of stakeholders: employers, professionals and professional bodies?**
2. **Is the qualification of sufficient interest from the academic point of view? Have common reference points been identified?**
3. **Definition of a qualification profile.**
4. **Description of the objectives of the qualification as well as the learning outcomes (in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities) that have to be met.**
5. **Identification of the generic and subject-related competences which should be obtained in the qualification.**
6. **Translation into the curriculum: content (topics to be covered) and structure (modules and credits)**
7. Translation into educational units and activities to achieve the defined learning outcomes.
8. Deciding the approaches to teaching and learning (types of methods, techniques and formats), as well as the methods of assessment...
9. Development of an evaluation system intended to enhance its quality constantly. *This step could relate to the qualification specification and/or the programme provision.*

Botswana example

- The manual for the development of qualifications (Botswana Qualifications Authority 2021), identifies two stages (1 and 3) that are relevant to the formulation and development of qualifications.

This pre-approval stage includes:

1. Identify need
2. Stakeholder consultation
3. Identify relevant standards
4. Identify gaps in qualification provider
5. Identify qualification development team
6. Establish stakeholder support
7. Outline qualification profile
8. Seek approval to develop

Once approval to proceed is obtained the development stage is undertaken and includes:

1. Develop qualification structure
2. Consider design requirements
3. Analyse needs – functional analysis
4. Establish qualification structure
5. Develop units
 - Learning outcomes
 - Assessment criteria
 - Content advice
 - Learning approach advice
 - Assessment advice
6. Internal verification or review to check the proposal.

Key considerations in formulation and development

1. Engaging stakeholders

Qualifications confer recognition in the labour market, and therefore the qualifications needs to meet the need. How is it best to use stakeholders in the process?

Structure and completion rules

- Qualifications should have a coherent outcome and meet the NQF qualification type specifications
 - How will core and electives be identified?
Consider benchmarking against professional standards and/or international qualifications, stakeholder consultations

2. Research and concept proposal

- Scoping the relevant industry, education, professional or community need
- Job task and work process analysis, through surveys, interviews, critical incident techniques, DACUM, functional analysis, observation

Drafting the learning outcomes in components

- Written as learning outcomes, e.g. competencies
 - Need to ensure that the learning outcomes (specified in components) as a whole meet the specified learning outcomes of the qualification.

04

**Locating a qualification
on an NQF**

Determining the level and qualification type

- Purpose of NQFs is to indicate the location of a particular qualification on the NQF.
- Important step in the approval process but it may be unclear how this is determined

Options – on a continuum



Best fit approach

When matching the outcome of a qualification to the NQF level descriptors and qualification type descriptor:

