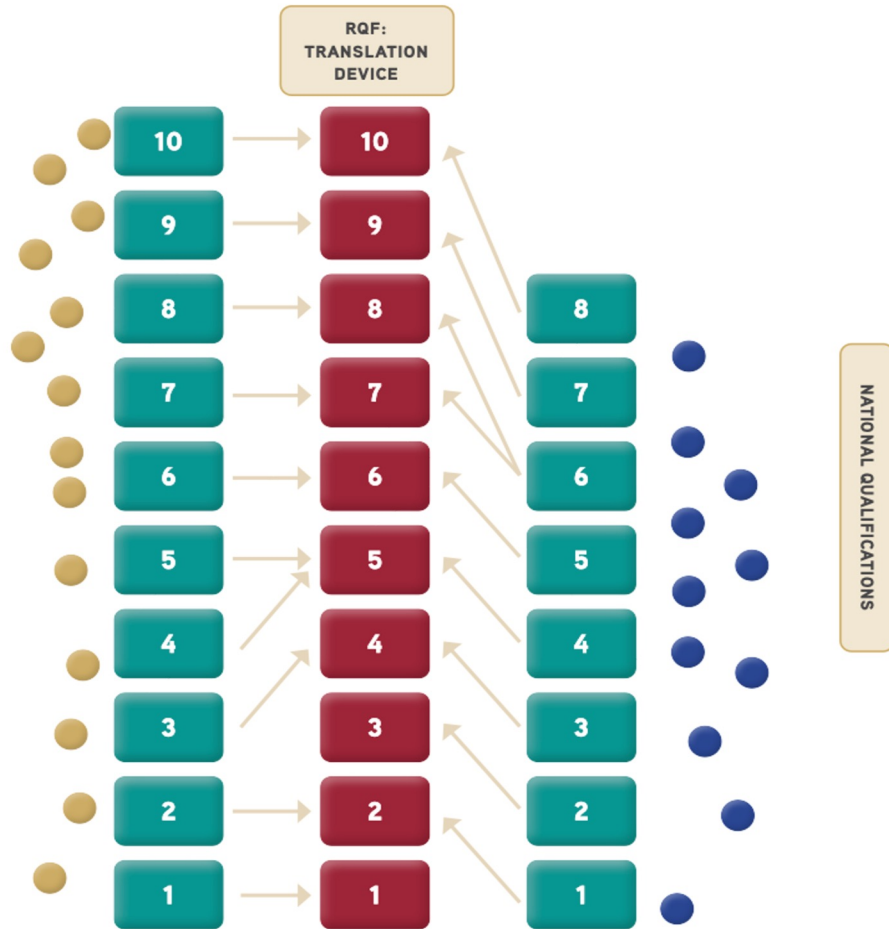# Ghana Consultation Week

Level descriptors

ACQF-II project:
Supporting implementation of ACQF

ACQF

DEVELOPING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF)

TRAINING MODULE ONE 01

LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE CONTEXT OF ACQF

DEVELOPING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF)

TRAINING MODULE TWO 02

LEVELS AND LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

African Union — THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP / LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE

Introduction

This session addresses 2 essential building blocks of qualifications frameworks:

- ✓ Learning Outcomes

- ✓ Level descriptors

To learn more:

- ✓ **ACQF Training Modules 1 and 2**

At: https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english

- ✓ **ACQF Thematic Brief 10**

At: https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs

- ✓ **Orientation Note on RQF**

At: https://acqf.africa/resources/library/publications-from-international-sources/etf-orientation-note-on-regional-qualifications-frameworks-2021

Summary

Level descriptors are a core feature of Qualifications Frameworks (whether sectoral, regional or national).

→

They are presented as a matrix of learning outcomes over cumulative levels and domains that are important to a country/ region.

→

They are written as statements of learning outcomes appropriate to learning at that level.

→

They play a key role in NQF conceptualisation, particularly in registering a qualification at a specific NQF level and all related elements relevant to qualifications like purpose and rationale, credits, certification, assessment, RPL, entry requirements, articulation and quality assurance, etc.

→

The ACQF relates to both NQFs and RQFs, however, national qualifications cannot be registered on the ACQF because they are registered in their own respective NQFs/ systems, but they can be referenced to the ACQF through their NQFs. Similarly, RQFs can be referenced to the ACQF.

→

It is important that a country's level descriptors are guided by key principles, are clear, vertically and horizontally coherent and makes sense.

→

To enhance understanding and consistency in application of level descriptors, it is recommended that that be made visible and accessible to users through training, capacity building, workshops and brochures.

Key concept: Learning outcomes base

ACQF

A learning outcomes approach means a change:
- From "what were you taught in this qualification?"
- Towards "what do you know, understand and what can you do as an outcome of the qualification?"

Qualifications framework and description of its learning outcomes-based levels (level descriptors)

Learning outcomes-based level descriptors:
Visibility, Transparency, Trust, Mobility, Access, Qualification, Achievement, Recognition, etc

Recap:

Learning outcomes:
Basic principle underlying NQFs and level descriptors

Recap: Learning outcomes linking the dots

Level Descriptor

- means a statement describing learning achievement at a particular level of the NQF that provides a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.

Learning Outcomes

- mean 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.

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.

ACQF
African Continental Qualifications Framework

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 Recommendation.

A national qualifications framework (NQF) is '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.
Source: EQF Recommendation

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.

