ACQF AG-5: presentation

26 May 2022 (virtual meeting)

Progress overview; ACQF Policy and technical document; Guidelines 10, 8, 3; Referencing testing; Governance Options

Chair: AUC

Co-chairs: Prof. Maria Luisa Agibo (CNAQ, Mozambique); Dr David Ossene (ECCAS)

Speakers: Mr. E. Okonkwo (AUC ESTI), E. Castel-Branco, E. Mukhwana, A. Bateman, C. Jaftha, K. Allgoo

Welcome to 5th ACQF AG meeting

ACQF

Meeting time: 09.00-11.45 GMT

Agenda items

- **Session 1**: Welcome, introductions (chair)

- **Session 2**: Overview of progress (E. Okonkwo)

- **Session 3**: ACQF Policy and technical document – (E. Castel-Branco, E. Mukhwana)

- **Session 4**: Technical foundations – ACQF Guidelines (focus: 10, 8, 3); referencing test. (A. Bateman, C. Jaftha, E. Castel-Branco)

- **Session 5**: ACQF Governance options – draft 1 (E. Castel-Branco, K. Allgoo)

2A

Session 2 (E.O)
Overview of progress

Review of progress since ACQF AG-4

**Main planned output of ACQF project:
ACQF Policy and Technical document with Guidelines**

- **ACQF Policy and Technical document**
  - ✓ **Draft 2: completed**
    - ✓ With 10 Synthesis Guidelines;
    - ✓ Language versions: EN-FR-PT (ready translations – 18/05/2022). Arabic: until 15/08/2022
  - ✓ **To be completed: Action Plan**
  - ✓ Next steps(led by AUC-ESTI):
    - ▪ Validation meeting with Member States (proposal: Thursday, 7 July 2022)
    - ▪ STC-EST meeting

- **ACQF Guidelines: technical foundations to support implementation**
  - ✓ Completed drafting of the 10 Guidelines: <u>package</u> – Technical + Synthesis + Training Modules
  - ✓ Language versions: EN-FR-PT (translation underway); Arabic (until 15/08/2022)
  - ✓ Synthesis Guidelines: as a separate Guide – 3 languages (in layout and design)

  Process:
  - ✓ ACQF stakeholders Consultation process took place: survey 1 month duration - after AG-4
  - ✓ Many comments and suggestions received – from ACQF AG-4 meeting and online survey consultation.
    - ▪ No objections / opposition / negative comments
    - ▪ Constructive suggestions and recommendations
    - ▪ Shared with ACQF experts team and incorporated in draft 2 of the Guidelines

Review of progress since ACQF AG-4

Output: ACQF Capacity development

- 10 Training Modules (linked with the 10 Guidelines) – ready, published and used
  - ✓ Language versions: EN-FR-PT (in final proofreading)
  - ✓ Published on ACQF website: https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules

- ACQF training programme:
  - ✓ 1st training week took place on 18-22 April 2022, fully online
  - ✓ 2nd training week: 5-9/Sept, South Africa – hybrid
- Thematic briefs: 9 published at https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs

Review of progress since ACQF AG-4

- **Support to countries, RECs (NQF)**
  - ✓ Guiné-Bissau
  - ✓ S. Tomé e Príncipe
  - ✓ Mozambique: CNAQ programme of webinars May-October 2022
  - ✓ SADC: conclusion study review of implementation SADCQF and way forward
  - ✓ EAC: IUCEA experts' meeting on RPL (11/April)
  - ✓ IGAD: experience-sharing on other RQFs (23/May)

- **Networking**
  - ✓ UNESCO meeting Dakar on NQFs (03/2022)
  - ✓ COI: Commission Indian Ocean
  - ✓ HAQAA: with TWG on governance / PAQAA

2B

Overview of progress (ecb)
- 1st ACQF Training Week
- PLW 2022: on RPL

ACQF is…mutual learning, mutual trust

ACQF Website

LMS Moodle

15 peer learning webinars (PLW) in 2020-2022

+ 40 country ... presented in PLW

ACQF Policy and Technical Document

10 Technical Guidelines

10 Training modules

21 training presentations on all NQF themes

9 Thematic Briefs

Newsletter

13 country and regional mapping reports on NQFs

Continental Mapping NQFs

1 report review implementation SADCQF + 1 NQF inventory SADC

1 mapping report on African school curriculum

3 reports support to countries in NQF development path

International conferences and experts' meetings

1st ACQF Training Week: 18-22 April

- 5 days – 4h / day, fully online
- 25 sessions
- Guest experts' presentations: 4 African countries
- International organisations presentations: 2 (Credential Engine – USA; Micro-Credential Observatory)
- Average: 100 participants

- 10 training Modules
- 21 main PPTs
- Additional PPT prepared as part of learners' assessment
- Digital certificates issued through new ACQF LMS - completion of final questionnaire
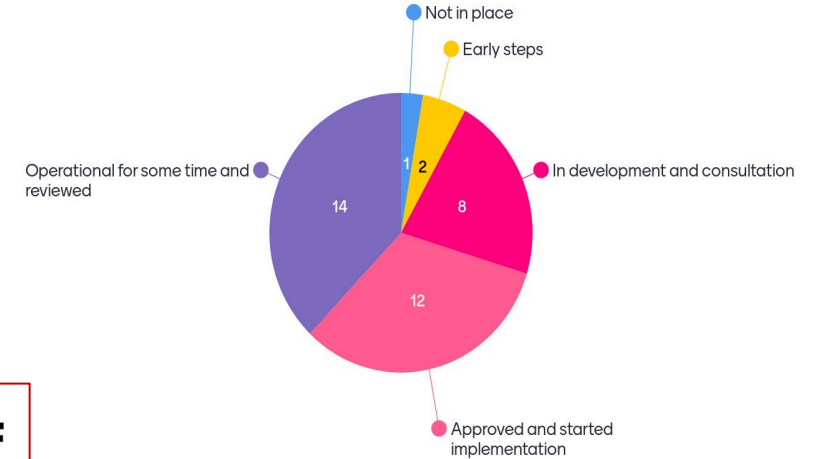
Themes of the training programme

Total: 25 sessions, including recapitulative summaries and assessment.

- ACQF: meta-framework. Policy, tools, guidelines

- NQF: systemic view. Governance. Cases.

- Occupations, skills, and qualifications. Classifications and taxonomies. Some results of the Global Inventory of NQFs 2021.

- Development of qualifications.

- Learning outcomes approach. Applications in different contexts.

- Validation of learning – RPL

- Validation of learning – CAT

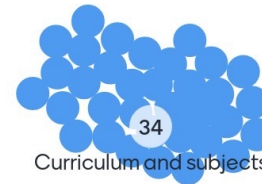- Registers (databases) of qualifications.

- Quality assurance in the context of NQF / ACQF

- International cases – registers (databases of qualifications): Credential Engine (USA).

- Innovation and technology in the context of NQFs, ACQF.

- Micro-credentials: the global debate and research on the theme; role in LLL, place in NQFs

- Monitoring and Evaluation – concepts, tools, data, how to do it; examples.

- ACQF – level descriptors

- ACQF – referencing

- ACQF – communication and outreach

- Presentations of learners' assessment exercises: 4 cases.

- Final Poll – on all key themes of the programme

The training programme was based on a combination of methods of delivery, interaction and assessment: trainers' presentations; case studies to illustrate certain thematic aspects and issues (by guest experts); continuous assessment through polls addressing the topics of each presentation and questions and answers using chat box of Zoom; learners' active contributions (daily recap sessions!!)

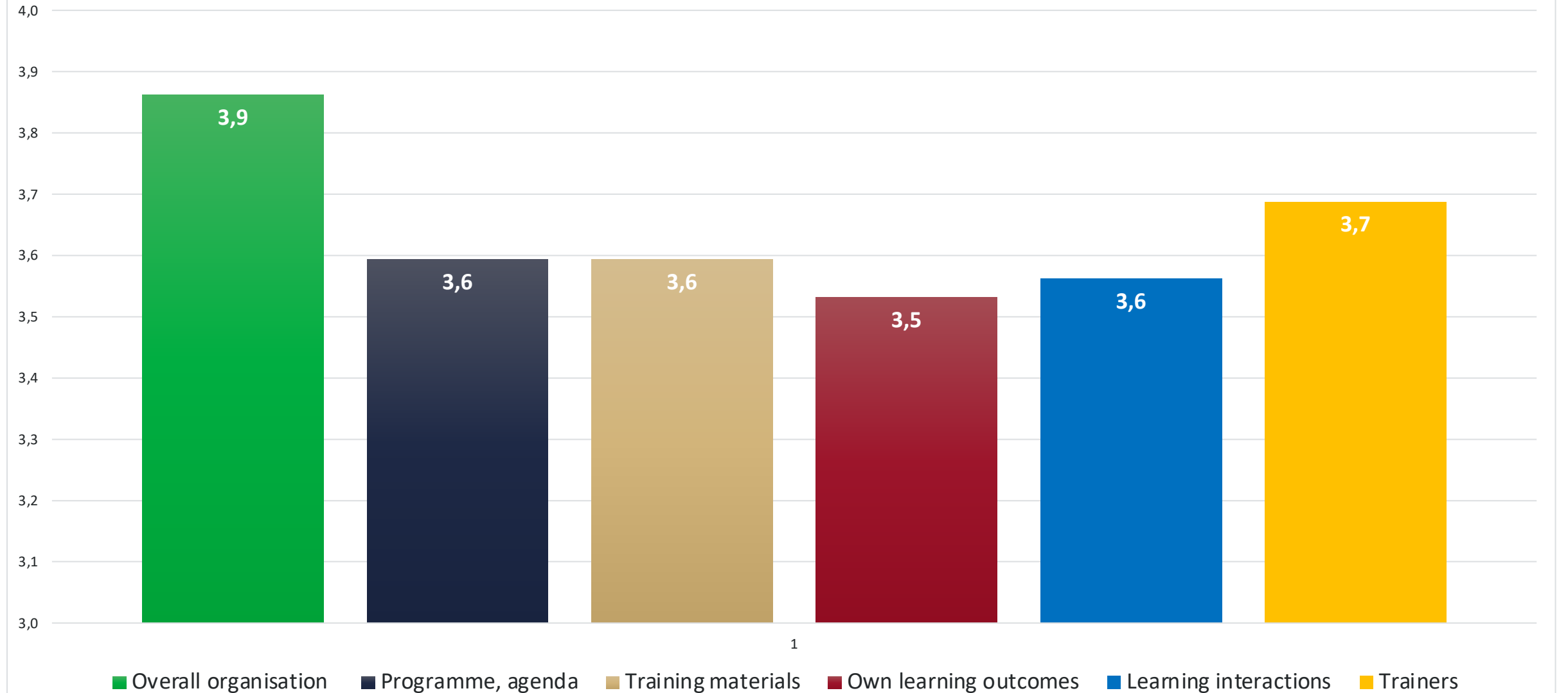## At what stage of development is the NQF in your country?

