AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي

UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: 251 11 518 20 75 Fax: 251 11 5517844
Email: www.au.int

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

African Continental Qualifications Framework project
Advisory Group – 3rd meeting
Date: Wednesday, 28 July, 12.30–15.30 (GMT+3)

Meeting report available on ACQF website
ACQF Website is live: https://acqf.africa/

<u>List of acronyms used in this report</u>

ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AG	Advisory Group
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AQRF	ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CAMES	Conseil Africain et Malgache de l'Enseignement Supérieur
EAQFHE	East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESTI	Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
HAQAA	Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation
NQF	national qualifications framework
NQS	national qualifications system
PAQAA	Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency
PTD	Policy and Technical Document
REC	regional economic community
RPL	recognition of prior learning
RQF	regional qualifications framework
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCQF	Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework
SIFA	Skills Initiative for Africa
STC-EST	Specialised Technical Committee-Education Science and Technology
STI	Science, technology and innovation
TVET	technical and vocational education and training

1. Summary

The 3rd meeting of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) Advisory Group (AG) took place on 28 July 2021 (12.30–15.30 GMT+3), via Zoom, chaired by the African Union Commission (AUC) – Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) (Acting Head of Education Division, Mr Hambani Macheleni). Mr Emmanuel Chigozie Okonkwo, Education Division, steered the main presentation. Simultaneous interpretation (English, French, Portuguese) was available.

1. **Objectives of the meeting**
   - Report on progress in project activities and outputs since the ACQF AG-2 (8 April 2021).
   - Present the main findings and plan of outputs of the ACQF Feasibility Report and the initial proposal towards the ACQF Policy and Technical Document.

2. **Documents shared with all participants on 29 June, with the invitation to the ACQF AG-3 meeting - for information and discussion**
   - Report of ACQF-AG 2 meeting (In English, French and Portuguese)
     Agenda
   - Package of Meeting Documents – technical notes presented at sessions 2, 4 and 5
   - Report of Feasibility Study – for sessions 3 and 4

3. **Main themes on the agenda** (Annex 2 of this report)
   - **Session 2**: report on progress since AG-2; adjustments to workplan; proposals on new starting activities; overview of the concept of ACQF Guidelines and emphasis on Guidelines 1, 2, 3 and 8; ACQF Capacity Development Programme, notably support to countries.
   - **Session 3**: presented essential aspects of the ACQF Feasibility Report, with focus on the overall approach and sources of the study, main aims by chapter, the nature of the interplay between the ACQF and National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs).
   - **Session 4**: introduced the main initial proposals underpinning the development of the ACQF Policy and Technical Document and Action Plan; and the proposed ten-point output plan at horizon 2025 for the ACQF.
   - **Session 5**: explored the first draft proposal on the network of NQF/NQS (national qualifications system) agencies and stakeholders (authorities, units) – as an option for governance and implementation of the ACQF.

4. **Participants**
   - Participation in the ACQF AG-3: The AUC invited all members of the AG and, as observers, additional countries that had been particularly active and cooperative in phase 1 of the ACQF project (2019–2020). The number of participating countries and organisations has increased compared with ACQF AG-2. One regional economic community (REC) participated (Southern African Development Community – SADC – Secretariat, by delegation). Total number of participants: 50.

5. **Main conclusions**
   - Chaired by the acting head of the Education Division, this third meeting of the ACQF AG was planned at a crucial juncture of the ACQF development process. It provided guidance for beginning the process of reflection on the nature and main components of the ACQF Policy and Technical Document, clarified the role and scope of the ten ACQF Guidelines, discussed the range of stakeholders to be involved in the proposed network of the NQF bodies and the options for governance of the ACQF. The ACQF Feasibility Report presented at this meeting gives conceptual and technical orientations for development of the ACQF as a policy instrument during the ongoing project (until September 2022) and proposes a strategic framework of outputs and actions for further ACQF implementation (horizon 2025).
   - ACQF work plan and reported progress: the planned activities and intermediary outputs are on track, notably the completion of the comprehensive Feasibility Report with a strategy of outputs

at horizon 2025, and the roll-out of the ACQF peer learning activities. In 2021 new activities were added to ACQF work plan to respond to justified requests of stakeholders and the AUC, notably the School Curriculum Mapping Study. On the other hand, administrative/procurement circumstances delayed the start of development of the ACQF Guidelines, and adjustments to the originally planned milestones and deadlines of the Guidelines and the associated training modules have been decided; consequently, the first comprehensive ACQF training programme has been moved to end of first quarter 2022.

- The number of participating countries and organisations (regional and continental) has increased, and the questions and recommendations from participants reflected increasing interest in the ACQF development process. Participants commended the AUC and the ACQF project for the tangible progress on all outputs, and for the content of all sessions of the AG-3 meeting.