Set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal and informal.
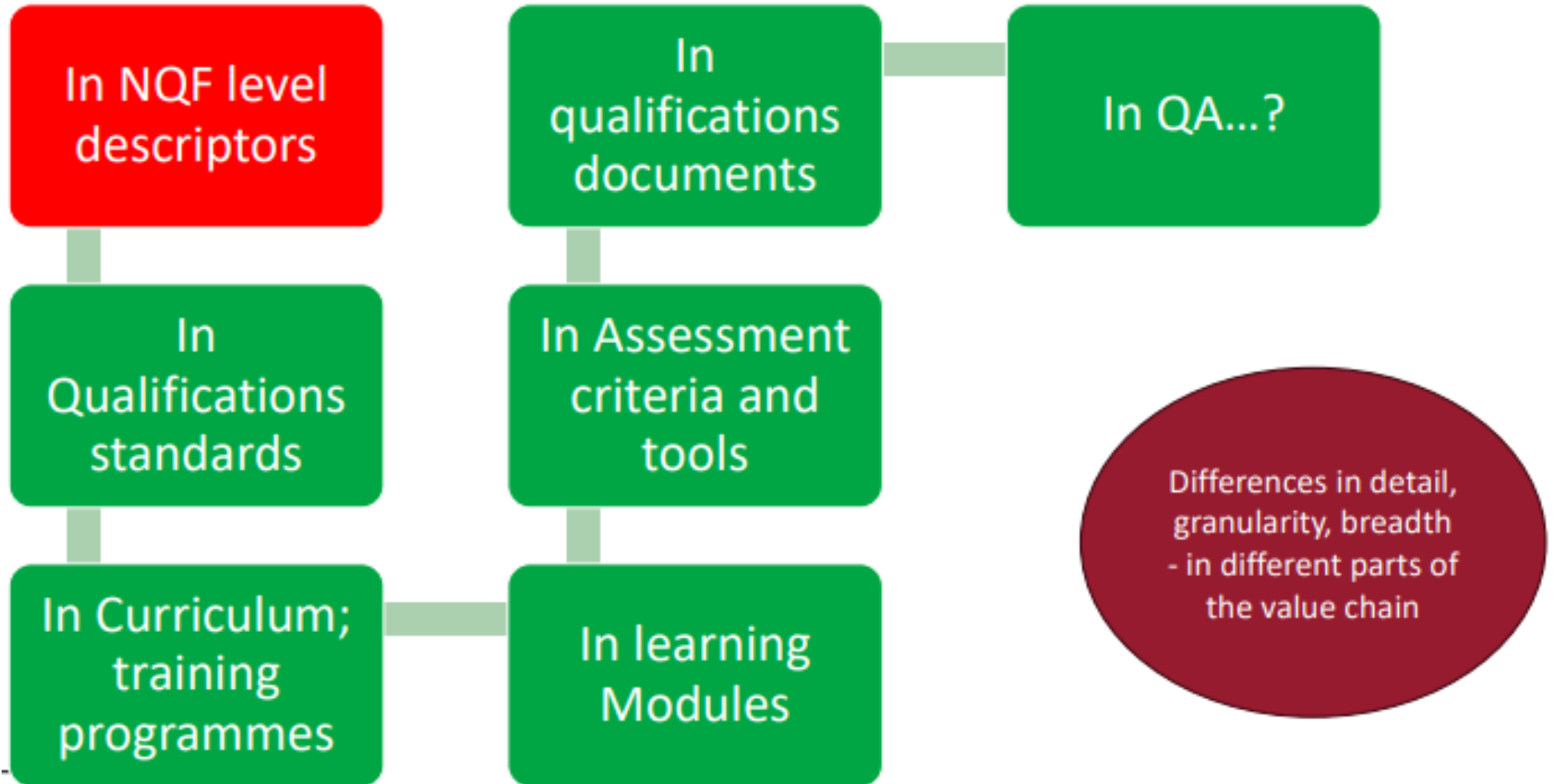*Source: Cedefop*

Central diagram

NQF Policy and design document

- Institutional setting & stakeholders
- Qualifications specifications/ standards
- Credit accumulation and transfer system
- Qualifications Database/ Register
- Quality assurance of qualifications, and provision
- RPL / Validation - Non-formal & informal learning
- M&E, research
- Outreach & visibility to users

A national qualification system includes all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These include the means to develop and operationalise national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, **quality assurance processes, evaluation and attribution** processes, **skills recognition** and other mechanisms linking education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems can be more or less integrated and coherent. One of the characteristics of a qualification system may be an **explicit qualifications framework.**
Source: OECD, Bridges to Lifelong Learning, 2007

Level descriptor: A statement describing learning achievement at a particular level of a Qualifications Framework that provides a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.
Source: SAQA, NQFPedia

A regional qualifications framework (RQF) is 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.
Source: ASEAN
QRF: ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, A Practical Guide and All you Need to Know.

Learning outcomes: in the qualifications value chain

In NQF level descriptors

In Qualifications standards

In Curriculum; training programmes

In qualifications documents

In Assessment criteria and tools

In learning Modules

In QA...?

Differences in detail, granularity, breadth - in different parts of the value chain

Recap: Learning Outcomes in Level descriptors: example

- Linked to an NQF level

- What is expected of graduates / holders of a qualification at that level

Example: Cape Verde NQF (NQF of 8 levels)

NQF, level 5

Domain: Responsibility and autonomy

- Manage and supervise in contexts of study and work susceptible to unpredictable change

- Revise and develop performance of self and others, both in quantitative and qualitative terms

- Work independently when decisions or initiatives at intermediate level are required

- Be able to organise the work for self and the team, according to the objectives and goals of the organisation and support others to effectively manage time
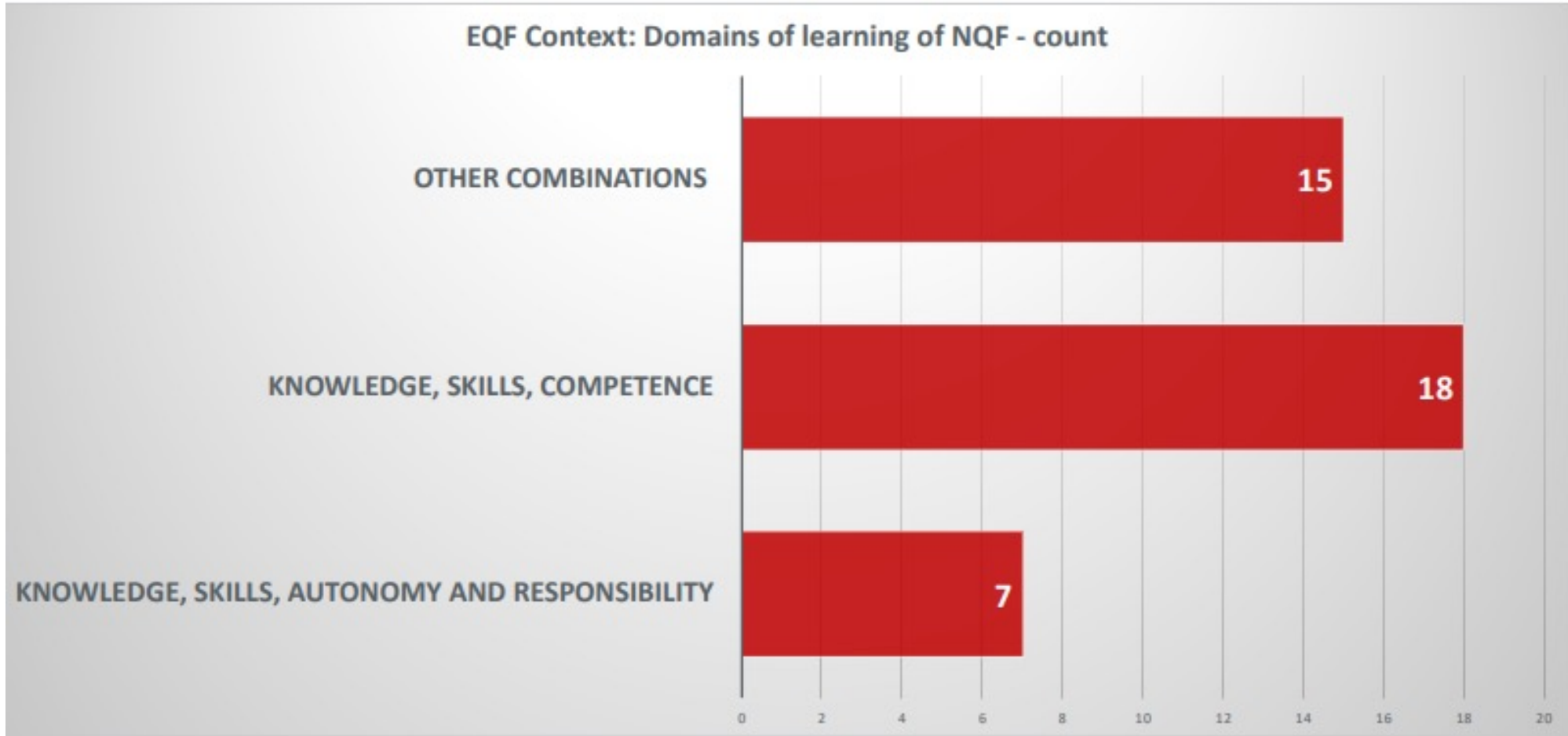
Level descriptors and domains