- Not in place: 1
- Early steps: 2
- In development and consultation: 8
- Approved and started implementation: 12
- Operational for some time and reviewed: 14

In your country, are learning outcomes linked to...

- Design and description of qualifications: 41
- Credits for qualifications: 27
- Professional/ occupational standards: 39
- Curriculum and subjects: 34
- Assessment: 41
- Comparison of qualifications achieved in other countries: 22
- Recognition of prior learning: 32

1ˢᵗ training week: evaluation

ACQF

ACQF 1st Training Week 18-22/April 2022
Participants' evaluation: scale 1-4

- ■ Overall organisation
- ■ Programme, agenda
- ■ Training materials
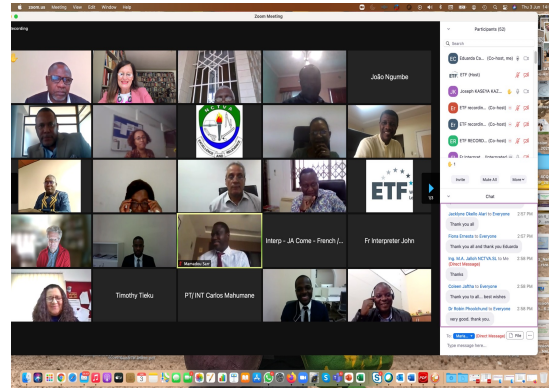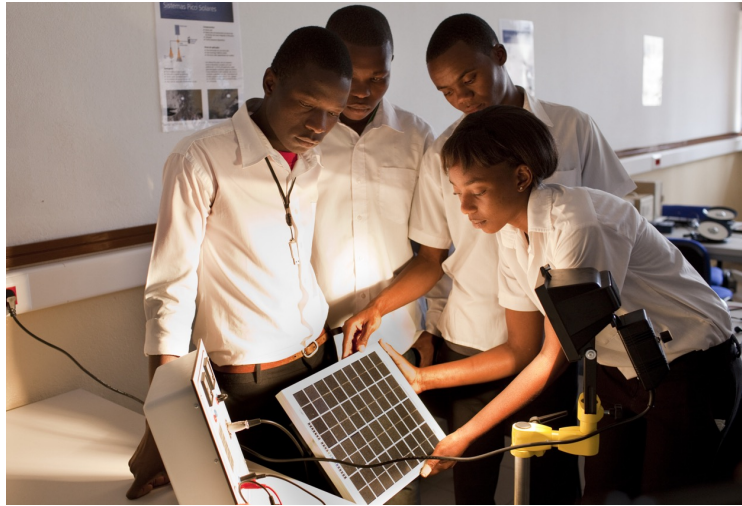- ■ Own learning outcomes
- ■ Learning interactions
- ■ Trainers

What additional themes would you like to learn in the next training programmes?

Advanced and practical quality assurance lessons
Mettre en accent sur compétences entre les pays.
Development of Standards from identification to final product
Coding of National Qualifications
I would like to learn more about Monitoring and Evaluation
Stratégie mise en oeuvre CNC et référencement
To deep the themes related to: - NQFs Monitoring and Evaluation - the relationship between RPL and CAT - RPL on Higher Education - the relationship between National Registration and registers of qualifications and International Registration?
Sistema de Créditos, Validação e Certificação das Entidades Formadoras
Secçao de partilha de experiencia dos diferentes paises sobre a Ligislaçao no sector de ensino tecnico e profissional.
Comme thèmes supplémentaires, j'aimerais qu'on abord, la "Stratégie de développement du CNQ dans un contexte des pays fragiles" où il n'y a pas un système structuré du système éducatif.
Cas pratique: élaboration d'un CNC
La spécificité de l'enseignement supérieur et de l'éducation par rapport à la formation professionnelle en terme de mise en place d'un système national de certification Aborder plus en détails le système d'évaluation et de certification (organisation des évaluations, sujets d'évaluation, évaluateurs, logistique, octroi des diplômes..... La liaison entre les qualifications partielles et/ou les formations de courte durée et les CNC
Comparison of qualification systems based on language identity: francophone/anglophone/lusophone/hispanophone
ACQF in relation to other continents.
More on NQF
Internal Quality Assurance

PLW 2022: on RPL

ACQF AG-5: presentation

PLW 2022: on RPL

- Preparation: ACQF Overview on RPL – international and 10 African cases. New RPL page at ACQF Website: https://acqf.africa/resources/recognition-of-prior-learning

- 3 PLWs – 70-110 participants

- PLW: 11 cases - 9 Africa, 3 Europe

- Countries at different stages of RPL development

- Similarities in objectives, issues, some aspects technical organisation

- Differences in scope, resources, analysis

- Polls provide rich information for further analysis

- Participants expressed interest: create RPL Network; further actions supported by ACQF

- All Materials of PLW 13, 14 and 15 accessible at: https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/webinars
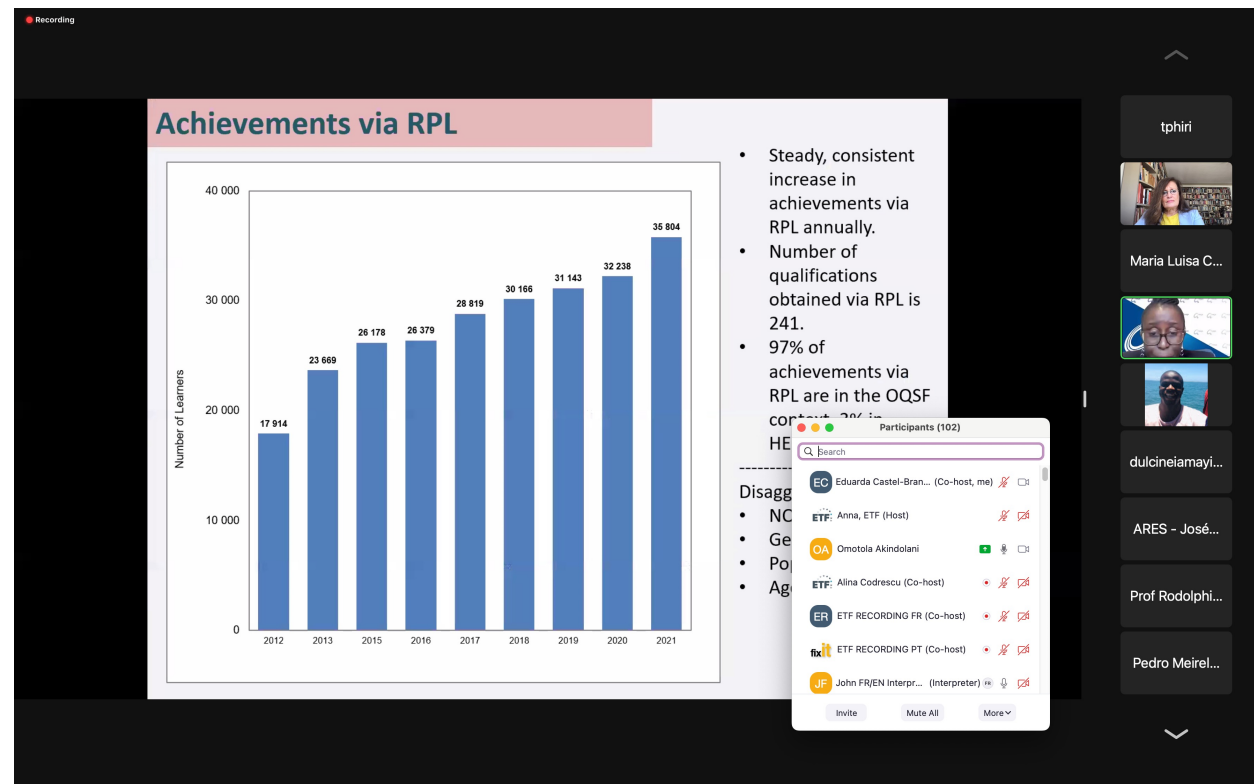
Cases shared and discussed at RPL PLW

Regional cases:

1. ACQF Guideline 4: on validation of learning, focus on RPL
2. EU policy framework RPL (VNFIL): implementation, monitoring, research

Country cases:

1. Cape Verde
2. Zambia
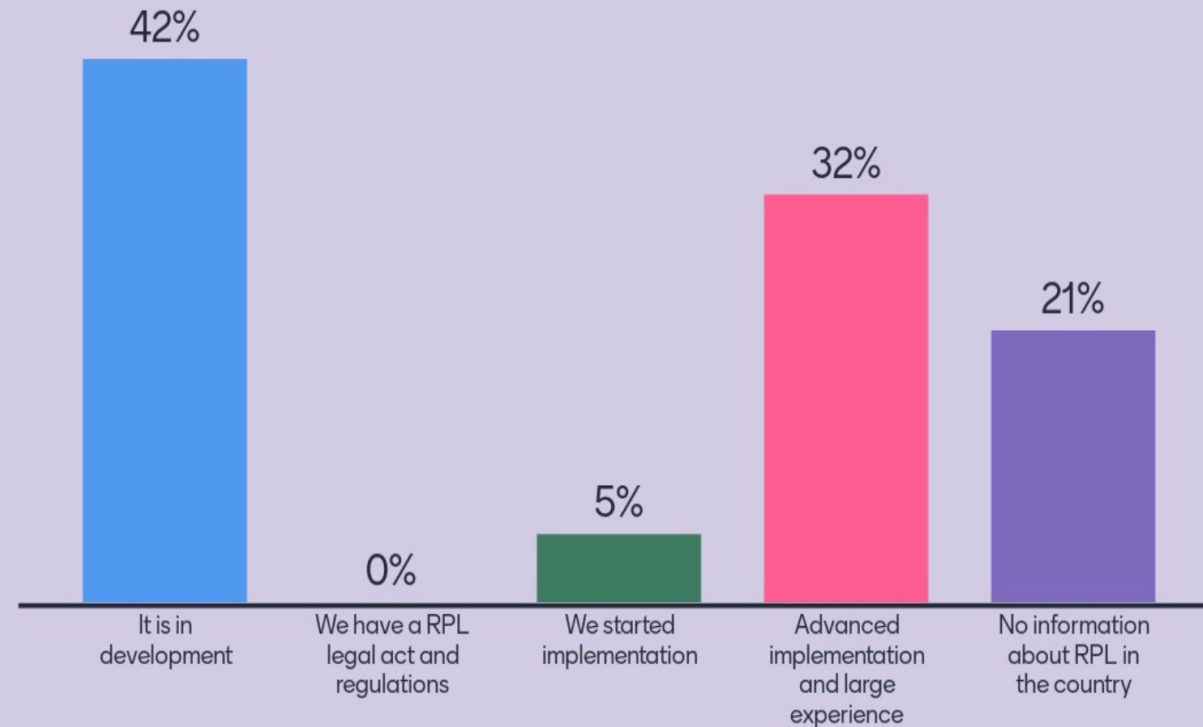3. Cameroon
4. France
5. South Africa
6. Senegal
7. Zimbabwe
8. Mozambique
9. Portugal