- In the discussion AG members discussed and made proposals on the following points:

a. **Adaptation to change and transformation**

Need to work towards transformation and opening up of scope and conceptual underpinnings of qualifications frameworks to embrace change: new types of qualifications; validation of learning; digitalisation of credentials; supporting the benefits of lifelong learning; general inclusion in programmes and qualifications of new skills for digital and green transitions and for new forms of work. Being developed in an era of large transformations, the ACQF has the opportunity and mission to contribute to rethinking and inclusion of these dimensions of innovation and support a more open model of qualifications frameworks.

b. **ACQF development process**

Is inclusive and consultative and represents a learning environment. The knowledge and networking emerging from this process are valuable and need to be maintained for sustainability. The ACQF website, with e-learning platform, and dissemination and learning activities with education institutions need to be oriented to support sustainability.

c. **Governance of ACQF**

Promote and support participation of institutions and stakeholders representing the world of work, not only education and training, notably ministries and departments of labour and social partners. The proposed network of African qualifications frameworks agencies and stakeholders envisages wide representation of the diversity of constituencies of the words of education and training and work/employment. Discussed and decided to prepare and start with the feasibility study on the options for governance of the ACQF, notably a modality based on a network of qualifications agencies and stakeholders, with legal entity and operational capacity supporting sustainability of ACQF going forward.

d. **Relevance for countries of ACQF documents**

Countries are interested in the rapid availability of the ACQF Policy and Technical Document, and the ten Guidelines, seen as contributors and knowledge sources to support national NQF processes.

e. **Use of ACQF Guidelines and training modules**

Considered relevant to support NQF developments and NQF working groups in many countries on the continent. Expectations: Guidelines to support clarification of strategic questions on the scope and added value of NQFs, operationalisation of NQF legislation, design and implementation of NQF mechanisms and instruments which ACQF Guidelines and training modules should support.

f. **Nature and scope of ACQF Guidelines**

Discussed and clarified the nature and objectives of ACQF Guidelines: as reference and information sources, the Guidelines represent the main conceptual and technical foundation of the ACQF and will accompany the ACQF Policy and Technical Document and Action Plan, supporting implementation. Each ACQF Guideline integrates three components – a synthesis guideline, a technical guideline and a training module – fitting the needs of different users (higher management/policy levels, operational management and implementation levels and end-users). The ten Guidelines will be interconnected, act in synergy and be available in digital format.

Content of the Guidelines addresses the perspectives and needs of national/regional level (ministries, agencies, departments, working groups, stakeholders) and of the continental level (AUC, ACQF governance and network, ACQF AG, implementation players).

g. **Themes of the Guidelines**: 1) learning outcomes; 2) level descriptors; 3) ACQF referencing; 4) validation and recognition of learning (recognitions of prior learning – RPL, credit systems, recognition of qualifications); 5) quality assurance; 6) registration and registers/databases of qualifications; 7) monitoring and evaluation in the context of qualifications frameworks and ACQF; 8) communication and outreach; 9) innovation and technology in qualifications and qualifications frameworks; 10) national qualifications frameworks – the systemic view.

Clarified: a) there is no specific Guideline on capacity development, but instead there is concept paper on ACQF capacity development; b) similarly, there is no Guideline on governance – this theme is explored and presented in Guideline 10.

h. **Interplay of ACQF with regional and national levels**

CESA-25 (Strategic objective 4 d) explicitly calls for the establishment of a continental qualifications framework, linked both to national and regional qualifications frameworks to facilitate regional integration and mobility of graduates. One of the regional organisations (Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur – CAMES) expressed interest in acting as a relay, working with the ACQF and supporting interactions with the member countries. Other regional bodies, such as SADC, expressed interest in cooperating with ACQF in building capacity (regional and national) on issues relating to qualifications frameworks' development and implementation.

i. **Skills systems and skills governance - interplay with ACQF/NQFs**

Discussed the interplay between qualifications frameworks (including ACQF) with changing labour market and skills demand from one side and information systems on skills demand and supply. Noted that the ACQF project does not include a skills intelligence component (labour market information) but going forward the outcomes and systems developed by the skills anticipation component of the Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA) should be accessible for use by ACQF (and vice versa).

Noted the importance of establishing operational skills governance systems and intelligence trends, and also data on stocks of existing skills. Emphasised the importance of skills-based human resources management and planning, especially in a period of increasing need for lifelong learning for many workers and job seekers, requiring flexible and targeted skills training. This question is strategic and needs to be taken into the discussion of the ACQF policy and technical document and ACQF level descriptors. At the same time, the definition of 'skills' cannot be narrowly oriented to tasks and jobs but should also include the variety of components of transversal skills and competences.

6. **Action points proposed at completion of the meeting (session 6)**

a. Follow up the action points from ACQF AG-2, especially those i) concerning wider involvement of countries and RECs, and ii) information and discussion on ACQF with the Specialised Technical Committee-Education Science and Technology (STC-EST).

b. Champions ACQF: initiative to be prepared and started. Champions can play an important role in increasing buy-in, dissemination of relevant information and supporting further steps in decision-making.

c. Focal points ACQF: members of this AG are the foundation. Preparation of brief note on role, functions and visibility of focal points.

d. ACQF capacity development programme: start enrolment for training programme; develop approach support to countries; develop approach to cooperation with education institutions.

e. Network of NQF institutions: undertake feasibility analysis, identify and analyse options for organisation, draft charter and role in governance of ACQF.

f. ACQF website: new phase of development started; aim is to be online in September 2021.

g. ACQF Policy and Technical Document: start drafting in September.

h. ACQF Guidelines: start development in August, adjusted milestones.

i. Consultation on ACQF levels and level descriptors.

j. ACQF AG-4 meeting: mid-December 2021.