- Written as **learning outcomes**
- Need to agree on the definitions of **each domain**, and the principles for drafting

Level descriptors and domains	Pros and Cons
Separate multiple domains	Provides clarity for reader and ability to compare the 'build' of each domain. Assists in horizontal and vertical logic.
Merged statement with domains embedded	May be difficult to compare the different levels of complexity, and harder to determine the horizontal and vertical logic.

Source: Session 2, Nairobi Workshop

African NQFs: LEVEL DESCRIPTORS (sample of NQFs)

ACQF

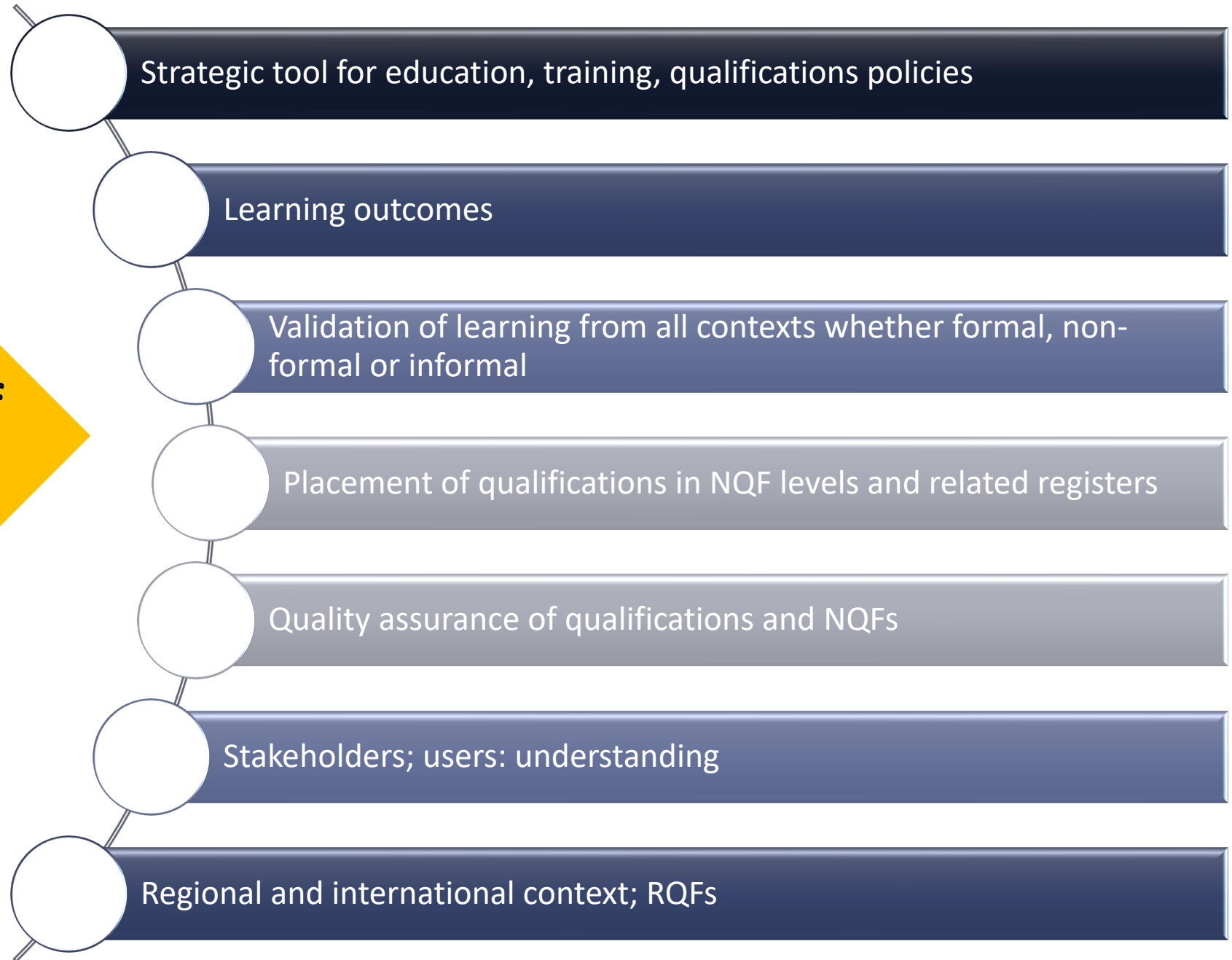| Country	Domains of learning — level descriptors
Angola	Knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility
Botswana	Knowledge, skills and competence
Eswatini	Knowledge, skills, personal attributes
Lesotho	Areas of knowledge; nature of competences; Agency and context
Mauritius	Demand; learning processes
Mozambique	Knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility
South Africa	"Applied competence" has **10 categories**, used across all 10 levels: Scope of knowledge; knowledge literacy; method and procedure; problem solving; ethics and professional practice; accessing, processing and managing information; producing and communicating of information; context and systems; management of learning; accountability. And **3 constituent elements**: a) foundational competence (intellectual / academic skills of knowledge together with analysis, synthesis and evaluation; b) practical competence (operational context); c) reflexive competence (learner autonomy).
Seychelles	The degree of complexity of the tasks; reasoning and problem solving; knowledge; autonomy and responsibility
Zambia	Foundational competence; practical competence; reflexive competence. Oct 2023: Changing to: KSC

