



# ACQF

African Continental  
Qualifications Framework



## ACQF-AfCFTA Linkages Exploratory study Brief overview

ACQF webinar, 19/12/2022

### What is the ACQF?

ACQF: policy instrument to deliver on the objectives of enhanced transparency and comparability of qualifications and mutual trust between qualifications frameworks and systems for LLL in Africa.

Common reference framework – translation device between qualifications and their levels



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# Main topics

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Objectives and methodology

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Internal mechanisms and linkages

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ACQF as an enabler of trade

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Recommendations

# Objectives and methodology

## Objectives

- To identify and propose a range of policies and mechanisms enabling synergy and mutually reinforcing interplay and cooperation between ACQF and AfCFTA.
- The study ran between June and November 2022.

## Methodology

- Combination of methods:
  - Desktop research, review of literature
  - Interviews

# Linkages: in layers

Layers	Description
<b>Strategic Linkages</b>	Policy congruence – ACQF is underpinned by the AfCFTA protocol thus creating a congruence of policy in the two instruments. In particular, Article 10 (‘Mutual Recognition’) of the Protocol on Trade in Services of the Agreement Establishing the AfCFTA spells clearly the aspirations of ACQF for common QF.
<b>Structural and Governance Linkages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross - participation: there are opportunities for the two initiatives to cross participate in each other’s governance institutions</li> <li>• Grassroot collaboration: the coordinating teams at the national levels should create significant linkages in the implementation frameworks of ACQF and AfCFTA.</li> </ul>
<b>Technical Linkages</b>	There’s already progress in ACQF developing skills and qualifications frameworks that of interest to AfCFTA thus offering technical backstopping for the latter in terms of policy formulation towards smooth working of trade in services
<b>Service Delivery Linkages</b>	<p>Awareness: Both bodies can support each other in creating awareness on the existence, importance and use of the instruments in place, continentally, regionally and nationally.</p> <p>Capacity Building: AfCFTA has a capacity building mandate for its parties, which is also the case with the ACQF. There will be need for collaboration in capacity building initiatives for both entities.</p>
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation Linkages</b>	<p>Data: Both entities will require significant data to measure success. Data sharing will enrich the management and performance of both entities.</p> <p>Studies: Additionally, both will have several studies to review performance. Support of the studies and access to information will enable there to be quality analysis of their progress and collaboration.</p> <p>Management Reports: Annually and periodically, both entities will provide information on their progress. A note from ACQF in the AFCFTA report will enable parties of the latter to better appreciate the role of ACQF in trade and build up stronger linkages. The reverse is equally true.</p>

# Planned ACQF activities – potential linkages with AfCFTA

1. Referencing of national qualifications frameworks and systems to the ACQF
2. Support recognition of prior learning
3. ACQF Qualifications Platform (database)
4. Qualifications development: development of qualifications profiles adequate for common continental use related to new and emerging tasks, technologies skills, and occupations linked with continental integration policies such as AfCFTA.

# Benefits of better linkages ACQF-AfCFTA

	AfCFTA	ACQF
<b>Qualifications and skills</b>	<i>Relevance of skills</i> for the sectors and occupations with high strategic importance for the AfCFTA	Comparability and transparency of qualifications facilitate <i>recognition and mobility</i> , therefore the creation of area of <i>trusted</i> qualifications in the continent.
<b>Service Delivery</b>	Can use the <i>capacity development</i> programme of ACQF for its own awareness creation, capacity building and stakeholder engagement	Can ride on the <i>popularity</i> of AfCFTA to create awareness
<b>Technical support</b>	AfCFTA will benefit from the large pool of experts in skills and human capital development in the NQF/ACQF networks	Will benefit from the pool of experts in the AfCFTA secretariat.
<b>Coordination and structure</b>	ACQF is owned by the NQF governing agencies in the countries. Collaboration with AfCFTA team will bring value add.	AfCFTA has a national coordination team in each country that could support ACQF
<b>Measurement</b>	ACQF has a rich library of studies and data from the countries, RECs and continentally. This data would be useful to AfCFTA	AfCFTA monitors trade data at a continental level. This data would be useful to ACQF

# ACQF as an enabler of free trade

‘Stakeholders across the continent are confident that the new continental qualifications framework is an enabler of trade and economic development.’