2. Report of the discussions and deliberations

Session 1: Opening

Speakers: Mr Hambani Macheleni, Acting Head of Education Division
Main topics: Context and objectives of meeting, introduction of participants
At the opening session the chairperson introduced the objectives and agenda of the ACQF AG-3 meeting, welcomed the participants. Recalled the wider policy context of the ACQF, and the importance of the consultation with ACQF AG.

Session 2: Report of progress since ACQF AG-2 (8 April 2021). Concept of ACQF Guidelines

Speaker: Eduarda Castel-Branco, ACQF project – thematic coordinator; Coleen Jaftha (on Guidelines 1, 2, 3 and 8).
Main topics:
- The ACQF project: report of activities and outputs since ACQF AG-2, adjusted work plan.
- New activities launched: 10 Guidelines; website

The speaker thanked AUC ESTI for the support and guidance and for the leadership in organising the 3rd ACQF AG meeting, and the AG members for their involvement and guidance, and all constructive suggestions and comments at this meeting. For the 3rd AG meeting, the ACQF project team prepared an intensive agenda of work. Agenda:
- At session 2: report on progress since the second AG and share proposals on new starting activities.
- Session 3: dedicated to the ACQF Feasibility Report – a key output of the project's journey towards the ACQF Policy and Technical Document, which is the main commitment of this project towards the AUC.
- Session 4 introduces the main initial proposals underpinning the development of the ACQF Policy and Technical Document and Action Plan.

- Session 5 presents the first draft of the proposal concerning establishment of a network of NQF/NQS agencies (authorities, units) – to take part in the governance of ACQF going forward.

Policy foundations of ACQF

It is important to recall the African Union (AU) policy context of the ACQF, and how the ACQF relates to national and to regional qualifications frameworks. The development of the ACQF is strongly anchored on Agenda 2063 and the related policies in the domains of education and training (CESA-25), continental free trade (AfCFTA) and free movement of persons (AU Free Movement protocol).

Underlined that strategic objective 4 – goals (c) and (d) of CESA 16-25 – explicitly refer to the establishment of qualifications frameworks, notably a continental qualifications framework linked with NQFs and regional qualifications frameworks (RQFs):

- (c) Set up NQFs and RQFs to facilitate the creation of multiple pathways to acquisition of skills and competencies as well as mobility across the subsector.
- (d) Develop continental qualifications framework linked to regional qualifications and NQFs to facilitate regional integration and mobility of graduates.

Moreover, the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan 2014–2023 of Agenda 2063 sets goals directly related to the ACQF, notably in Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.

- Goal 2: Well-educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation (STI). Priority areas: education and STI skills-driven revolution.

The relevant 2023 target on the continental level is formulated as follows: 'Common continental education qualification system is in place.'

ACQF project

To support the AU in developing the ACQF, the programme Skills for Youth Employability – a contribution to SIFA Technical Assistance is working to:

- lay the foundations for the ACQF as a sustainable policy instrument contributing to AU integration, and prosperity.
- The main output of the ACQF development project is the ACQF Policy and Technical Document with Action Plan and ACQF Guidelines, supported by analysis and targeted research, capacity development – within a participative approach.

The activities of the phase 2021–2022 are structured in three main outputs. Altogether, this set of activities, engagements and analytical work is the comprehensive contribution to the ACQF, the largest regional/transnational qualifications framework/common reference framework in the world, working with 55 countries (NQFs/NQSs) and all regions/RECs of the continent – as prescribed by CESA-25 and the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063.

1. Scenarios and feasibility of the ACQF
2. ACQF Policy and Technical document and technical foundations
3. Capacity development programme and networking

Overview of progress

ACQF development - progress to-date

2020

- **ACQF Mapping study collection**
  13 country-reports, 3 regional, comprehensive report (3 versions - long, synthesis, infographic, 3 languages)
- **ACQF CDP**
  7 Peer Learning Webinars (PLW)

2021

- **ACQF Scenarios paper** (discussed)
- **ACQF AG-2** (8/4/21) and 3 (today)
- **Feasibility report** completed
- **Continuation PLWs** (3 out of 5 of 2021 programme)
- **Thematic briefs** – 6 for self-learning on RQF-NQF themes
- **ACQF Guidelines**: concept; expert team; staring inception phase
- **Website development**: ongoing
- **Network African NQF bodies**: proposal tabled
- **Networking**: started new line of cooperation with AQVN
- **School curriculum mapping study**: with CESA Curriculum Cluster – kick-off 4 May / ongoing

Adjusted work plan 2021–2022

Outputs and main activities	Milestones	Final
Output 1: Feasibility report	Scenarios ACQF: 01/21; presented AG-2 (08/04/21)	22/06/21; shared AG 27/06/21; presented AG-3 (28/07/21).
Output 2: ACQF Policy-Technical document + Action Plan	Start: 07/21; Version 1: 10/21; V2: 12/21 (discussed AG-4); V3: 04/21 (discussed AG-5)	30/07/2022
ACQF Guidelines	All advanced drafts: 12/2021	02-06/2021

Output 3: CDP
   a) 5 PLW 2021
   b) Conference
   c) ACQF Training (2)
   d) Support to countries
	a) PLW 8 (03/06) to 12 (28/10)
	b) 24-25/11
	c) 1st programme: 06-10/12; 2nd programme: 04/2022
	c) Requests countries: 10/2021
		a) Ongoing, on track
		b) On track
		c) Postpone: 1st programme to 03/22
		d) Started earlier: 07/2021

School curriculum survey	Launch event: 04/05/21; launch survey online: 31/07/21	11/21
Website	Enhancement: 07/21; online: 10/21	Enhancement of website: on track.
Learning management system	09/21 – start	03/2022
Network of African qualifications bodies	07/21: proposal tabled; 10/21-04/22: feasibility report	07/2022
Study ACQF-AfCFTA	11/2021 – first scoping discussions	04/2022

[ACQF Guidelines](#)

ACQF Guidelines: Objectives, themes and structure

- 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.