Some results from the poll of 18/02/2022

1. RPL in your country: what is the status of the RPL system?

42% — It is in development
0% — We have a RPL legal act and regulations
5% — We started implementation
32% — Advanced implementation and large experience
21% — No information about RPL in the country

Some results (2)

2. Which qualifications can be obtained through RPL processes?

Category	Value
All qualifications on the NQF	5
All qualifications on NQF except higher education	2
Only TVET qualifications	5
Only partial qualifications	2
None	2
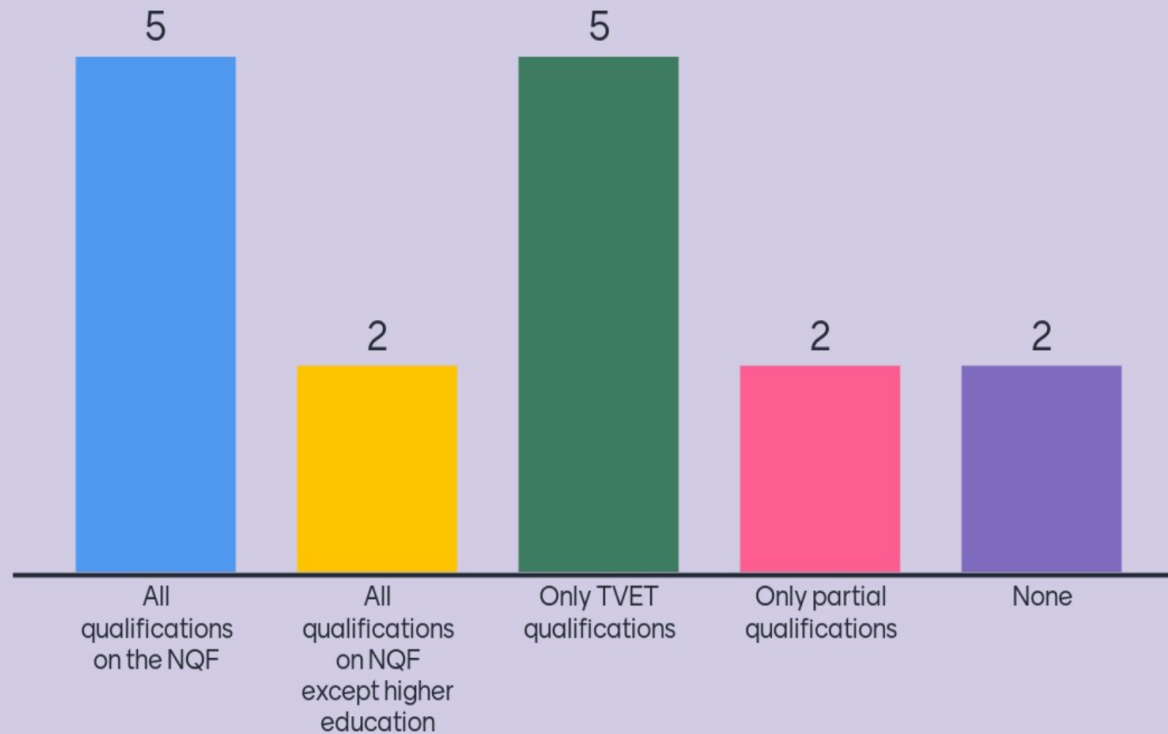
Some additional results (3)

3. Main barriers / challenges for wider RPL implementation in your country? (tick all that applies)

- Employers not cooperating
- Financial resources
- RPL is not a strong part of the education and training system
- Lack of guidance and information for public
- Lack of RPL centres / providers
- Lack of trained RPL professionals

Financial resources: 6
Employers not cooperating: 1
RPL is not a strong part of the education and training system: 6
Lack of guidance and information for public: 6
Lack of RPL centres / providers: 6
Lack of trained RPL professionals: 11

Results from Poll

Question: how should ACQF help?
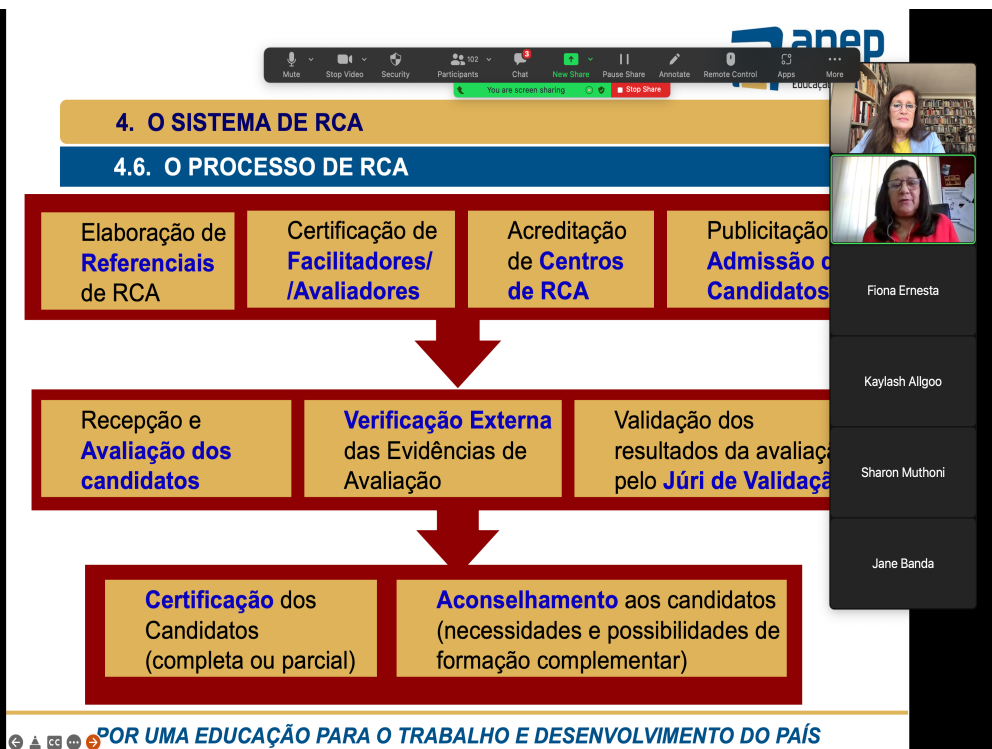
More discussion, sharing good practice and campaigns

Deeper understanding links RPL-HE

Sharing of good practice on private sector involvement

Training of RPL practitioners

RPL – equitable / comparable with formal learning

Support countries develop, implement RPL

Digitalisation: certificates, supplements

Network RPL / VAE

03

ACQF Policy and technical document

Objectives and scope of ACQF policy and technical document

- ACQF Policy and Technical Document defines the vision, policy objectives and technical features of the ACQF, proposes the set of ACQF implementation modalities and instruments, and is accompanied by technical annexes, which form an integral part of the document.

- The ACQF is designed to work in coordination and complementarity with other relevant policies mentioned in chapter 2, and with African standards and guidelines and UNESCO conventions listed in Annex 4.

Structure

- 4 chapters
    1. Introduction: scope and objectives
    2. Political and legal basis
    3. Establishment of ACQF
    4. Synthesis Guidelines supporting implementation of ACQF

- Sources

- Annexes
    - Glossary
    - Recommendation on minimum elements in qualifications design and structire
    - Other reference documents
    - Action Plan (in development)

AU Political and legal basis

- Agenda 2063 and its First Ten Year Implementation Plan

- CESA 16-25

- AfCFTA

- AU Free Movement Protocol

- PAQAF

Establishment of ACQF

- Considering the political and legal basis, the ACQF will be established as a policy and instrument of continental scope to deliver on the **objectives of enhanced transparency and comparability of qualifications and mutual trust between qualifications frameworks and systems for lifelong learning in Africa.**

- The ACQF is defined as an **overarching reference qualifications framework of ten levels, serving as a translation device** between different qualifications frameworks or systems and their levels.

- Governance of the ACQF builds on the political support and steering of the African Union, the participation of all AU countries and regions, partnerships with stakeholders from the world of education, training, qualifications and work and sustainable implementation capacity.

- The ACQF is a holistic and indivisible policy instrument.

- ACQF **cooperates with national and regional qualifications frameworks and systems** and is not intended to change or supersede existing national or regional legal-regulatory frameworks, guidelines, and practices, but to complement and contribute to development and implementation of qualifications frameworks and to relevant innovations.

Conticeptual technical design

ACQF

- **Meta-framework:** translation device for referencing, comparison, cooperation between different NQFs

- **Comprehensive scope:** all levels, modes of learning

- **10 levels:** whole continuum

- **Level descriptors** expressed as **learning outcomes**

- **Domains of learning:** Knowledge, Skills, Autonomy and Responsibility

Learning outcomes orientation supports:

✓ Improve **transparency and comparability** of qualifications of different national systems

✓ **Transparency and credibility of RPL** and validation of outcomes from experience, access to quality RPL

✓ **Application of credit accumulation and transfer systems** in different academic and vocational pathways.

  - Access, learning progression, lifelong learning, flexibility,
  - In design of qualifications: facilitate transfer of components of qualifications

Conceptual-technical design

Contribution to facilitate recognition of foreign qualifications

- The transparency, information-sharing and mutual trust resulting from referencing levels of NQFs to ACQF levels contribute to transparency of recognition of foreign qualifications in the context of Africa and other continents. The ACQF and national information bodies involved in the recognition of qualifications will share information on learning outcomes, levels and other characteristics of qualifications frameworks referenced to the ACQF.

Underpinned by quality assurance

- The ACQF as an overarching qualifications framework and a catalyst for NQF development is underpinned by quality assurance. Quality assurance is fundamental for trust in qualifications, and for their currency and mobility.