Session 2: Nairobi - NQF

Source: Session 2, Nairobi Workshop

EQF Context – level descriptors

EQF Context: Domains of learning of NQF - count

OTHER COMBINATIONS — 15

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, COMPETENCE — 18

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AUTONOMY AND RESPONSIBILITY — 7

Source: Session 2, Nairobi Workshop

# Key principles for descriptor development

Key principles

- To ease development and application of level descriptors, it is recommended that they should:

ACQF

Encompass all elements of transparency:

- Strategic tool for education, training, qualifications policies
- Learning outcomes
- Validation of learning from all contexts whether formal, non-formal or informal
- Placement of qualifications in NQF levels and related registers
- Quality assurance of qualifications and NQFs
- Stakeholders; users: understanding
- Regional and international context; RQFs

o Identify key domains/ elements to describe the principles, skills, competencies that a country/ region deems important to personal, social and economic development
  ✓ Define the key domains and where applicable, sub-domains of learning

o Be detailed enough to capture the complexities of an NQF/ RQF including future orientation (green skills, innovation, etc)

o Be consistently applied in the development of qualifications in the countries where they are used

o Capture the balance between being prescriptive (allocation to levels) and being descriptive

ACQF
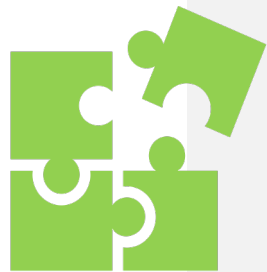
o Be general enough to accommodate the different parts of the QFs/ systems - general, TVET and higher education, as applicable

o Be conceptually and technically clear and suitable for all contexts (not too academic, theoretical, and wordy)

o Be clear about the vertical and horizontal logic of the domains when moving from lower to high levels of complexity; be developmental and cumulative

o Preferably be accompanied by a glossary, to align terms with domain definitions and to ensure that there is consistency and no duplication nor ambiguity

o Be made visible and accessible to users through training, capacity building, workshops and information sessions

o consist of verb-driven outcome statements that typically: -
  ✓ Start with words similar to: "The individual can..." - - -
  ✓ Include an active verb/ combination of verbs/ verbal phrase
  ✓ Include an object/ objective
  ✓ Include context (one or more indicators of quality or scope).

Demonstrating horizontal and vertical logic

ACQF level descriptors: domains of learning - definition

Level	Domains of learning		
	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy and responsibility
Definition of the domains of learning	In the context of ACQF "Knowledge" includes various kinds of knowledge such as facts, principles, and theories in various areas	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.	In the context of ACQF "Autonomy and responsibility" refers to the context and extent of the application of autonomy and responsibility

Horizontal

Read the descriptor across the 3 domains of learning
- **Per row**

Horizontal logic and coherence: ACQF Level descriptors 1-5

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy and Responsibility
Level 1: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal, and informal learning at this level include:	**Simple** knowledge, literacy, and numeracy	Simple communication, cognitive and practical skills required to follow simple instructions, and use simple, **repetitive** solutions to address simple problems	**Highly structured,** repetitive contexts under **close** supervision and guidance taking **minimal** responsibility for self
Level 2: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	**Basic** knowledge incorporating comprehension and recall of factual and operational knowledge in some areas	Basic communication, cognitive and practical skills required to use **concrete** information, ideas and **known** solutions to address **straight-forward** problems	**Structured** contexts under limited supervision and guidance taking **limited** responsibility for self and group outcomes
Level 3: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal, and informal learning at this level include:	**Factual and operational** knowledge incorporating some theoretical aspects in some areas	A **range** of communication, cognitive, practical and technical skills required to **interpret** and communicate ideas and detailed information, and **select and use** known solutions to address **familiar** problems	**Predictable** contexts under **routine** supervision and guidance, with **initiative** for self-responsibility and some responsibility for group outcomes
Level 4: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	Mainly factual, operational or technical knowledge **incorporating theoretical** aspects in one or more areas	**Well-developed technical** skills required to analyse information and new ideas, **make informed judgements,** communicate outcomes and apply **varied** solutions to varied (familiar and unfamiliar) problems	Varied (predictable and unpredictable) contexts with adaptability and initiative for self-direction under general guidance, taking **full responsibility for self,** some planning and responsibility for group outcomes and initiative for responsibility for others
Level 5: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal, and informal learning at this level include:	Mainly technical or theoretical knowledge with **substantial depth** in a discipline/area	A **range** of well-developed technical skills, **with some specialisation**, required to analyse information and new ideas, construct and communicate a **coherent argument**, and apply a **range of solutions**, often in combination, to address **unfamiliar** problems	**Unpredictable** contexts with full autonomy and **full responsibility for self and group outcomes**, and some responsibility for others

To assist the comparison of NQF descriptors with ACQF descriptors:
- It helps to identify key words in each level
- This also assists with checks for horizontal coherence

Horizontal logic and coherence: ACQF Level descriptors 6-10

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy and Responsibility
Level 6: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	**Highly technical** or theoretical knowledge, with specialisation in a discipline/area	Highly technical and **specialised** skills required to collate, analyse, synthesise, and communicate a range of information and new ideas, and **formulate or adapt** different solutions to address **complex and sometimes abstract** problems	**Highly variable** contexts with **well-developed autonomy** and **responsibility for self and group outcomes and responsibility for resources and processes**
Level 7: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	**Advanced analytical and/or specialised** knowledge of a discipline/area	Advanced, specialised skills required to demonstrate advanced analysis and initiative for **new insights** and ideas in research and/or innovation, and formulate **advanced solutions** to address **complex and abstract** problems	**Complex and variable** contexts with **advanced autonomy and responsibility**
Level 8: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	**Highly advanced,** complex knowledge of a discipline/area	Highly advanced, complex skills required to demonstrate highly advanced analysis, communicate new insights and ideas in research and/or innovation, and formulate highly advanced solutions to address **highly complex and abstract** problems	Highly complex contexts with some specialisation demonstrating highly advanced autonomy and responsibility
Level 9: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	**Mastery** of a complex body of knowledge **at the forefront** of a discipline/area	Skills mastery required to demonstrate originality and new insights in research and/or innovation and **formulate and test** theories to show mastery of highly complex, abstract problems	**Highly specialised** contexts demonstrating mastery in autonomy and responsibility
Level 10: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal, and informal learning at this level include:	**Substantial and original** knowledge contribution that extends the forefront of a discipline/area and/or **at the interface** between disciplines/areas	**Expert** skills and techniques that demonstrate innovation, interpretation and creation of new ideas required to critically evaluate, formulate, and test theories to address **emergent, new,** and critical problems	Emergent new contexts demonstrating expertise in management of new ideas