- Present and elaborate on specific tools and implementation modalities, digital format – all Guidelines integrated in a digital ACQF handbook.

- 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 dimension corresponds to Objective 3 of the ACQF ('work in cooperation and complementarity with the countries/NQFs').

Each ACQF Guideline includes

1. <u>Users</u>: countries / regional authorities, organisations, stakeholders, AUC, NQF Network
2. <u>The topic – what is it?</u> State-of-art, knowledge base, principles. Conceptual+theoretical foundations, applications in the Qualifications - QF domain, literature, cases and examples.
3. How the given theme / policy area relates / applies in ACQF context
4. Recommendations on application
5. Tools (digital forms and templates, self-assessment questions, check-lists, specifications…)

Synthesis Guideline	**Technical Guideline**	**Training Module**
2-3 pages	**15-30 pages + annexes**	Purpose, users
		LO
• Concept(s)	• Comprehensive presentation of the topic	What
• Users	• Recommendations on application in ACQF context	Why
• Recommendations related with ACQF	• Links with other ACQF Guidelines	How
• Links with other ACQF Guidelines	• Literature	Cases
	• Annexes	(Self)-assessment
		Sources

Discussed the main themes and specific features of Guidelines 1, 2, 3 and 8: on learning outcomes, level descriptors, referencing and communication. Development of this set of Guidelines is in its initial stage.

ACQF capacity development programme

As discussed at ACQF AG-2, the capacity development programme is composed of several learning and capacity-development modalities: peer-learning webinars, training programmes, conferences, tailored support to countries, cooperation with education institutions, self-learning and Learning Management System.

Peer-learning webinars: seven in 2020; five in 2021.

ACQF PLWs: Themes and cases shared

2020	National Qualifications Frameworks	Regional Qualifications Frameworks
Africa (14 cases)	Angola, Cape Verde, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe	Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework (SADCQF), East Africa Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (EAQFHE)
Other regions, continents (8 cases)	Bahrain, France, Ireland, Portugal, Slovenia	Arab Qualifications Framework (AQF), European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Qualifications Reference Framework

2021	**Complementarity**: Qualifications Frameworks x Quality assurance x Recognition			

National Qualifications Frameworks	Quality Assurance frameworks	Recognition Qualifications	Registers of Qualifications – MIS NQF	Thematic
Seychelles, Namibia, NQF-P Mozambique	CAMES ANAQ-Sup (Senegal)	RPL (Kenya) AQVN In higher education (Angola) In higher education (Cape Verde)	South Africa Kenya	Learning outcomes NQF as NQS (systemic view) School curriculum mapping

Support to countries:
- Scoping activities and meetings started with Guinea-Bissau and Cameroon.
- First outputs of cooperation with country level: Angola. Completed report on quality assurance and monitoring of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems and qualifications – overview of policies, practices and trends.

Main features and benefits of capacity development programme 'support to countries'
- Based on demand: communication by countries or RECs with ACQF project
- Contextualised: takes account of policy and strategy objectives, reforms, institutional and capacity features, availability of technical assistance resources

- Focus on coaching, facilitation, advice, planning: facilitation of stakeholders´ dialogue, experience and knowledge-sharing, support to planning of key steps in NQF development and review roadmaps
- Practical application for ACQF trained experts (2022)
- Reflection on lessons learned, cases of good practice, critical issues (briefs) from 'support to countries'.

Thematic briefs – for self-learning: drafted eight on the following themes (published six):
- Concepts and definitions
- Competences' frameworks
- Level descriptors
- Quality assurance in TVET
- RQFs
- Governance of NQFs
- Registration and databases of qualifications
- Recognition of prior learning

Session 3: Feasibility study

Speakers: Eduarda Castel-Branco and Jeffy Mukora
Main topics
- Overview of process, structure, and main conclusions of ACQF Feasibility Report

Feasibility study

The ACQF feasibility analysis establishes the link between the first phase (continental mapping and creation of evidence) and the deciding phase of elaboration of the ACQF Policy and Technical Document. It is, therefore, a crucial moment of the ACQF development process.

The report is structured in five main chapters:
1. Executive summary
2. Introduction: Paving the way to the ACQF
3. The context of the ACQF
4. Qualifications and qualifications frameworks in Africa
5. Scenarios and strategy for the ACQF.

The main question of this study is not whether to develop and operationalise the ACQF, but how to develop and prepare the most adequate conditions for a pertinent and sustainable ACQF. The study is about the challenges, purposes, features, governance and instruments enabling effectiveness of the ACQF for African countries, regions and the continent.