- **Quality assurance is the subject of Criterion 4 of referencing to the ACQF**, which states that 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 ACQF.

Main areas of activity of the ACQF

 1.Referencing of national qualifications frameworks and systems to the ACQF, following agreed criteria and procedures.

2. Support recognition of prior learning – for example, the development of common guidelines and approaches, updated inventory of RPL systems on the continent, a wide information and support campaign (with interested countries).

3. ACQF Qualifications Platform (database) and EMIS

4. Qualifications: a range of activities such as research and design of common approaches and methodologies. Development of qualifications profiles adequate for common continental use (e.g.: related with economic integration / AfCFTA).

ACQF

5. Capacity development in the relevant thematic areas:

- Training programmes in hybrid and digital formats,
- Peer-learning activities
- E-learning platform
- Technical support to countries in developing, implementing and reviewing their national qualifications frameworks and systems and preparing for referencing with ACQF.
- Cooperation and mutual learning across African regions

6. Networking and cooperation:

- With African stakeholders: national and regional entities responsible for qualifications frameworks or systems, recognition bodies and committees, education and training providers, social partners, professional and sector associations, employment sector institutions, students' unions.
- International networking and cooperation with regional and national qualifications frameworks on other continents, international organisations active in certification, recognition and research in the domain.

7. Analysis, monitoring and evaluation on ACQF implementation and other themes (for continuous improvement)

Referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to ACQF

- ACQF aims at **connecting** the national (and regional) qualifications frameworks of the community of African Union (AU) member states. This core function is based on the process of **referencing to ACQF**.

- Referencing: process aimed at comparing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the ACQF following criteria and procedures (**Session 21, TM 3**)

- At **national level**, referencing contributes to self-assessment of the status of the national qualifications framework or system to identify areas for reform and improvement

- At **continental level and between countries**, referencing to the ACQF of a significant and increasing number of national qualifications or systems leads to the creation of a common area of trusted qualifications and enables the transformative potential of the ACQF for the continent.
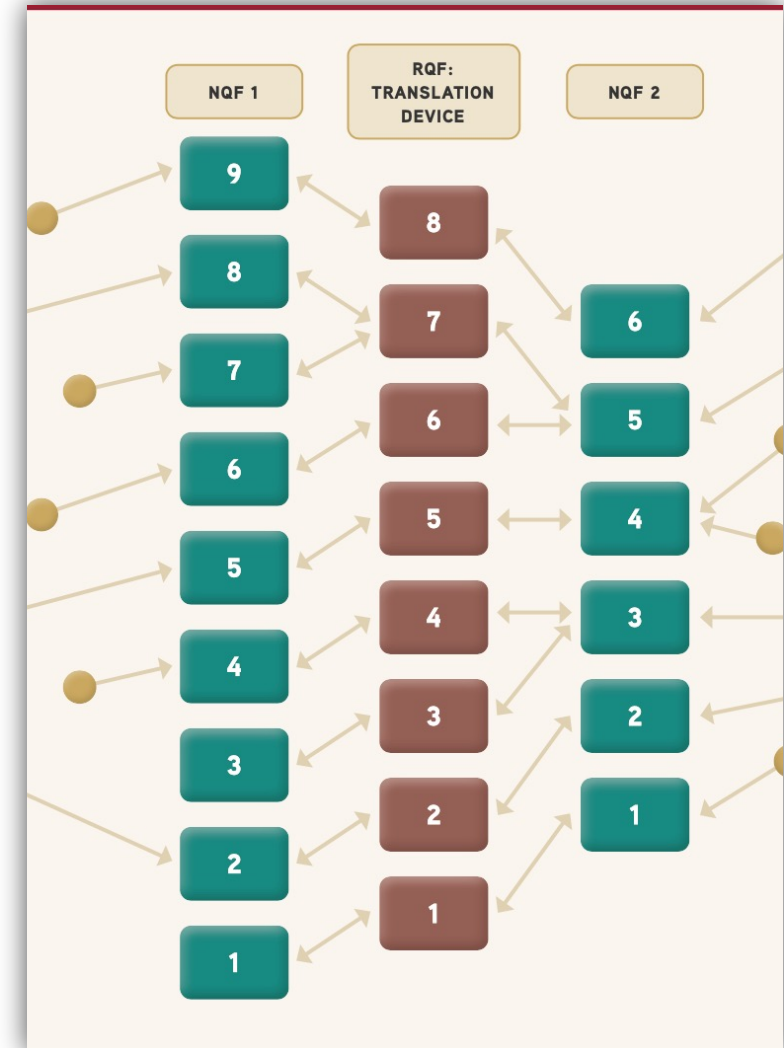
Chapter 4: 10 Guidelines (Synthesis)

- 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. 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)

- 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.

ACQF Guidelines

- 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

Level descriptors: the development process and methodology

✓Inventory level descriptors – Africa, Europe

✓Specific survey

✓Sub-group in ACQF experts' team

✓Builder matrix

✓Specific glossary

✓Consultation international experts

✓Systematic series of sub-groups meetings: step-by-step, follow-up

✓Read Thematic Brief 10 at: https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-10-acqf-level-descriptors-the-story-of-the-development-journey

ACQF level descriptors (1)

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
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

ACQF

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Autonomy and responsibility
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
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

Going forward: 2023-2026

Building on the outputs / outcomes of the current ACQF project

Follow-up: project supporting ACQF implementation

Diverse levels of cooperation – national, regional and continental

Action areas 2022-2026

ACQF Governance and implementation: roles, agreements, technical capacity, organisation, resources

ACQF Qualifications Plaform and MIS: digitalisation of qualifications information and transparency - purpose, concept, specifications, build

Capacity development: links to education and training institutions; enhance LMS; pilot projects; network trainers, trained persons

Support countries and RECs: define needs, support packages;

Referencing to ACQF: awareness, pilot phase, disseminate; transparency; use of ACQF levels on qualifications NQFs referenced to ACQF

Qualifications: common profiles related with priority sectors and occupations important for the agenda of continental integration; reflection and debate towards common language – micro-credentials

Support to RPL: network, campaign, pilot projects, analysis

Establish monitoring and evaluation system: linked to platform and MIS

Networking, cooperation with other RQFs, NQF (other continents): communication, comparison with other RQFs, UNESCO conventions

Session 4: ACQF Guidelines
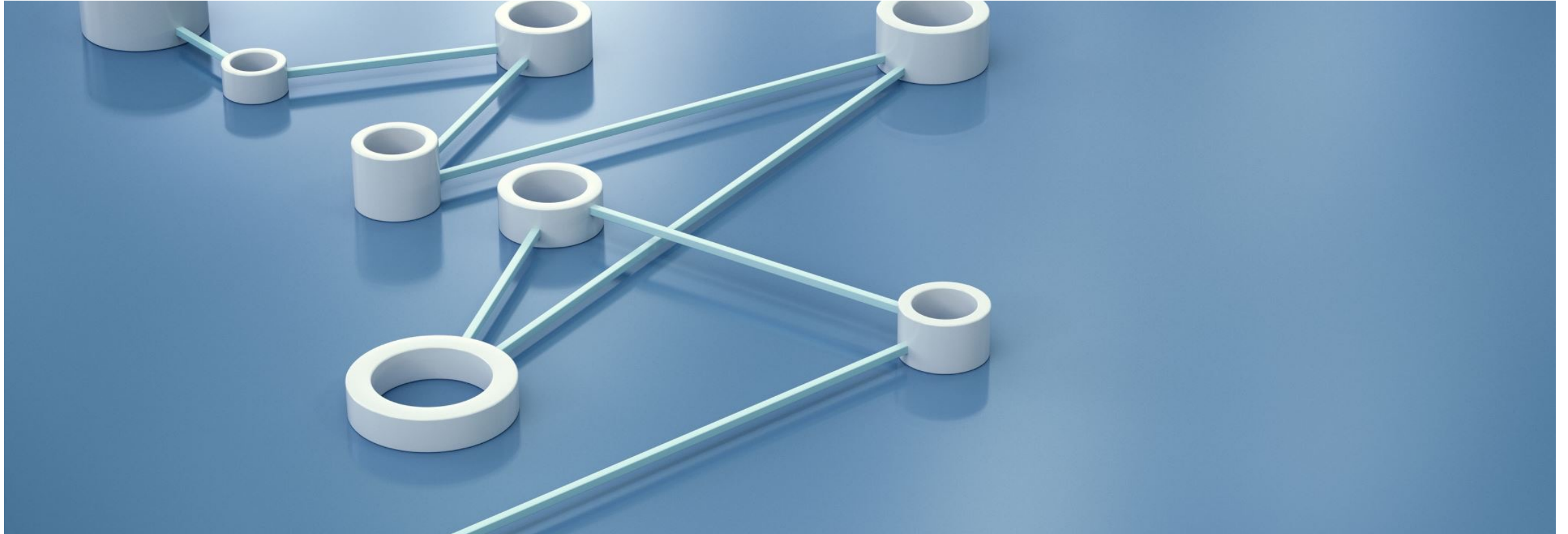
Session 4A

Guideline 10: Qualifications, NQF – a systemic view (integrative Guideline)

Guide Linkages

Scope and aim

Aims:

- To provide a comprehensive systemic view of NQFs as policy instruments and the context of a National Qualifications System (NQS)
- To provide technical and methodological recommendations on development of qualifications and their alignment to the principles of the NQF/RQF

Scope:

- NQFs
- Qualifications (including microcredentials)
- Other linkages: register/data base, RPL, credit transfer

Focus:

- Aims to include African continental examples of different approaches, but also includes international experiences and examples

Structure of the Guideline

Key elements addressed within the Guideline include:

1. Qualifications systems (includes NQFs [implicit or explicit] and quality assurance)
2. NQFs
   - How they fit into the system, why, what for
   - Design features
   - Phases of an NQF (design, implementation and review)
   - Governance
3. Qualifications
   - How development is quality assured
   - Locating qualifications on the NQF
4. Other linkages
5. Recognition of prior learning

1. Overview – Qualifications systems

- This sections aims to:
  - ➤ Provide a definition for NQF and also quality assurance
  - ➤ Places an NQF within the qualifications system, and explain its linkages with quality assurance arrangements