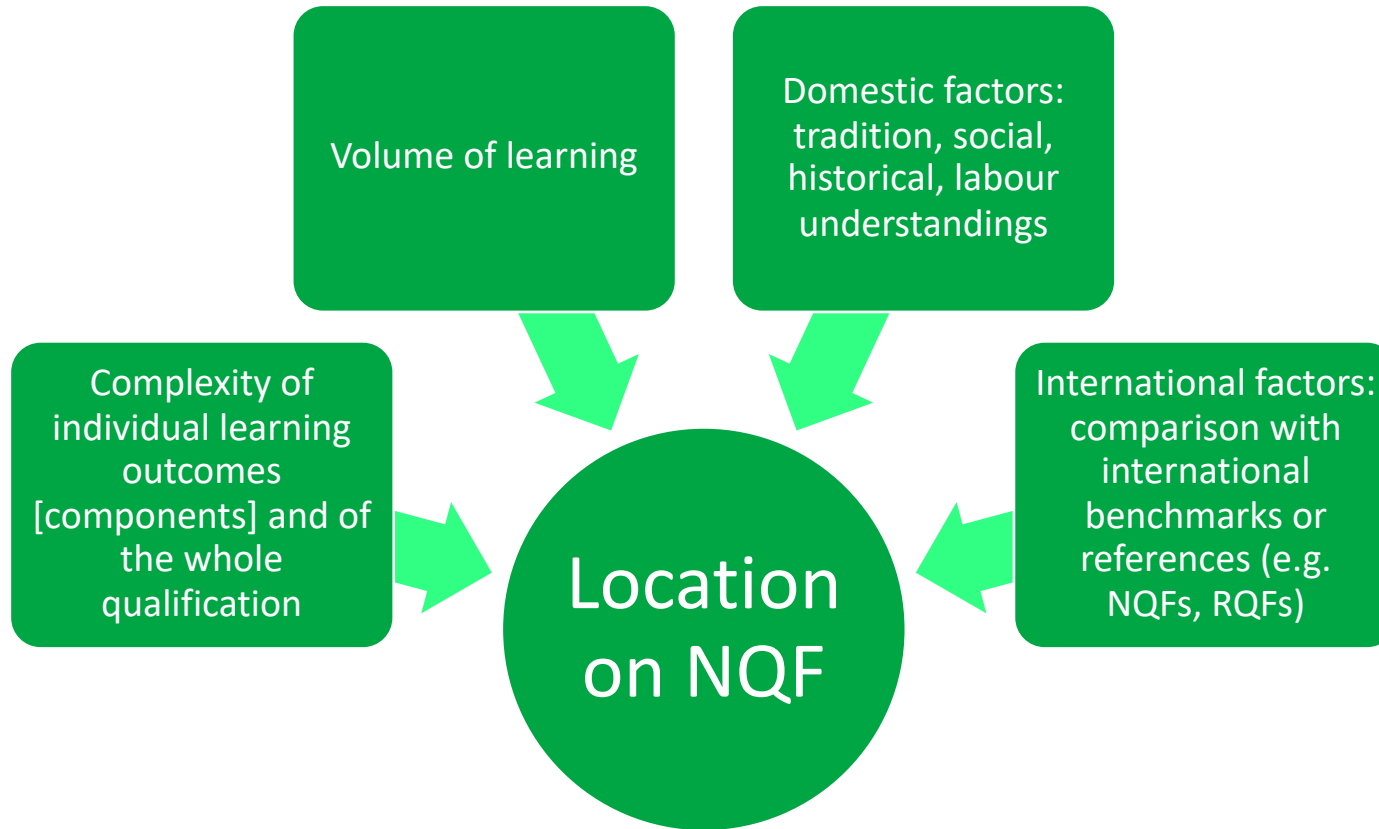
'The concept of 'best-fit' is ... the acceptance that perfect fit is probably not possible and some judgement or approximation is necessary to make a link and solve a problem.' (EU 2011a, p. 32)

'the concept of 'best-fit' requires a common judgement from a range of stakeholders so that there can be confidence in the outcome of the approximation. It is therefore useful to consider 'best-fit' as a decision that is based on collective professional judgements of stakeholders.' In addition, an important characteristic of using 'best fit' is that *'of flexibility and tolerance in interpretation.'* (EU 2011a, p. 32)

Credit based approach

- A formula for determining the level and qualification type is used.
- To be able determine an overall credit value, qualification developers allocate a level and credit value to each component and finally to the whole qualification.
- This is often termed a rating activity. Developers may use an expert panel in this process to promote an accepted outcome with stakeholders.
- It is not just a 'numbers game', as the qualification should have a coherent outcome and be consistent with other aspects of the NQF qualification type descriptor.

Factors that affect location



Case study: Lesotho

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Homework

Refer to Assessment #2: Linkages to QA

- Consider the quality assurance arrangements for two sectors e.g. TVET and higher education within your country of interest.
- Refer to Table Write a report for an international audience, explain the quality assurance arrangements for the two sectors. It is suggested that the two sectors can be treated separately and that there is some analysis of the variances.
- Refer to Table. Limit your response to the top 3 items:
 - NQF
 - Responsible body
 - Assurance of qualifications formulation and development

Volunteers!

- We need to 2 people to volunteer to present a quick reply (in writing – PPTs) to aspects of Assessment #2 on Day 5 (Session 23)
- 5 minutes only for the presentation!

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Closing comments

Closing comments

- Processes for formulation, development and approval of qualifications will vary
- There is no one **single** right way...
- **Questions:**
 - 2 questions from participants