The importance of innovation, on the one hand, and openness to experience-sharing and mutual learning, on the other, cannot be overestimated in the context in which ACQF is being shaped, marked by the effects of the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic and multiple transformations of the society, economy, technology, work and climate.

The vision of the ACQF is aligned with innovation, which is a paramount foundation to build a 'future-ready ACQF', able to promote the adaptation of qualifications in Africa to the multiple transitions (green, digital, technological, societal). The ongoing pandemic has exacerbated and brought to light existing distortions and inequalities in all dimensions of human and economic development. As countries and regions are taking measures to deal with post-pandemic recovery, wider access to retraining and reskilling will be indispensable to support people's transitions to different jobs and adaptation to new skills requirements. The post-pandemic recovery – build back better – must bring the world (and Africa) to a better place, in terms of equitable, safe and democratic societies, in which participation in the benefits of technology, new learning and work is a commitment of leaders and citizens across the continent and around the world. This a framework to which the ACQF ought to contribute.

- The Executive Summary provides a comprehensive synthesis of the main issues, findings and recommendations.
- The introduction contextualises the development process of the ACQF and outlines the objectives and major strategic orientations of the report.
- Chapter 3 provides an overview of key trends, perspectives and challenges characterising the African economic outlook, human capital utilisation, education indicators, skills governance and the features of five of the RECs and helps to place the ACQF in the continental context, pinpointing major challenges its strategy should aim to address.
- Chapter 4 is about the panorama of NQFs, RQFs and qualifications on the continent.
- Chapter 5 outlines the scenarios for the ACQF and the proposed governance model and plan of outputs in the medium term.

This session presented a first part of this analysis and proposals – and sessions 4 and 5 complemented it.

The Feasibility Report was drafted by the ACQF team, based on:
- Findings and database of ACQF Mapping study 2020
- Exchanges with countries' NQF bodies, experts
- ACQF Scenarios - discussed at ACQF AG-2 (8/4/2021)
- Mapping of NQF-RQF levels and descriptors
- Mapping of NQF governance bodies
- International experience – focus on three operational RQFs
- Recent research on state of play and development of RQFs globally: European Training Foundation report and global webinars
- Publications and research: global and Africa-specific, such as:
    - AFDB African Economic Outlooks (2020, 2021)
    - AU-OECD Development: Africa's development Dynamics – report and statistical annex
    - Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings: Foresight Africa 2021
    - World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs and Skills in Africa
    - Statistics and registers of qualifications African countries
    - AU policies and monitoring reports, especially: CESA-25; AfCFTA; 1st Continental Report on the implementation of Agenda 2063 (2020)

Baseline situation of NQFs/RQFs in Africa
- Considering a total of 41 countries included in the data collected by the ACQF Mapping Study, the continent has a higher number of qualifications frameworks (approved, implementation started or implementation advanced) than other larger regions had when they enacted their overarching RQFs. Although thirteen years separate the advent of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the development of the ACQF, it is very useful to note that when the legal base of the EQF was approved (2008), only three countries had NQFs in place and operational (France, Ireland and the United Kingdom).

By end 2020 the African continent had:
- three NQFs at the stage of advanced implementation (and already reviewed);
- nineteen qualifications frameworks at the stage where the relevant legal base had been approved and implementation had started. A number of these qualifications frameworks have substantial experience and could be considered to be part of the advanced implementation group. In seven of these nineteen countries, the existing qualifications frameworks are sectoral, not integrated and inclusive. The majority of these seven cases are TVET qualifications frameworks;
- eight countries developing their NQFs, of which a share had entered the approval/adoption process;
- eight countries undertaking early steps towards the development of an NQF;
- one regional qualifications framework, the SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF), had been adopted and implementation started; and
- one regional qualification framework, the East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (EAQFHE), had been adopted, though implementation was limited to higher education qualifications.

This overview of countries by stages of development and implementation has one major aim: a dynamic view of the changing panorama of NQFs and NQSs. This dynamic perspective of a changing landscape of

NQFs/NQS is important in designing the future strategy of the ACQF – fit-for-purpose and adapted to a differentiated context and different needs. Most importantly, this dynamic view indicates possible synergies and mutual support between countries with larger NQF experience and countries at early thinking stage.

The feasibility study includes a synthetic mapping of NQFs, with a focus on two features of the conceptual-technical design: levels and level descriptors. These findings are useful for the development of ACQF level structure and descriptors.

Overview of levels and level descriptors in African NQF-RQFs	
Levels	**Descriptors**
• **10** (14 NQFs) • **8** (6 NQFs) • **7** (1 NQF) • **6** (1 SQF) • **5** (1 SQF) • **10** (1 RQF) • **8** (1 RQF)	• Knowledge, skills, competence • Knowledge, Skills, Autonomy-responsibility • Knowledge, Skills, Personal attitudes • Learning demand - processes • Areas of knowledge (depth, breadth, complexity); nature of skills; agency & context • KS, complexity, autonomy-respons, adaptability, communication • Competence, skills, autonomy • Degree complexity; reasoning & problem solving; knowledge; Autonomy-responsibility

In this context it should be noted that:
- Within the design of an RQF (continental) emphasis is placed on the level descriptors, as they are seen as the key structure that enables 'RQFs and national qualifications systems to align with or "talk to" each other'. It is these level descriptors to which NQFs/NQSs are referenced and on which transparency is based. Nonetheless, RQFs play a range of functions, and their ecosystem is wide, and level descriptors are only one of the features and instruments of RQFs.
- Many RQFs make clear statements that the framework is based on learning outcomes, for example, the SADCQF, the EQF and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF).
- Within RQFs, level descriptors are written as generic learning outcomes that can be applied across education and training sectors. These learning outcomes may reflect some or all of the domains of the participating NQFs or include aspects that they wish to encourage in NQFs within the community of countries.