NQF within the qualifications system
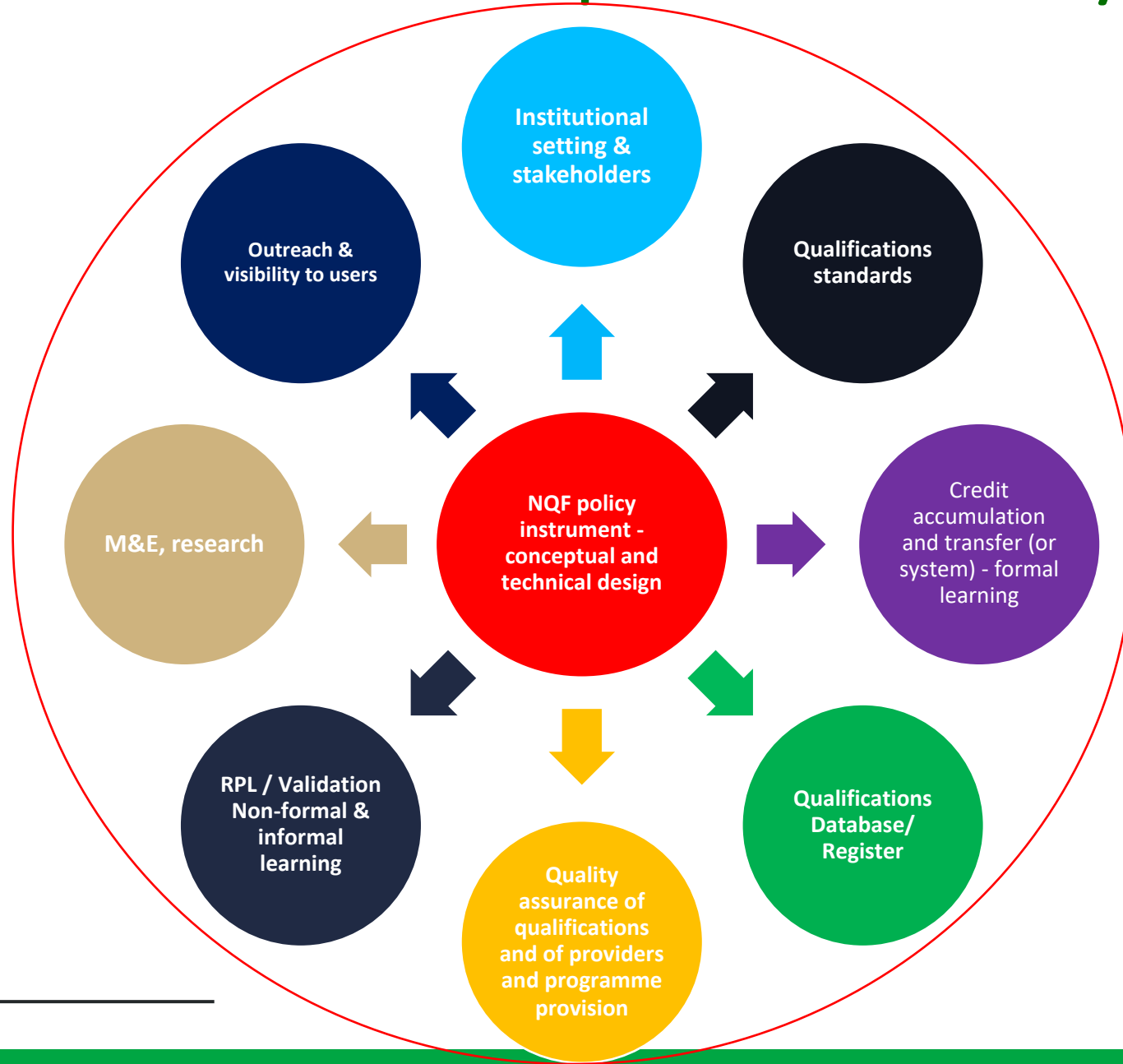
2. Overview – National qualifications frameworks (NQF)

This section provides the general overview:

1. Role of NQFs
2. Key features of an NQF: purpose/objectives, scope, structures [level descriptors, volume of learning measure and qualification type descriptors]
3. NQFs may serve different functions: communication, reform, regulation; NQFs may be tight or loose
4. Instruments closely related with the NQF: registers / databases of qualifications (and of providers approved to deliver NQF qualifications)
5. Linkages with related national strategies (RPL, micro-credentials, recognition of foreign qualifications, quality assurance)
6. Governance
7. Communication strategies
8. Phases of an NQF
   a. Developing an NQF – focus here is on development of the policy document (NQF structures)
   b. Implementation
   c. Monitoring and review of NQF

3. Qualifications

This section provides an overview of the quality assurance arrangements for formulating, developing and approving (and re-approving) a qualification.

1. **Definition of qualifications**

2. **Types of qualifications/national variations**

3. **Quality assuring the formulation and approval/re-approval of qualifications**

   - Use of quality standards to inform and assure the formulation, development, approval/re-approval [separate concept from provider capacity to provide a program leading to a qualification]

   - Process for formulating and developing qualification specification

   - Determining the level and qualification type (locating the qualification on the NQF)

   - Approval processes

4. Recognition of Prior Learning

This section aims to:

- Place RPL (and credit transfer) within the whole qualifications system and the aspirations of an NQF

This section focuses on:

- Unpacking the agreed definitions of RPL and credit transfer
- Clarifying the difference between credit transfer [recognise achievement in one context and transfer to another context – if recognition of formal learning achieved, e.g. at component (e.g. subject, unit) level] and RPL [recognition of nonformal and informal learning achieved]
- Purpose and benefits of RPL – has a strong social justice focus, aims to improve access and equity for all, and has its basis in equity of learning achieved
- Considerations for system level implementation:
  - Barriers and enablers
 - Overview of process for RPL assessments

Session 4B
Guideline 8: Communication and outreach

What is NQF/ ACQF communication?

Mutual trust between qualifications frameworks and systems of countries and regions depends on reliable, accessible and free information on the different aspects that contribute to comparability of qualifications of all levels and types, and to validation of learning of individuals across the lifelong learning continuum.

➢ User outreach and communication is a key component of NQF/ ACQF development and governance.

➢ It is a means of ensuring that the message reaches the people.

➢ Communication raises visibility and creates awareness, but also ensures that useful feedback and information is available to drive policy, decision-making and training.

➢ It is also a way to harness the available yet most suitable instruments to engage stakeholders including policy makers and the general public.
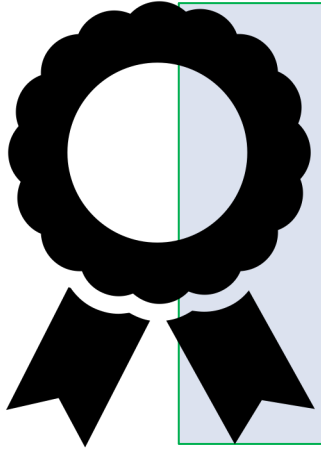
VALUE

Communicate the value of NQFs to attract stakeholders and get them involved.

What are the benefits?

What is the change that NQFs brings?
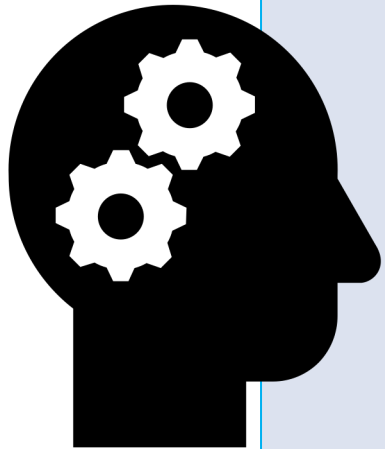
COMMON LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING

To make NQFs clearer for all stakeholders and users.

Variety of tools explaining and unpacking what the NQF is about (all dimensions of the NQF) e.g. leaflets, short information booklets, etc

NQF concept and structure

Qualifications database

Institutional setting/ stakeholders

Quality assurance

Recognition of prior learning

Monitoring and evaluation, research

User outreach and communication

NQF system- value added by NQFs

Place of Communication and Outreach in NQF as a system
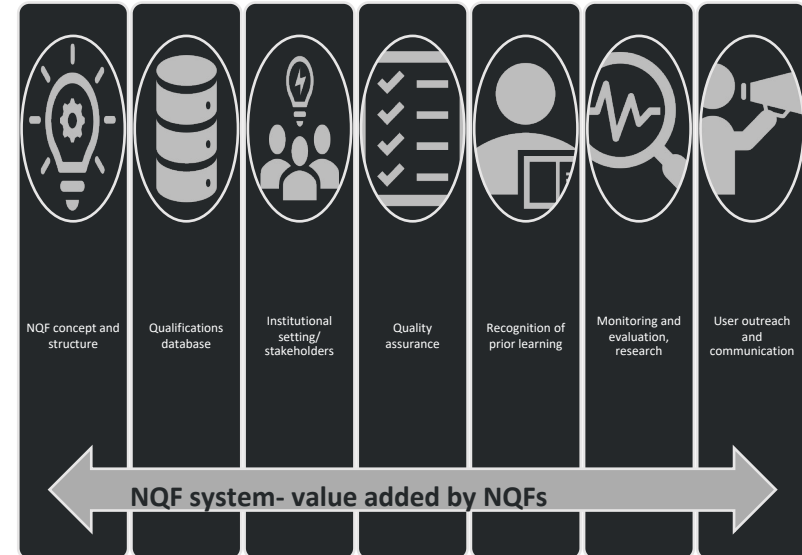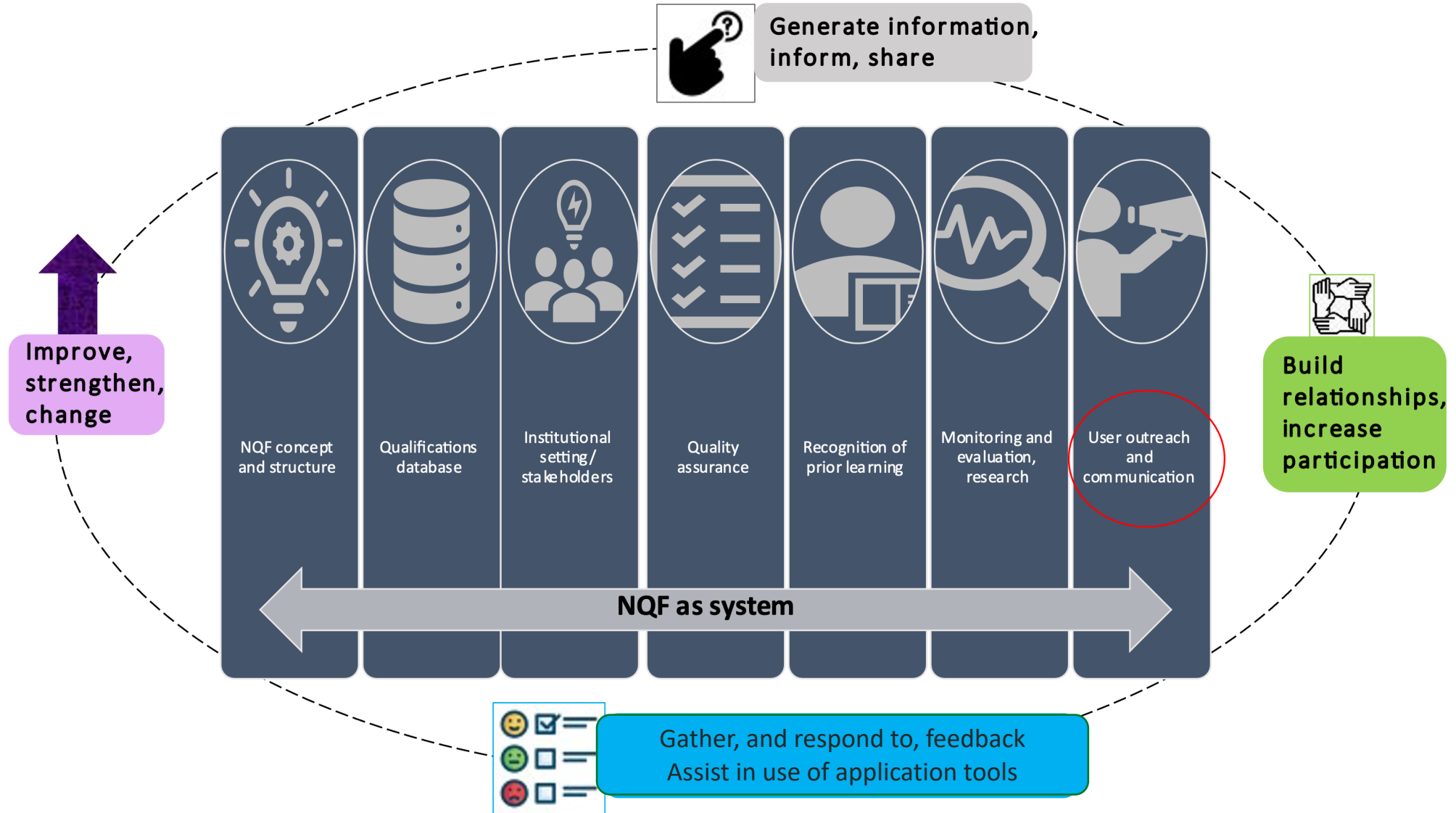
NQF Communication and outreach...