To assist the comparison of NQF descriptors with ACQF descriptors:
- It will help to identify key words in each level
- This also assists with checks for horizontal coherence

Ghana Week_Level descriptors

ACQF descriptors (horizontal logic and glossary)
• Example (simple, L1)

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy and Responsibility
Level 1: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal, and informal learning at this level include:	**Simple** knowledge, literacy, and numeracy	Simple communication, cognitive and practical skills required to follow simple instructions, and use simple, **repetitive** solutions to address simple problems	**Highly structured,** repetitive contexts under **close** supervision and guidance taking **minimal** responsibility for self
Level 2: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	**Basic** knowledge incorporating comprehension and recall of factual and operational knowledge in some areas	Basic communication, cognitive and practical skills required to use **concrete** information, ideas and **known** solutions to address **straight-forward** problems	**Structured** contexts under limited supervision and guidance taking **limited** responsibility for self and group outcomes

Meta-descriptor glossary

Term	In the ACQF level descriptors the term:	Progression in complexity	Levels
Simple	Means uncomplicated and easy to understand. It can be used without experience and is found at the lowest level of complexity	Simple to straightforward/ basic	L1

ACQF descriptors (horizontal logic and glossary)
• Example (mastery, L9)

ACQF

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy and Responsibility
Level 9: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at this level include:	**Mastery** of a complex body of knowledge **at the forefront** of a discipline/area	Skills mastery required to demonstrate originality and new insights in research and/or innovation and **formulate and test** theories to show mastery of highly complex, abstract problems	**Highly specialised** contexts demonstrating mastery in autonomy and responsibility
Level 10: The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal, and informal learning at this level include:	**Substantial and original** knowledge contribution that extends the forefront of a discipline/area and/or **at the interface** between disciplines/areas	**Expert** skills and techniques that demonstrate innovation, interpretation and creation of new ideas required to critically evaluate, formulate, and test theories to address **emergent, new,** and critical problems	Emergent new contexts demonstrating expertise in management of new ideas

Meta-descriptor glossary

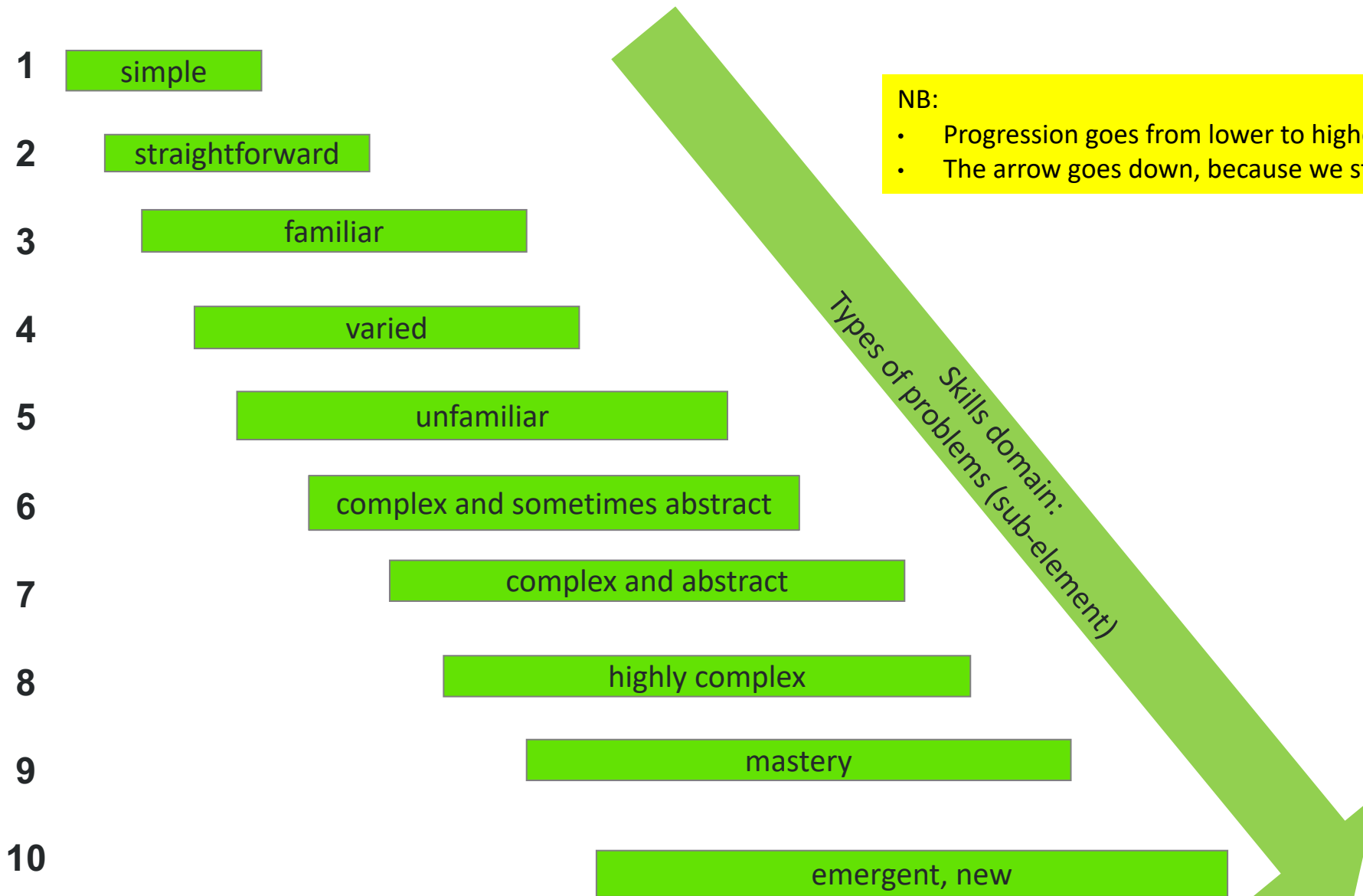| Term	In the ACQF level descriptors the term:	Progression in complexity	Levels
Mastery	Means superiority in knowledge and skills	Mastery to expertise	L9