Regional (continental)/reference frameworks:
- aim to develop a common understanding and strengthen transparency of member country qualifications;
- seek commonalities and clarify differences;
- aim to build mutual trust across the community of countries.

A key underpinning concept of any RQF is that they support and add value to NQFs or NQSs. There appears to be an accepted view that the regional initiatives (that is, the development and implementation of an RQF) provide a strong avenue for facilitating policy learning across the community of countries. RQFs have a coordinating effect, and this is often due to the guidance offered to countries on the commonalities and differences between the national approach and the approaches in other countries

Pointers for the ACQF
- At the time of writing this report (March–June 2021), we can estimate that approximately twenty countries can be considered for preparatory actions leading to future referencing with the ACQF (horizon 2025). Another group of less than ten countries can be candidates, once their NQFs reach the point of starting implementation.
- It is important to note that this is a gradual process, involving dialogue and buy-in, shared goals and shared understanding of mutual benefits and also leadership, commitment and good technical and

methodological foundations. The ACQF Guidelines and capacity development actions contribute to technical foundations and sustainability.

<u>Recalling the scenarios of the ACQF</u>

Three [scenarios of the ACQF](#) were developed and proposed to ACQF AG-2 for comments. The ACQF scenarios are interconnected in a developmental perspective, and their features are cumulative (Scenario 2 capitalises on the features of Scenario 1; Scenario 3 builds on Scenario 2). The three scenarios are based on a common thread across the three 'futures'.

The titles of each scenario underline the distinctive added value of each scenario:

a. Scenario 1: 'ACQF connects' – underscores support for effective networking, experience and knowledge sharing, capacity development, support to NQFs' development, communication and benchmarking on NQFs and RQFs. The ACQF website is fundamental and the ACQF is a platform for all countries and RECs on the continent. This scenario is conceived as relatively accessible, as it focuses on supporting dynamics that enable the establishment of NQFs, and contributes to building the capacities, motivation and tools that countries need to engage with NQF development.

b. Scenario 2: 'ACQF creates mutual trust' – beyond experience-sharing and communication, this scenario focuses on referencing of NQFs/RQFs to the ACQF, and eventually the use of ACQF levels and labels on qualifications of the linked NQFs/RQFs. This implementation of the features proposed for this scenario contributes to meeting the full set of objectives of the ACQF, including more efficient recognition and portability of skills and qualifications across the continent.

c. Scenario 3: 'ACQF opens new horizons' – besides being a meta-framework for referencing, the ACQF promotes new qualifications (standards, profiles) of a continental nature, supports automatic mutual recognition of qualifications (based on quality assurance and other considerations) and supports digitalisation of credentials.

Session 4: Towards the ACQF Policy and Technical Document

<u>Speaker:</u> Kaylash Allgoo

<u>Main theme:</u> proposals for conceptualisation and elaboration of the ACQF Policy and Technical Document (PTD).

The ACQF PTD will be the crucial output of the ACQF project. It is the main reference document describing the objectives, principles, scope, conceptual-technical design, and modalities of implementation of the ACQF.

•   Development should be started in July 2021, completed in July 2022, and validated by the ACQF AG for submission to AUC ESTI for further consultation, dialogue and approval.

•   Development of the PTD will go through at least three main drafts, with consultation with ACQF AG. If adequate, a wider consultation process can be recommended: written via website; discussion in two to three webinars with stakeholders from as many countries as possible.

•   Coordination/articulation with other lines of work of ACQF project: a) ACQF Guidelines, especially Guidelines 2, 3, 4, 5, 8; b) School curriculum survey (final report will be ready in October 2021, and some findings will be relevant for ACQF); c) ACQF-AfCFTA study.

•   Coordination/discussion with the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) project, especially on the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (PAQAA).

•   Discussion and consultation with AUC legal advisor/unit on the recommended template, references/recitals.

•   The political dialogue will involve STC-EST, in which representatives of all ministries of Education gather and express their views/support for policy initiatives of AU scope. Useful to inform your ministry (if you

have working relations) of the relevance and rationale of the ACQF as a policy instrument benefiting countries, regions and the continent. The AUC coordinates and leads the communication with STC-EST, and presents the policy initiatives. In certain cases, experts/partners may be invited.

Scope of ACQF PTD

Status: a document of the nature of political commitment by the AU and its member countries, offering certain benefits to participating states and NQFs.