# ACQF: will contribute to transparency and mobility of skills and qualifications – and to enable trade

- **Labour Mobility:** As QFs facilitate qualifications referencing, they in turn enable qualified people to travel beyond borders with confidence that their skills and competencies are recognised in the host country. There was no data available to demonstrate growth in mobility in places where a regional qualifications framework has been implemented. In fact, most respondents decried that migration figures remained unaffected. However, it is still expected that in the long run, the QFs will prove effective.
- **Value Chains enabler:** AfCFTA has a key objective to drive trade. Part of this involves recognising value chains across the continent and supporting them with the aim of improving trade. In particular, AfCFTA recognised the ACQF as a value chain enabler in that it facilitates production of quality skills and competencies in the continent which in turn facilitate trade in services.
- **Skills portability:** The referencing framework helps citizens to move their skills across border and in turn become economically engaged. Absent of a referencing framework, skills may not be recognised in a foreign country.
- **Common Language:** The qualifications framework enables stakeholders in education and skills development, labour and employment and trade to speak the same the language. Its focus on learning outcomes as opposed to the process ensures that every stakeholder recognises a qualification and can refer to it in simple language understandable by all. Elsewhere, this has inspired more dialogues between policy makers, implementers and other stakeholders nationally and regionally.



- **Insufficient Data and awareness:** Some respondents mentioned the lack of data on qualification frameworks available to officers seeking to establish NQFs in their countries. While capacity building efforts have been made continentally and by certain regions, the information gap is still important.
- Further, many nationals still are unaware of the existence of ACQF its benefits.
- **Insufficient Expertise in Africa:** The continent has very few professionals able to build and manage qualification frameworks.
- **Lack of Political will on Labour mobility:** while many African countries are signatories to numerous agreements and protocols on free movement of persons, few have implemented these agreements. In part, politicians remain protective of their labour markets as they imagine that foreigners will take the local's job opportunities. This is against a multitude of scientific evidence pointing to the fact that migration spur economic growth.
- **Diversity among member states:** While the ACQF creates an opportunity for referencing, African countries are extremely diverse, geographically, demographically, socially, politically and economically. Consequently, the bigger nations could be uncomfortable allowing free mobility of labour from the neighbouring poor or struggling countries.
- **Non-Tariff Barriers:** Countries still have stringent conditions for foreigners to live, study and work in therein. These include expensive and difficult qualifications evaluations, long waiting periods for work permits, impossible demands, etc. these are supposed to be addressed by the ongoing rules of origin negotiations at the AfCFTA.
- **Competition:** It is anticipated that opening up of borders would bring competition for new and cheaper goods from across the border. This would also apply in the labour market. To this end, many countries still fear competition and even though they sign off agreements allowing for free movement of goods, they continue to maintain barriers to entry.
- **Social Security Mobility:** while there is mobility happening, social security mobility including insurance and pensions are yet to be portable. This means that whoever migrates to seek opportunities out of their home country, if forced to forego these social security benefits.
- **Development of NQFs:** the ACQF is a reference framework that allows comparison (referencing) between two or more NQFs. Consequently, the application of this function of ACQF is will grow in scale with the expansion of the number of NQFs in a stage of implementation. The number and visibility of NQFs has improved but more and consistent work and joint efforts will be necessary to create the area of trusted qualifications and NQFs across the continent.

# Main recommendations

- Structure and governance
- Memorandum of collaboration
- National and Regional Cross-coordination
- Policy making and negotiations
- Awareness, information and advocacy

# Know more about ACQF – visit and use the website:

<https://acqf.africa/>

Thank you



Want to know more about ACQF?

Visit our website:  
<https://acqf.africa/>

Learn more on qualifications frameworks and systems - view and download:

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

Inventory of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF): <https://acqf.africa/resources/nqf-inventory>

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

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

Training Webinars and Workshops: <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/webinars>

Webinars with AQVN on recognition of qualifications <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/networks/networking-with-african-qualifications-verification-framework>

Support to countries: <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/support-to-countries>

Recognition of Prior Learning: <https://acqf.africa/resources/recognition-of-prior-learning>

Library of international literature: <https://acqf.africa/resources/library>

And much more on ACQF website for stakeholders, policy makers, education and training providers, learners and experts interested in themes and issues related to national and regional qualifications frameworks and their related systems, tools and governance.