Vertical

Read the descriptor for complexity of learning
- **Per column**

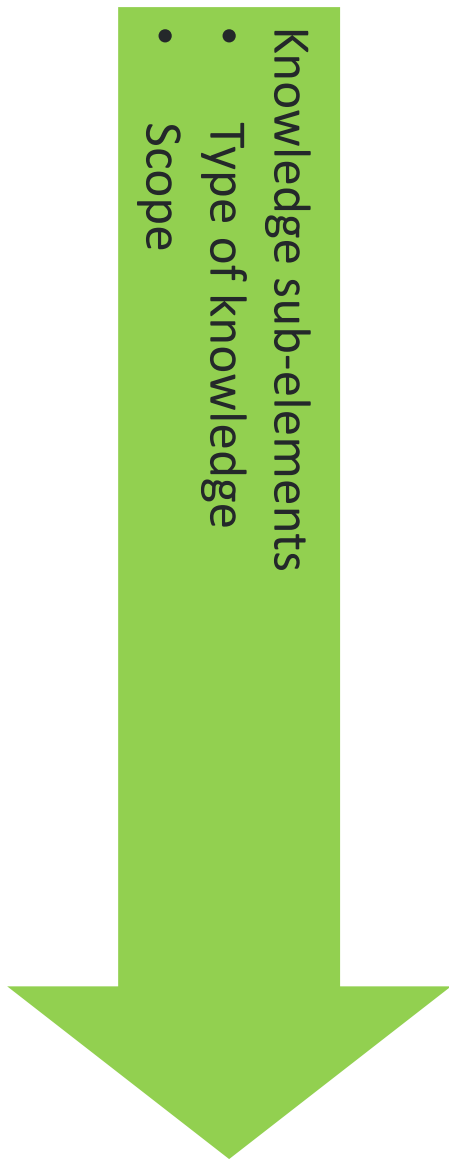# Vertical logic (cumulative, progression in complexity)

1 — simple

2 — straightforward

3 — familiar

4 — varied

5 — unfamiliar

6 — complex and sometimes abstract

7 — complex and abstract

8 — highly complex

9 — mastery

10 — emergent, new

Skills domain:
Types of problems (sub-element)

NB:
- Progression goes from lower to higher levels of complexity
- The arrow goes down, because we start the levels matrix at level 1

To assist the comparison of NQF descriptors with ACQF descriptors:
- It helps to identify the progression in complexity
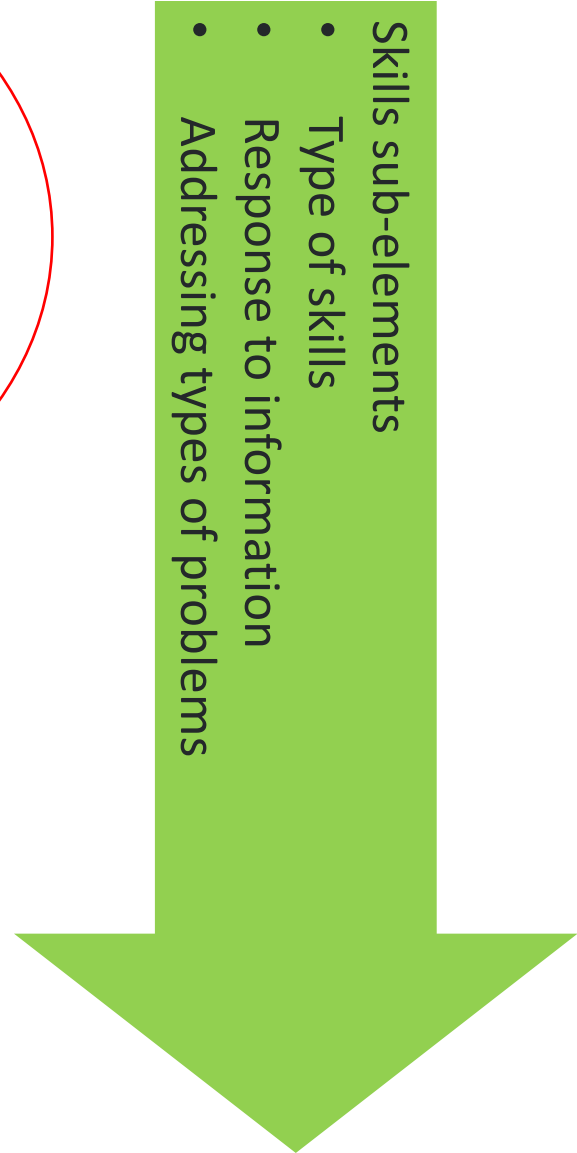- This also assists with checks for vertical coherence

Ghana Week_Level descriptors

ACQF

	Knowledge domain and sub-domains	
Level	**Type of Knowledge**	**Scope**
Level 1	Simple knowledge, literacy and numeracy	
Level 2	Basic knowledge incorporating comprehension and recall of factual and operational knowledge	In some areas
Level 3	Factual and operational knowledge incorporating some theoretical aspects	In some areas
Level 4	Mainly factual, operational or technical knowledge incorporating theoretical aspects	In one or more areas
Level 5	Mainly technical or theoretical knowledge with substantial depth	In a discipline/ area
Level 6	Highly technical or theoretical knowledge, with specialisation	In a discipline/ area
Level 7	Advanced analytical, and/ or specialised knowledge	Of a discipline/ area
Level 8	Highly advanced, complex knowledge	Of a discipline/ area
Level 9	Mastery of a complex body of knowledge	At the forefront of a discipline/ area
Level 10	Substantial and original knowledge contribution	That extends the forefront of a discipline/ area and/ or at the interface between disciplines/ areas

The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at these levels include:

Knowledge sub-elements
- Type of knowledge
- Scope

The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at these levels include:

	Skills domain and sub-domains		
Level	Type of skills	Response to information	Addressing types of problems
Level 1	Simple communication, cognitive and practical skills	Follow simple instructions	Use simple repetitive solutions to address **simple** problems
Level 2	Basic communication, cognitive, and practical skills	Use concrete information and ideas	Use known solutions to address **straightforward** problems
Level 3	A range of communication, cognitive, practical and technical skills	Interpret and communicate ideas and detailed information	Select and use known solutions to address **familiar** problems
Level 4	Well-developed technical skills	Analyse information and ideas, make informed judgements and communicate outcomes	Apply varied solutions to address **varied** (familiar and unfamiliar) problems
Level 5	A range of well-developed technical skills with some specialisation	Analyse information and new ideas, and construct and communicate coherent arguments	Apply a range of solutions often in combination to address **unfamiliar** problems
Level 6	Highly technical and specialised skills	Collate, analyse, synthesise, and communicate a range of information and new ideas	Formulate or adapt different solutions to address complex and sometimes abstract problems
Level 7	Advanced skills	Demonstrate advanced analysis and initiative for new insights and ideas in research and/ or innovation	Formulate advanced solutions to address complex and abstract problems
Level 8	Highly advanced, complex skills	Demonstrate highly advanced analysis and communicate new insights and ideas in research and/or innovation	Formulate highly advanced solutions to address highly complex and abstract problems
Level 9	Mastery	Demonstrate originality and new insights in research and/or innovation	Formulate and test theories to show mastery of highly complex, abstract problems
Level 10	Expert skills and techniques	Demonstrate innovation, interpretation and creation of emergent and new ideas	Critically evaluate, formulate and test theories to address emergent, new and critical problems

Skills sub-elements
- Type of skills
- Response to information
- Addressing types of problems

Addressing types of problems

	Skills sub-domain		ACQF glossary of terms			
Level	Addressing types of problems	Term	In the ACQF level descriptors, the term	Progression in complexity	Levels
Level 1	Use simple repetitive solutions to address **simple** problems	simple	means uncomplicated and easy to understand. It can be used without experience and is found at the lowest level of complexity	simple to straightforward/ basic	L1
Level 2	Use known solutions to address **straightforward** problems	straightforward	means clearly defined and uncomplicated but requires some experience	simple to straightforward to familiar	L2
Level 3	Select and use known solutions to address **familiar** problems	familiar and unfamiliar	Familiar means frequent and well known. Unfamiliar means it is new to the individual, but the individual can draw on experience with familiar problems to identify an appropriate response	Familiar, to familiar and unfamiliar, to unfamiliar	L3 to L5
Level 4	Apply varied solutions to address **varied** (familiar and unfamiliar) problems				
Level 5	Apply a range of solutions often in combination to address **unfamiliar** problems				

ACQF

		Autonomy and responsibility domain and sub-domains		
The learning outcomes related to formal, non-formal and informal learning at these levels include:	**Level**	Context	Autonomy	Responsibility
	Level 1	Highly structured, repetitive contexts	Close supervision and guidance	Minimal responsibility for self
	Level 2	structured contexts	Limited supervision and guidance	Limited responsibility for self and group outcomes
	Level 3	Predictable contexts	Routine supervision and guidance and initiative for adaptability	Initiative for self-responsibility and some responsibility for group outcomes
	Level 4	Varied (predictable and unpredictable) contexts	Adaptability and initiative for self-direction under general guidance	Full self-responsibility, some planning and responsibility for group outcomes and initiative for responsibility for others
	Level 5	Unpredictable contexts	Full autonomy	Full responsibility for self and group outcomes and some responsibility for others
	Level 6	Highly variable contexts	Well-developed autonomy	Well-developed responsibility for self and group outcomes; responsibility for resources and processes
	Level 7	Complex and variable contexts	Advanced autonomy	Advanced
	Level 8	Highly complex contexts with some specialisation	Highly advanced autonomy	Highly advanced
	Level 9	Highly specialised contexts	Mastery of autonomy	Mastery
	Level 10	Emergent, new contexts	Expertise	Expertise in management of new ideas

02

Level descriptors of NQFs and RQFs

ACQF

Both National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) and Regional Qualifications Frameworks (RQFs) have level descriptors.

NQF:

A national qualifications framework (NQF) is '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'. Source: EQF Recommendation 2017

RQF:

Broad structure of levels of learning outcomes agreed by countries in a defined geographical location, that can enable one national framework of qualifications to relate to another and, subsequently, for **qualifications to be compared between countries**.

An RQF works/ cooperates with several NQFs.

Level descriptors of NQFs and RQFs: Similarities
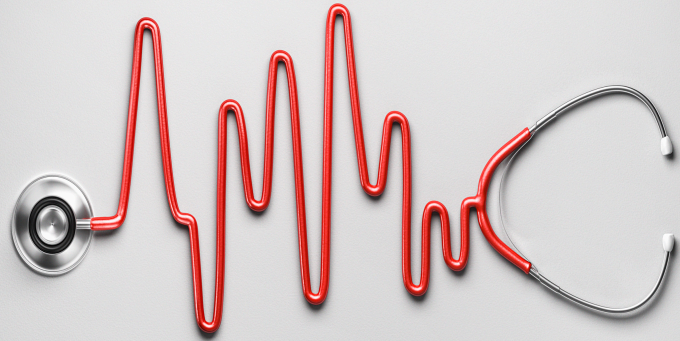
Level descriptors:

- Are at the heart of development of qualifications frameworks

- Are formulated as general learning outcomes statements and signal transparency

- Are suited to a particular purpose and can capture reforms and renewal of an NQF/ RQF including future orientation (green skills, innovation, etc)

- Are an agreed central reference point and multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue

- Based on logic along vertical and horizontal dimensions

Although NQF and RQF descriptors are similar in design and logic, they have different purposes and certain key differences- – especially related to their level of detail and contextualization.

Level descriptors of NQFs and RQF: Differences

NQF level descriptors (more detailed and complex)

Capture the complexities of the national system

Describe the complexity of learning in qualifications/ qualification types and are often linked to features of existing qualifications.

As a benchmark for levels of learning achievement recognised at national level they orient the allocation of a national qualification to an NQF level.

The positioning of two or more qualifications on the same NQF level indicates that the qualifications are broadly comparable in terms of generic complexity at that level of the NQF, regardless of where or how the qualification was obtained.

RQF level descriptors (serve complementary purposes to those of NQFs)

Do not capture the same complexities that are evident in national level descriptors

signify the levels of learning complexity at regional level

As a basis for referencing levels of NQFs or systems to the RQF

Serve as orientation for countries/ regions in developing qualifications frameworks or systems and orientation towards common minimum benchmarks for outcomes of learning on the regional block

Level descriptors – useful for…

- A degree of harmonisation and common understanding (in country, beyond borders) of qualifications (development, leveling, registration)

- Comparison between QFs

- Agency, new ideas, new goals- in education and training reforms

Your views: Any other uses?