- **Adapted to**

  ✓ To different NQF development stages / different phases of the NQF lifecycle (start of development – start of operations – advanced implementation - review stage...)

  ✓ Types of NQF's functions / orientation: communication, reform, regulation

  ✓ Target groups / stakeholders

  ✓ Mix of methods and tools – include digital tools

  ✓ Other contextual features (languages...)

ACQF/ NQF communication – some elements and orientations

All the interactions within the ACQF/ NQF will **contribute towards its perceptions**

Regular communication will help reduce uncertainty and **engage stakeholders at appropriate times**

Communication should be **positive**, seek to improve contact between all ACQF/ NQF stakeholders, and provide an opportunity for follow up or questions

Any standard **templates,** especially regarding writing styles and graphic identity must be made available to relevant users.

Whether communication is internal or with the general public, it is important that the messages are **consistent.**
- Each communication fits the **technical level of the intended audience**, avoiding acronyms and definitions that may not be clear.
- ACQF/ NQF communication points should be **clear and easily recognisable** in terms of its purpose, audience, frequency, most direct way to state it, and action required from the recipient.
- Messages should be **succinct** and aim to clarify a few points rather than cover an unlimited range of issues. Messages should be people-centred. Where appropriate, a story-telling approach is used: one that emphasises the impact of the action on individual lives.

ACQF/ NQF communication is undertaken, where appropriate, through partnerships with individuals and organisations that can have a potential **multiplier** effect, uses the local language(s) and considers the local context, is consistent with actions in terms of human and financial resources and responsibilities
- ACQF: The ACQF website is the standard ACQF platform, houses all relevant news, documents, events, video clips, presentations, updates, etc. All data on the website can be downloaded and is available for sharing.
- NQFs: Similarly NQF communication is best housed within a website that can be easily accessed by the public. NQF communications should include a link to the NQF website. The ACQF website is a source of information for NQFs

Session 4C
Guideline 3: Key elements of referencing to the ACQF

Referencing: ACQF areas of activity

"**By virtue of its objectives, principles and conceptual-technical design, the ACQF will deliver on the following main areas**:

These seven areas are developed in the ACQF Feasibility Study presented to the ACQF Advisory Group meeting of 28 July 2021.

1. Referencing of national qualifications frameworks and systems to ACQF

2. Support recognition of prior learning (RPL

3. ACQF Qualifications Platform (database)

4. Qualifications and development of qualifications profiles

5. Capacity development in the relevant thematic areas

6. Networking and cooperation

7. Analysis, monitoring and evaluation for continuing improvement

Referencing: Definition

Referencing to the ACQF:

- A process to compare national qualifications frameworks/ qualifications levels with those of the overarching qualifications framework (ACQF).

- Through a structured referencing process, based on agreed and common criteria and procedures, a national multi-stakeholder team of experts defines and establishes the relationship/ link the NQF/ NQS levels and quality assurance with those of the ACQF.

- The purpose of referencing to the ACQF is to contribute to clarity and mutual trust between national qualifications frameworks and systems, to comparability of qualifications of different countries, to transparency and information-sharing on qualifications frameworks and systems.

Referencing: what it is and what it is not

ACQF

Referencing

- is a process of comparison and linking national qualifications frameworks to the ACQF and should be done through the national qualifications frameworks
- will be open to all countries with operational NQFs/ whose NQFs are approved and in implementation / at an advanced stage of development
- is conceived, structured, and conducted as a gradual process that can take longer in certain countries than in others. Where countries are unable to meet all the referencing criteria, they can engage in a phased referencing
- **Is about supporting, encouraging, self-improvement**

Referencing:

- is not a competitive process or intended as ranking between countries
- is not an exam to pass or fail. It is a process of mutual learning, comparison and transparency

Role of ACQF governance structure

ACQF Governance Structure:

- At the continental level, the ACQF Governance Structure has an oversight responsibility for the referencing process.

- It has the mandate and technical capacity to provide guidance and support to national referencing processes, to promote a participative and efficient model of referencing, to support information-sharing with all African Union countries, to endorse the completed countries' referencing reports, and ensure their publication on the ACQF website.

The ACQF governance structure and Support Team will have the capacity to:
- encourage countries to initiate referencing,
- provide technical and methodological support to countries to support the ACQF and NQFs,
- advance referencing processes and
- endorse and publish referencing reports.

Referencing criteria

Four criteria: Interplay between ACQF-NQF/NQS

ACQF Referencing Criterion 1:

There is a clear and demonstrable link between the **qualifications levels in the NQF or NQS and the level descriptors of the ACQF.**

ACQF Referencing Criterion 2:

The NQF or NQS are based on **learning outcomes** principles and related to arrangements for **RPL (incl non-formal and informal)** and, where appropriate, to **credit systems.**

ACQF Referencing Criterion 3:

There are transparent processes and procedures for **including qualifications** in the NQF or for describing the place of qualifications in the NQS and **information on qualifications** is accessible, trustworthy and verifiable in a national register(s) of qualifications.
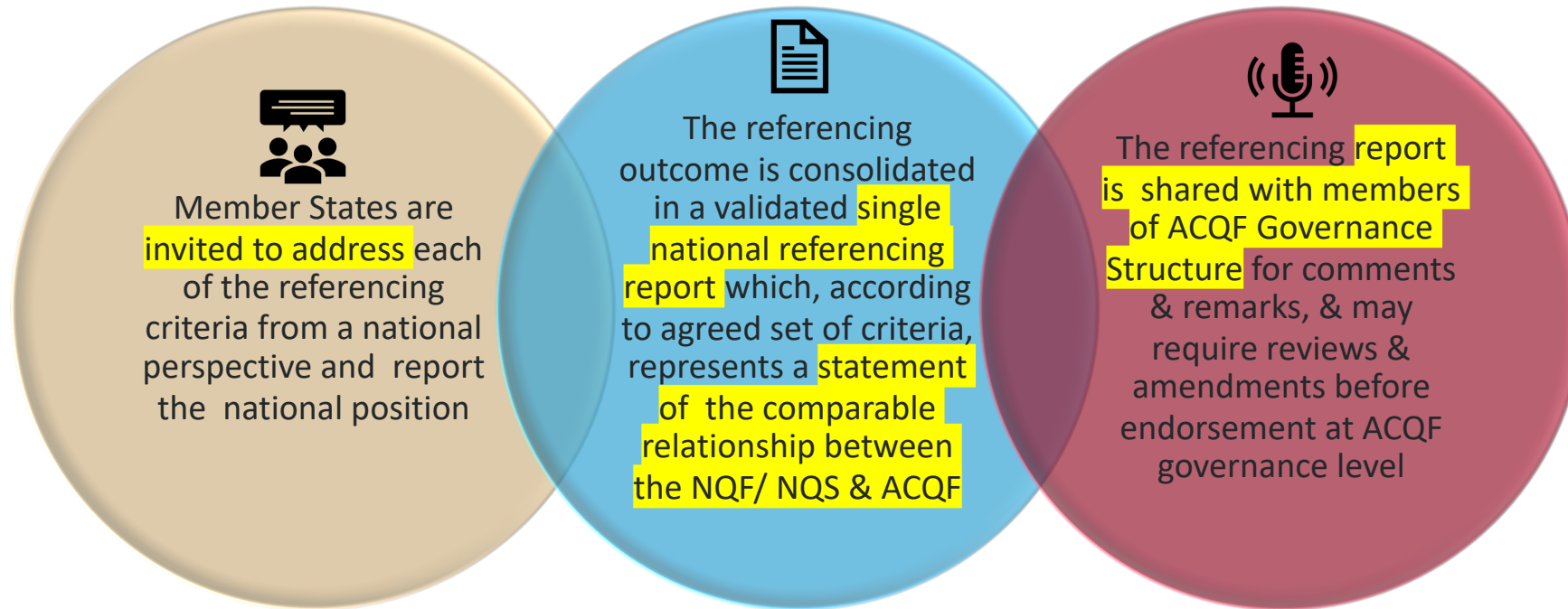
ACQF Referencing Criterion 4:

The national quality assurance **(QA) system** for education and training refers to the NQF or NQS and is consistent with the principles of QA of the ACQF.

