

Concept Note on ACQF Guidelines



1. ACQF Guidelines: Concept

The Guidelines aim to:

- generate a set of applicable concepts, principles, criteria and procedures, as well as tools, contributing to common understanding and application across countries and regions to ease the implementation of ACQF at continental, national and regional levels;
- clarify how the given policy or mechanism (for example, RPL) relates to the ACQF and what are the related key requirements for countries engaging in referencing/alignment to the ACQF;
- provide conceptual and technical orientations to countries/RECs to support improvement/consolidation of their own systems (for example, credit accumulation and transfer and links with NQF and the ACQF). This corresponds to Objective 3 of the ACQF ('work in cooperation and complementarity with the NQFs');
- present and elaborate on specific tools; and
- seek synergy and complementarity with already existing AU policies and instruments, such as PAQAF and African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA).

ACQF Guidelines:

- should give tangible substance to the (future – Output 3 of ACQF project) ACQF policy and technical document – they are instruments/mechanisms to support practical application and sustainability of the principles, objectives and milestones defined in the ACQF document;
- in most cases should have two layers of content: a) synthesis guideline (policy orientation – for policy institutions above all, and other groups); b) technical guidelines (as a short handbook: for clarification and technical support – for implementers, practitioners above all, and other groups) – see below; and
- as ACQF instruments they should work in synergy and complementarity with each other; refer to the existing (or planned) AU policies, instruments and recommendations relevant for the domain/issue; contribute to an AU area of education and qualifications, based on converging elements and recommendations that eventually contribute to continental integration and mutual understanding while respecting national and regional context and diversity.

Most Guidelines will be composed of two complementary formats:

- **A) synthesis guideline:** main objectives, definition(s), applications, mechanisms and tools, main requirements for alignment, referencing to the ACQF, linkage to existing relevant AU policies and tools (PAQAF, ASG-QA, CESA 16–25) – approximately 2–3 pages; and
- **B) technical guidelines:** approximately 10–20 pages (additionally: annexures, sources, technical instructions, examples), depending on the subject or policy area. Complements the synthesis guideline.
 - Purpose: deepen, clarify, and provide technical orientation for national implementing bodies and stakeholders, especially the lead institutions managing the NQF and interacting with the (future) ACQF implementation structure (unit)

- The technical guidelines combine features of a) technical document and b) short application handbook.

2. List of ACQF Guidelines

Guideline	Theme and broad overview of topics, issues and contextualisation
Guideline 1	<p>Learning outcomes approach</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. theoretical, conceptual and technical underpinnings 2. application in different contexts, such as level descriptors, qualifications standards, qualifications documents, curriculum, training documents, assessment 3. Issues specific to different subsectors of education and training: higher education, school education, vocational education and training 4. guiding principles to define and describe learning outcomes 5. application in the context of the ACQF and NQFs 6. cases, examples, sources (from African and international literature and experiences)
Guideline 2	<p>Level descriptors</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. theoretical, conceptual and technical underpinnings 2. domains and sub-domains; horizontal and vertical logic 3. making level descriptors user-friendly: understanding the applications of level descriptors for qualifications standards, curriculum and assessment; use of level descriptions in different contexts 4. guiding principles to define and write level descriptors. Issues, for example, understanding competence; integrative/domain-specific level descriptors 5. ACQF level descriptors: comprehensive draft proposal of descriptors for all levels and domains (sub-domains) 6. proposal for testing ACQF level descriptors and reviewing and fine-tuning based on feedback from test 7. cases, examples, sources (from African and international literature and experiences)
Guideline 3	<p>Criteria and procedures for referencing/alignment of NQFs (or RQFs) to ACQF</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. conceptual and technical underpinnings; rationale, purposes of referencing/alignment; benefits for the involved parties (national, regional, continental). Contribution to transparency, comparability, common concepts and trust, while respecting diversity of education and training systems across Africa. Contribution to development, implementation and consolidation of NQFs 2. criteria, procedures, process, governance, efficiency and quality assurance of alignment and referencing to ACQF. Transparency and robustness of referencing/alignment process and outcomes. Publication of information on results of referencing/alignment on ACQF website 3. suggestion on use of digital tools to ease and streamline referencing/alignment 4. proposal on the use of ACQF levels on qualifications documents, qualifications databases of NQFs upon successful referencing/alignment to ACQF 5. examples, sources (from African and international literature and experiences)
Guideline 4	<p>Validation of learning:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. credit accumulation and transfer system(s) 2. validation/RPL; non-formal and informal learning 3. recognition of qualifications: brief chapter, with focus on the text and application of the Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees

	<p>and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States 2014 (Addis Recognition Convention)</p> <p>Conceptual and technical underpinnings, main features and application mechanisms</p> <p>Proposal for application of credit accumulation and transfer system in the context of NQFs and ACQF</p> <p>Proposal for application of RPL (VAE) in the context of NQFs and ACQF</p> <p>Proposal on systematic exchange of information between ACQF, NQFs and qualifications recognition structures (agencies, departments) (at national level) to ease and streamline recognition processes and improve efficiency of outcomes</p> <p>Examples, sources (from African and international literature and experiences)</p>
Guideline 5	<p>Quality assurance</p> <p>Conceptual and technical underpinnings, main features and application mechanisms of quality assurance frameworks (principles, instruments, processes, governance)</p> <p>Application in the context of NQFs and ACQF</p> <p>Reference to existing AU policies and instruments, notably PAQAF and ASG-QA</p> <p>Proposal for a quality assurance framework to support the ACQF. Contribution to a basic QA framework for TVET (main objectives, principles, indicators, requirements for referencing/alignment to ACQF)</p> <p>Examples, sources (from African and international literature and experiences)</p>
Guideline 6	<p>Registration and information management of qualifications</p> <p>Conceptual and technical underpinnings, main features and application mechanisms</p> <p>Approaches, requirements (classifications, others)</p> <p>Proposal for technical design and main specifications for ACQF register/database of qualifications of various types (formal education and training, international-sectoral qualifications, new types of credentials, qualifications of the context of non-formal learning). Elements of data fields for electronic publication of qualifications. Use of ACQF levels in qualifications registers and databases (link with Guideline 3)</p> <p>Examples, sources (from African and international literature and experiences)</p>
Guideline 7	<p>Monitoring and evaluation in the context of NQFs, ACQF</p> <p>Conceptual and technical underpinnings, main features and application mechanisms in the context of the ACQF</p> <p>Indicators, data, analysis</p> <p>Review of NQFs and the ACQF: approaches, methods</p> <p>Digital tool to support ACQF monitoring and evaluation</p> <p>Cases, examples, sources (from African and international literature and experiences)</p>
Guideline 8	<p>Communication</p> <p>Purposes, benefits and uses of communication in the context of NQFs and the ACQF. Contribution to buy-in, performance and impact</p> <p>Target groups, end-users: policymaking, implementation institutions, education and training institutions, NQF authorities</p> <p>Examples, sources (from African and international literature and experiences)</p> <p>Draft a succinct proposal for ACQF communication plan, with main objectives, instruments, outreach modalities with some target-group differentiation, interactions continental-regional-national levels</p>
Guideline 9	<p>Innovation and technology in NQFs and ACQF</p> <p>This guideline has distinctive features: a) it provides wider context and information on innovation and technology in qualifications and NQFs; b) provides technical information on tools</p>

	<p>and specifications. Part c) will be for limited circulation, depending on interest and relevance for wider public</p> <p>Digital certificates. Micro-credentials. Other novel types of qualifications and recognition of learning</p> <p>Developed digital tool: a) supporting comparison of qualifications; b) supporting comparison of level descriptors</p> <p>Proposal for model and specifications for ACQF database of qualifications (and underpinning documents, standards, units)</p>
<p>Guideline 10 Integrative Guideline and training module</p>	<p>Qualifications and NQFs: a systemic view (a larger guideline to support countries and the ACQF implementation structure)</p> <p><u>This guideline has specific features:</u> a) it provides a comprehensive, systemic view of NQFs as policy instrument in the context of NQSs, and relates to all ACQF Guidelines (using smart links, as adequate); b) it provides technical and methodological recommendations on development of qualifications, and their alignment to main principles and features of the NQF/RQF</p> <p>Conceptual and technical underpinnings, main features and application mechanisms in the context of ACQF</p> <p>A) NQF</p> <p>Developing fit-for-purpose NQF – linked with the NQS and national strategies (such as: education, skills, employment, lifelong learning). Pillars and components of the NQF and NQS Instruments of the NQF</p> <p>Links and coherence in the NQF ecosystem</p> <p>Governance, management and implementation of the NQF. Capacities, analysis, instruments, IT system</p> <p>Communication and outreach to end-users, target groups. Examples and cases (from African countries and other regions)</p> <p>B) Qualifications</p> <p>Qualifications policies</p> <p>Types of qualifications</p> <p>Development and renewal of qualifications: technical and methodological aspects, organisation; standards underpinning qualifications; alignment with NQF levels and principles. Participants in the process. Approval, levelling, registration</p> <p>Innovations in the qualifications’ development (and renewal) cycle, process and tools – to ease alignment with demands related with the transformation of work, technology, occupations, tasks, skills and important societal change</p> <p>C) RPL/VAE</p> <p>Developing, implementing the system. Links with the NQF and NQS</p>