03

Level descriptors overview-
Africa and Europe

Recalling from Session 2 - Nairobi workshop

Source: Session 2, Nairobi Workshop

05

Case: ACQF descriptor development

Case: Development of ACQF level descriptors

*Reference sources, Tools, Path

VISION FOR THE ACQF

- ▶ Enhance comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications from all sub-sectors and levels of education and training and support people's lifelong learning outcomes;
- ▶ Facilitate recognition of diplomas and certificates, and mobility of learners and workers;
- ▶ Work in complementarity with national and regional qualifications frameworks, and support the creation of a common African education space;
- ▶ Promote cooperation and alignment between qualifications frameworks (national, regional) in Africa and worldwide.

Principles

- **Inclusive: all** types of learning and levels of qualifications (all sub-systems of education and training);
- **Open:** learners' & stakeholders' needs, policy learning & lessons from other QFs
- **Innovation-ready:** transformation of skills and learning: digitalisation, greening & beyond Covid-19 reconstruction.

Functions:

- Overarching framework against which national and regional frameworks and level descriptors - can be calibrated

Referencing qualifications framework:
- NQF-RQF
- comparison with other international frameworks

Hub, catalyst for development of NQFs and their instruments

RECAP

PURPOSE and SCOPE and underpinning   PRINCIPLES

Purpose, principles and scope influence the decision around number of levels and domains of level descriptors

A set of level descriptors

Specified linkages to quality assurance criteria or arrangements

Governance arrangements

Ghana Week_Level descriptors

1.
Reference to global knowledge and practice related to level descriptors in qualifications frameworks (national, regional)

2.
Reference to the African context
o Stocktaking and overview of level descriptors and domains of learning in existing NQFs and RQFs in Africa. **Outputs: ACQF Feasibility Study (2021), ACQF Thematic Brief 3.1: level descriptors (2020).**
o Special survey on NQFs, level descriptors, and learning outcomes, carried out in August 2021. The findings of the survey informed the proposed domains of learning of ACQF level descriptors.
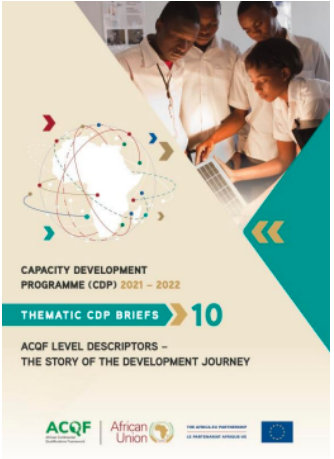
3.
Methodological Guidance:
o Developed and published the **Orientation Note on Regional Qualifications Frameworks (2021) and other relevant sources**
o ACQF Guideline 2 and related Training Module; ACQF thematic brief 10

4.
Practical method for conceptualisation, drafting, review of the ACQF level descriptors:
o **Expert team: lead author and four contributors and reviewers**
o **Systematic process,** based on:
  • Planned focused team meetings
  • Progressive matrix, encapsulating all versions, specific glossary, comments
  • Advanced draft of the grid of ACQF level descriptors was presented and discussed at a wider internal meeting with all experts
  • Final draft of the level descriptors was incorporated in the dedicated ACQF Guideline Two and presented for comments to the ACQF advisory group meeting, on 13 January, 2022. The guideline was shared with the advisory group four weeks before the meeting. All documents for review and debate by the advisory group are accessible at the ACQF intranet
  • The advisory group was invited to provide more substantive comments on all ACQF guidelines presented at the meeting held on 13 January, 2022. A period of four weeks was given for this consultation process, administered through a survey. The comments received were incorporated in the draft guidelines. The proposed draft level descriptors did not receive objections or requests of major modifications.

See more here: Thematic Brief 10

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (CDP) 2021 – 2022
THEMATIC CDP BRIEFS 10
ACQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS – THE STORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

ACQF | African Union

Overall design: ACQF level descriptors

The ACQF descriptors:
- are regional, generic, broad statements of learning outcomes complexity that can accommodate and value all forms of learning (formal, non-formal and informal)
- can be applied across all African Union countries and all education and training sectors

10 levels

Detailed glossary explaining terms in the ACQF descriptors

3 domains

1.
"Knowledge" includes various kinds of knowledge such as facts, principles and theories in various areas

2.
"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.

3.
"Autonomy and responsibility" refers to the context and extent of the application of autonomy and responsibility

Underpinning principles of ACQF LDs

- learning outcomes orientation
- transparency
- Future orientation
- Generic in scope
- Developmental and cumulative
- Conceptual and technical clarity

Ghana Week_Level descriptors

07

Summary

Sources for further reading

- ACQF Thematic Brief 3.1: level descriptors. 2021. https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-3-1-level-descriptors

- ACQF Training module 1: learning outcomes. 2022. https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-1-learning-outcomes

- ACQF Training module 2: levels and level descriptors in the context of ACQF. 2022. 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 level descriptors: reflections, development story. 2022 https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-level-descriptors/acqf-level-descriptors-article-newsletter-1-march-2022

- Comparison of the ACQF and SADCQF: initial thoughts. 2023 https://acqf.africa/news/comparison-of-the-acqf-and-sadcqf-initial-thoughts-by-coleen-jaftha

- ACQF. A Brief Handbook. 2022. https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/brief-acqf-handbook/brief-handbook-on-acqf

- Cedefop. Analysis and overview of NQF level descriptors in NQFs of European countries. 2018. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/5566

Some questions

Answer either yes, no, or not sure on the level descriptor contexts in your country: The answers may involve some discussion:			
The level descriptors are used in the following contexts in the NQF/ NQS:	Yes	Not sure	No
1. Guide the development of qualification standards			
2. Guide the development of education and training programmes/curriculum			
3. Improve coherence between curriculum, assessment, and certification in all sub-sectors of education and training			
4. Support the determination of the level of a qualification for registration on an NQF			
5. Build trust in qualifications regionally and internationally?			
6. Ease comparison and referencing between qualification frameworks?			
7. Facilitate an understanding of NQF or NQS qualifications			
8. Improve transparency of NQF or NQS qualifications			
9. Promote the recognition of NQF or NQS qualifications and credit transfer arrangements, nationally			
10. Reform/modernise existing curriculum			