Governance, procedures and follow-up

1. **Responsibilities and/or legal competence of relevant national bodies** involved in the ACQF referencing process are clearly defined and published by the relevant competent authorities.

2. The relevant national **quality assurance bodies state their agreement** with the referencing outcome and referencing report.

3. People from other countries who are experienced in the field of qualifications are involved in certain aspects and steps of the referencing process. Their role is advisory and supports transparency, improvement and credibility. The national referencing committee informs the ACQF Governance Structure on the involved **international experts.**

4. Competent national bodies certify the referencing to the ACQF and publish **one comprehensive, evidence-based referencing report,** which addresses all referencing criteria.

5. The **referencing outcome is published** by the participating country and the ACQF network upon its final validation by the ACQF Governance Structure, on the dedicated ACQF website.

6. Following the completion of referencing, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g.: certificates, diplomas, supplements) and qualifications registers issued by the competent national authorities will contain a clear reference to the **appropriate ACQF level**, based on national legislation and procedures.

Member states are invited...

ACQF

Member States are invited to address each of the referencing criteria from a national perspective and report the national position

The referencing outcome is consolidated in a validated single national referencing report which, according to agreed set of criteria, represents a statement of the comparable relationship between the NQF/ NQS & ACQF

The referencing report is shared with members of ACQF Governance Structure for comments & remarks, & may require reviews & amendments before endorsement at ACQF governance level

Follow-up upon successful referencing:
- **Publication of the endorsed referencing report on ACQF website**
- **Use of ACQF levels on qualifications documents and qualifications databases of the NQF referenced to ACQF.**

Referencing report

Referencing report structure defined by country's referencing team. However, few (4 suggested) minimum elements:

1 **Description of whole education and training system:**
Including adult learning, literacy and basic skills, continuing training; pathways for learners; QA; main institutions & stakeholders & their roles in the system; main legislative acts, regulatory texts

2 **The NQF:**
Goals, principles, legal & regulatory acts, levels & descriptors, governance, registers / databases of qualifications, Status of implementation, Main challenges & plans for further development

3 **Country response to ACQF referencing criteria- sections elaborated by criterion:**
Brief overview of referencing process, stakeholders' involvement, endorsement by national competence bodies, follow-up measures; builds (refers to) on chapters describing education & training & NQF; use of examples & references to sources contributes to robustness & credibility of argumentation in this chapter, & is recommended

4 **Sources:**
Relevant legislative-regulatory framework, guidelines, standards, important databases / registers

To ensure report is easy to read & understand, it should be structured in comprehensive & integrated way, make use of cross-referencing between chapters, use examples, & user-friendly layout

ACQF

- **Virtual meetings**
- **Digital referencing tools**

Step 1: Self-assessment and decision

Step 2: Short training and roadmap

Step 3: Referencing report: state of play presentation

Step 4: Referencing report, advanced draft

Step 5: Referencing report, final draft. Sharing and Presentation

Referencing capacity and arrangements

Support to countries
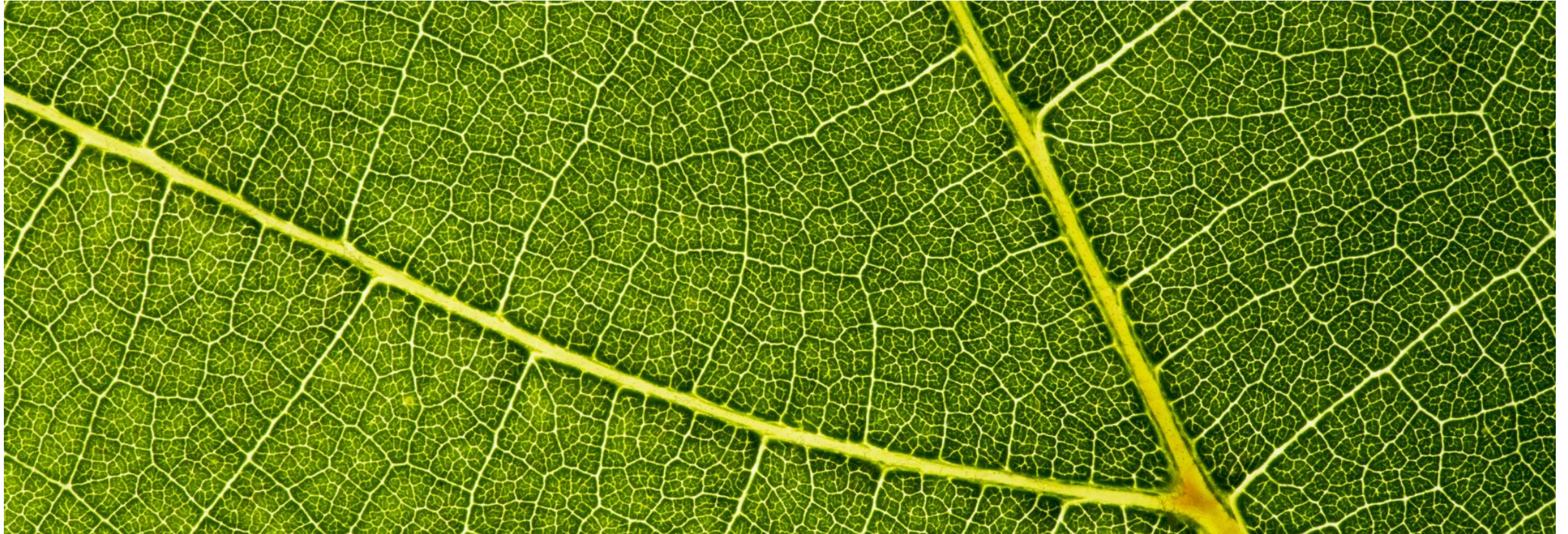
Principles

ACQF referencing will be coordinated, managed and quality assured by the ACQF governance structure, acting in full respect for the following **principles:**

- The ACQF is a public policy and instrument
- The ACQF is holistic, integral and unified
- Referencing between NQFs and the ACQF is based on:
  - trust and integrity of the process,
  - coordination, support and continuous improvement of the process and outcomes
  - establishing and maintaining the zone of trust by providing transparency to the process

The needed robustness of referencing should not be the result of overly complex and time-consuming activities, but of dialogue, peer review, analysis, self-assessment, and an evidence-based report.

Support will be given to countries to plan and carry out efficient and streamlined referencing processes

The country is the major beneficiary.

Referencing will be encouraged and advanced through:
- Regular referencing briefs from the ACQF governance structure
- Full use of various platforms and communication methods
- ACQF Website https://acqf.africa/
- Digital tool to support the referencing process
- Good documentation to ease the coordination and monitoring process
- Dissemination of ACQF Guidelines and training modules
- Established principles, templates and digital tools
- Training sessions (mostly virtual) in relevant languages
- Peer-sharing and Coaching
- Online communication and e-meetings

Session 4D
Testing ACQF Referencing

Proposed approach to testing referencing

- This a is technical activity to test, raise awareness and collect feedback

- Time for the testing exercise: start mid-June to end September 2022

- Scope: 3 - 4 countries interested to go through the process
  - Suggestion: countries from 3 different RECs - Cape Verde, Kenya, Mozambique
  - Other countries are welcome

- The methodological support is presented in Guideline 3 + Training Module 3 + PPT.

- ACQF team directly works and guides testing country teams

Workflow of proposed testing of referencing to ACQF

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┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐
│   Training on       │────▶│ Create experimental │────▶│   Self-assess 4 main│────▶│ Discuss 4 criteria  │
│   referencing: 3-4 h│     │ country Referencing │     │   referencing       │     │ and block           │
│                     │     │ teams               │     │   criteria          │     │ institutional       │
│                     │     │                     │     │                     │     │ procedures          │
└─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘
```

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┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Brief report of     │────▶│   ACQF team: brief  │────▶│ Country teams present│
│ self-assessment +   │     │   feedback report - │     │ their brief testing  │
│ follow-up steps by  │     │   by country        │     │ reports at final ACQF│
│ country team        │     │                     │     │ conference (10/2022) │
└─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘
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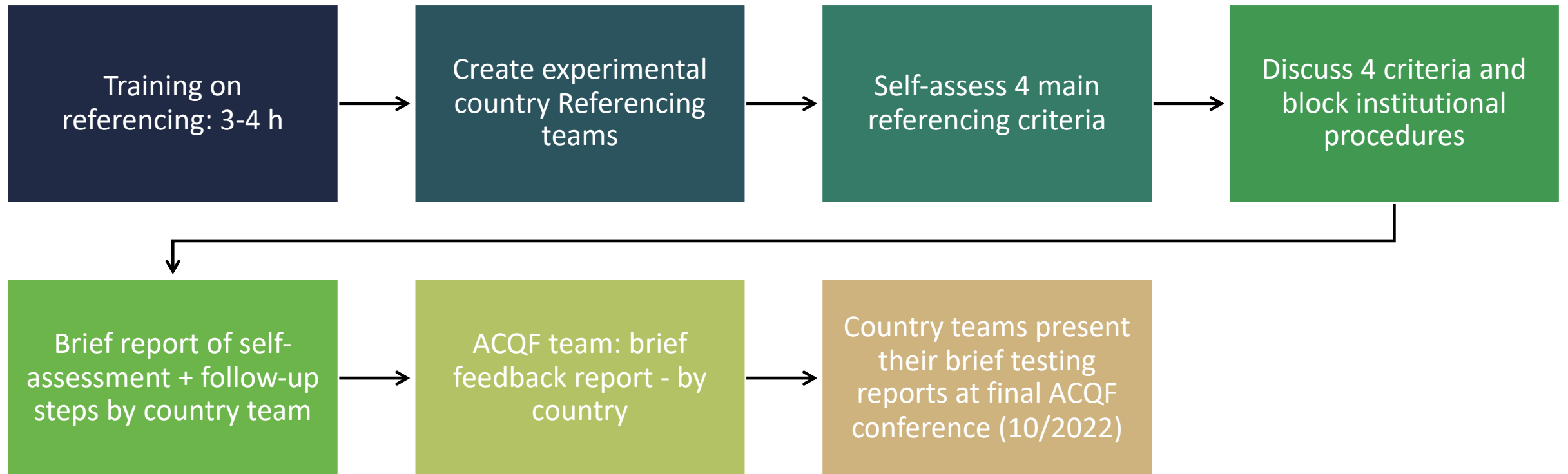
Main activities of testing the referencing process

- Training: 3-4 h

- Creation of experimental national referencing teams (3-4 persons with relevant roles in the NQF / NQS process)

- Self-assessment on the 4 main referencing criteria: 2 half-days (country referencing team)

- Discuss the 4 criteria + institutional procedures

- Prepare a brief report of main findings: 2 pages per criterion + 2 pages of follow-up steps.

- ACQF Team produces a brief feedback report by country, and confirms completion of the testing of ACQF referencing.

- National teams present their brief reports of testing at final ACQF AG meeting (Oct 2022)

- Incentive: the successful completion of the testing counts for future ACQF referencing.

# Digital Referencing Tool - Prototype

Self-managing tool for country referencing committees to develop their ACQF referencing report according to guideline 3 of the ACQF. Each country referencing team has its own secure work area on the ACQF intranet. In this area the team has access to the following functions:

- Self-assessment
- Roadmap
- Manual comparison of level descriptors (national ~ ACQF)
- Report by referencing criteria 1 to 4 in rich text format
- Export to Word document
- Library of supporting documents/evidence
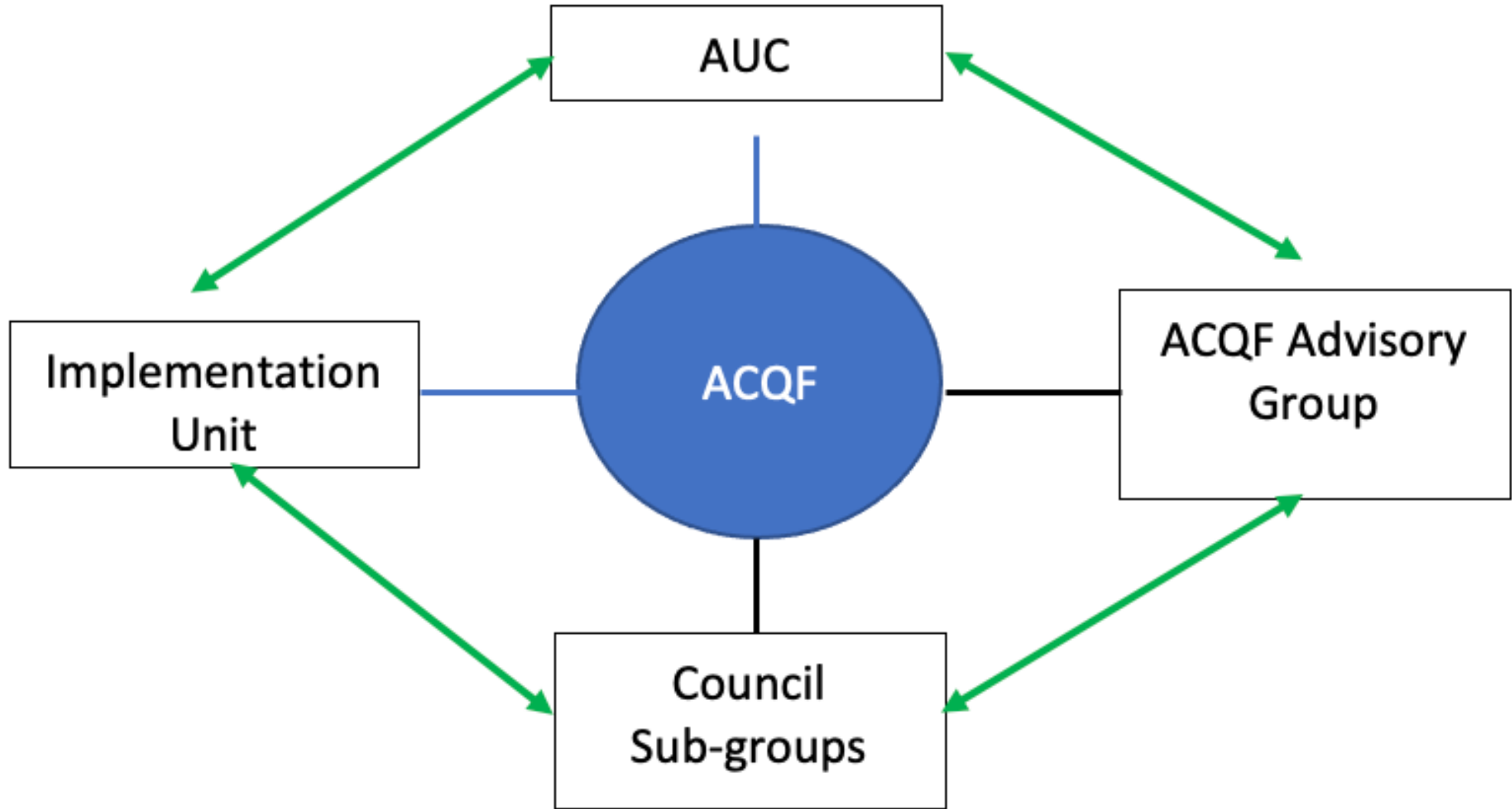- All information is stored securely for country members only

05

Session 5:
ACQF Governance options

Options

1. Continuity and improvement

2. African NQF Network

3. Merger ACQF and PAQAA governance
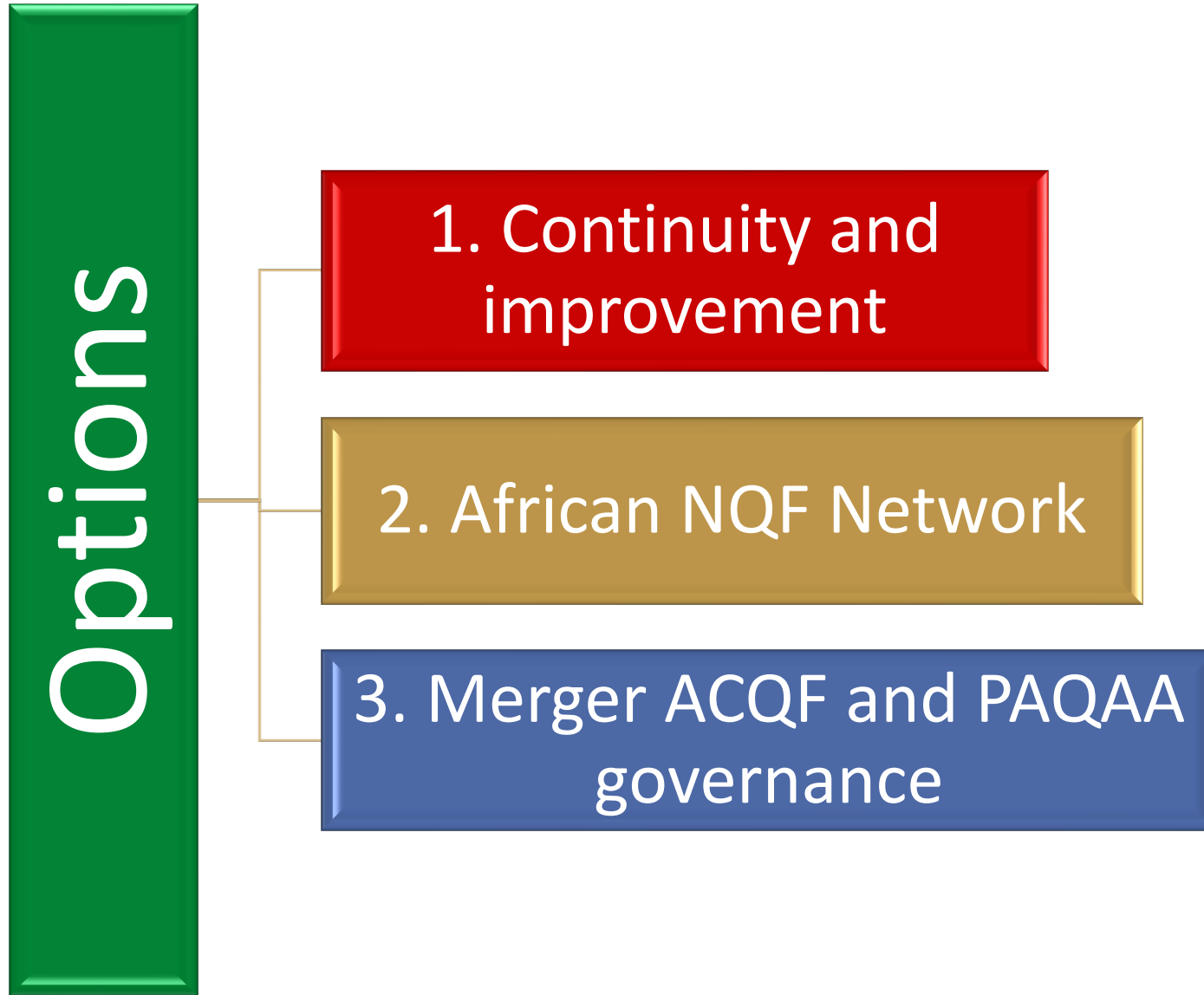
Option 2

- African NQF Network: established by Statute
- A memorandum of cooperation with AUC should lay the foundations and institutional basis for planning and carrying out ACQF operations, based on accountability towards the AU.

The Network will comprise:

- A strengthened Secretariat encompassing the Implementation Unit – working within the Network – with technical experts to ensure implementation regarding the areas of activities of the ACQF and sustainability. The Secretariat also exercises the functions of management and coordination.
- A Council tasked with providing strategic direction, oversight, and accountability. The council will be made up of adequate number of members drawn from the regional blocks of the continent and key stakeholder groups. The members will serve on a rotational basis to facilitate the participation of all member states.
- Committees of Council to deal with both technical and management functions like sustainability of operations, strategic planning, international relations. The Committees will work more closely with the strengthened Secretariat.
- A General Assembly made up of a membership including: all NQFs, qualification institutions, professional/sectoral organizations, student bodies, African social partners, QA bodies, RECs, RQFs, and international partners.
- Like in Option 1, the AUC will maintain a political lead, steering and will support the ACQF Network

Questions? Discussion

06

Conclusions, Action points

Next steps

ACQF training week: 5-9/Sept 2022, hybrid – South Africa

Final ACQF conference: 21/October 2022

20 Oct.

5–9 Sept.

21 Oct.

6th ACQF AG meeting: 20/October 2022

Conclusions, action points

- **Comments and suggestions from ACQF AG on:**
  - ACQF policy and technical document
  - Testing the referencing process
  - ACQF governance options

  Online survey: 3 weeks for responses

- **Validation of ACQF policy and technical document**: process led and organised by AUC in line with procedures
  - ✓ Note Verbale to all Member States
  - ✓ Online meeting
  - ✓ STC-EST meeting