Some elements:

- Policy and legal context: references, recitals to key texts and strategies
- Rationale, wider objectives (wherein the ACQF contributes), benefits of the ACQF
- ACQF: goals and targets
- Scope of ACQF: comprehensive, inclusive; (R)-NQFs – qualifications
- Key elements of conceptual-technical design: learning outcomes principle, quality assurance principle, level structure, descriptors and domains; recognition of prior learning and credit system(s)
- Key elements in support of recognition of qualifications
- ACQF levels – linked with referencing
- Key elements of governance
- Complementary with national/regional levels
- Annexes: Glossary, ten synthesis guidelines, minimum elements in qualifications design and structure, other reference documents supporting implementation.
- Action Plan: outputs, activities, resources, timeline, responsibilities, main actors

The main ACQF policy document is not overly detailed and extensive. It is accompanied by technical annexes, which provide the necessary level of technical detail for countries and different user groups. The ACQF Guidelines are key technical foundations covering ten major themes (for more details, please refer to report of session 2).

Orientations and advice from the AUC ESTI and AUC legal unit are helpful to assist the ACQF team structuring the most adequate template for the document and the work process, especially for timely preparation of documents for consultation and debate with AUC, STC-EST and other AU instances.

Which ACQF scenario?

From the discussions in Jan–March 2021, the ACQF team had a degree of consensus towards Scenario 2 as the adequate option, given the objectives set out in the vision of the ACQF. The ACQF PTD should be scenario-fit, to the extent possible. The scope of work of Scenario 1 is different and less demanding and less ambitious than the scope of work of Scenario 2.

Scenario 2 (ACQF creates mutual trust) is the scenario of a referencing framework with a substantial scope of work with countries and regions. In this scenario, the ACQF does not intend to replace existing NQFs or impose a unique structure to new NQFs (in development currently) – it is an overarching, meta-framework oriented to create a network of all NQFs (whatever their shape and scope) of the African continent.

The vision is for a network that multiplies the forces of all African nations, qualifications systems and the potential of African knowledge, skills and competences. This network would be based on:

⇒ A network of NQF agencies (authorities, councils) working together with quality assurance and recognition agencies and institutes to drive and implement the ACQF, and with support of the policy guidance role of AUC.
⇒ Referencing between NQFs and the ACQF.

⇒ Support countries developing and strengthening their NQFs – with quality-assured qualifications. The ACQF's own level structure and descriptors can inspire countries. Countries can use the ACQF Guidelines for their own home NQF.

⇒ A continental database of qualifications – all interested countries can connect to it; countries can directly link their qualifications to this database.

⇒ A sustainable capacity development basis to create knowledge, mutual learning and sustainable solutions on qualifications and skills.

The work plan of the ACQF PTD should provide clear guidance to the AUC and member states to drive the transition from concepts to action, the establishment, reinforcement and implementation of the ACQF. Partners and donors refer to the ACQF PTD and its Action Plan to cooperate and support the various aspects of this initiative.

Main outputs for ACQF implementation – horizon 2025

1. ACQF governance setting established and operational
2. ACQF policy and technical document and Action Plan implemented and monitored
3. ACQF database of qualifications designed/launched, and operations started with pilot countries
4. Skills and qualifications: analysis, intelligence, development
5. NQFs referenced to the ACQF, in accordance with ACQF Guidelines
6. Increased number of NQFs at stage 4–5 (approved, implementation started and advanced) in African countries
7. Improved learning validation practices through application of high-quality RPL and credit accumulation and transfer systems, and cooperation with recognition agencies (bodies)
8. ACQF contributes to better mobility and quality of qualifications in the context of the AfCFTA
9. ACQF capacity development and awareness-raising activities expanded to all countries
10. Dialogue, comparison and cooperation with other regional and national qualifications frameworks in the world.

Session 5: Towards a network of African national qualifications agencies and stakeholders

Speaker: Eusebius Juma Mukhwna

Main theme: Network of African qualifications agencies and stakeholders – a sustainable base for ACQF operations.

This session presented first proposal towards the concept of a network of African national qualifications agencies further: 'network'). This note contributes to the future feasibility analysis of the ACQF, specifically to define the governance model of the ACQF. The network is a core component of this governance model. The aim is to establish a governance structure for the ACQF that is simple, practical, contextualised in African NQF experiences and working with political support and steering of the AUC.

The institutional and policy context of the ACQF is characterised by:

- Scale: a continent with 55 member countries, 8 RECs, 5 regions
- Multi-level stakes and participation: national, RECs, specialised organisations of regional and continental nature that contribute to or participate in NQFs and/or RQFs
- The role of the AUC: political lead; guarantor of the compatibility and contribution to AU policies and strategies
- The role of other AU instances: STC-EST for technical and political consultation and future endorsement of the ACQF policy and technical document
- Technical implementation and delivery: starting phase (2019–2022) – project supported by external funding; technical experts' team

- Stakeholders' consultation setting: ACQF AG, Chaired by the AUC.

The ACQF feasibility report proposes a governance model based on the articulation of two main roles (functions), and involvement of stakeholders:

1. Function 1: Political steering
2. Function 2: Technical implementation management / operations of ACQF

Two options are envisaged for the function of technical implementation management:

1. Option 1: Association of national qualifications agencies (topic of this note)
2. Option 2: PAQAA.

Considering the plans and needs of the period 2022–2025, in which ACQF implementation should be prepared and initiated, the governance model requires a professionally competent and credible and lean structure to ensure effective and timely opoerations. The proposed ACQF governance model is schematically presented in the figure below.
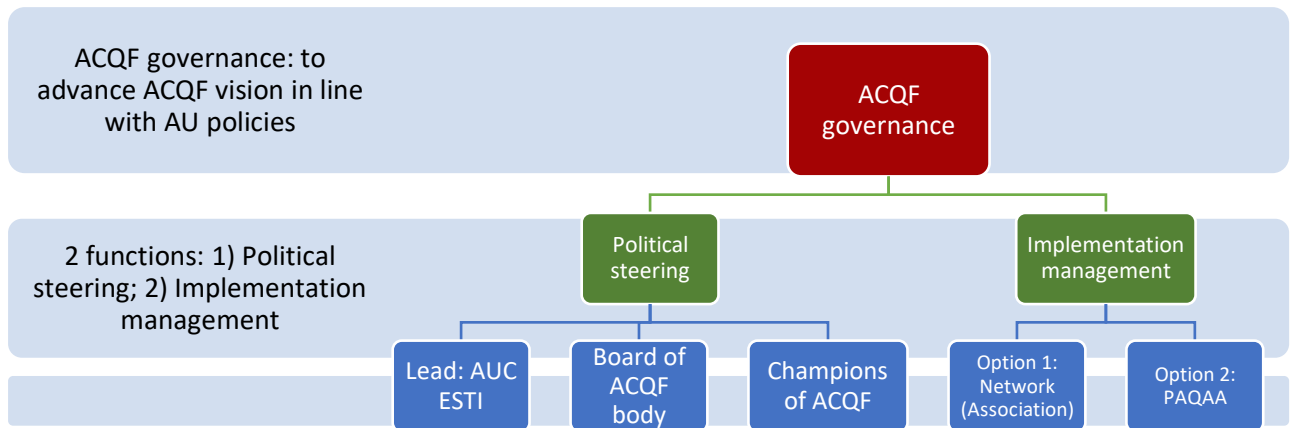
ACQF governance: Summary overview

Political steering	Implementation management	Stakeholders engagement
1. Lead: AUC ESTI 2. Champions of the ACQF 3. Board of ACQF implementation body Professional and other associations with interest in the NQFs/RQFs (ad hoc)	1. Professionally competent and credible structure - 2 options: a) Association (network) of national qualifications agencies (to be established as a legal entity) – ACQF implementation unit linked with the network. b) PAQAA, if encompassing all levels and sub-sectors of education and training. This option has several caveats. 2. Supported by a technical assistance project	1. ACQF AG (renewed) 2. Networks, unions and associations: students, sectoral organisations, social partners, education and training organisations – through ACQF events, website, peer-sharing, joint activities

Network of NQF institutions

Mission of the African network of NQF institutions: advance development, comparability and relevance of skills, qualifications and qualifications frameworks, contributing to the objectives of integration, prosperity and mobility defined in the AU Agenda 2063, AfCFTA, AU Free Movement Protocol, CESA-25 and other relevant AU policies and political commitments.

Main functions, tasks of the network:

⇒ Create synergy, complementarity and a common agenda between NQF/NQS institutions
⇒ Create synergy, complementarity and a common agenda between RQFs
⇒ Bring together and create consultative forums of professional and other bodies with interest in the NQFs, NQS, and RQFs
⇒ Manage, implement and monitor the actions defined in the memorandum of cooperation regarding the ACQF
⇒ Report on status of implementation of the ACQF, propose revision of activities – accountability towards the steering structure of the ACQF
⇒ Ensure optimal cooperation and use and of technical assistance resources (human, financial) put in place to support ACQF implementation
⇒ Advance networking and cooperation with relevant African and international initiatives, regional qualifications frameworks, organisations, and conventions.

To ensure that implementation and management of ACQF operations is based on tangible technical competence, understanding of NQF policy, and contextualised in African NQF/NQS experiences and developments, the existing and interested African NQF agencies (of different legal statutes) can be invited to cooperate in a network of African NQF agencies (an African NQF Association).

This network could become the focal point supporting implementation of the ACQF, working with the AUC (political lead), with the countries and regions (stakeholders and users of the ACQF) and other agencies and bodies working in the areas of high complementarity with ACQF, especially quality assurance, recognition of qualifications, RPL, labour market and skills intelligence. Stakeholders – social partners, learners, recognised representatives of the formal and informal sectors of the economy, teachers and trainers – are to be involved in activities of the network and the ACQF.

The network should have a legal status, membership, a board tasked with planning and accountability functions, and an efficient management and technical team to carry out operations. The ACQF website could be co-owned and co-managed by the network. A memorandum of cooperation with the AUC should lay the foundations and institutional basis for planning and carrying out ACQF operations, based on accountability towards the AU instances.

This option has the advantage of involving existing African NQF expertise embodied in the national institutions leading and coordinating NQFs and the associated areas of competence. Moreover, this approach fosters bonds and a common agenda between NQF agencies across the continent. Finally, the option empowers the countries and the NQFs in co-creating the ACQF and acts through a bottom-up dynamic that holds promise. The risk of fragmentation and distancing from the wider AU Agenda 2063 is averted by the institutional setting (Association), the political lead role of the AUC and the memorandum of cooperation laying down the scope of work, commitments, and resources.

Different funding and financing for sustainability mechanisms are possible, spanning from membership contributions to African sponsors (private sector, governments, civic initiatives, social partners and others), African flagship initiatives, and technical assistance projects and donors' contributions. In the medium term the African NQF Association, as ACQF implementation body, can engage in private-public partnerships with African and international medium and large enterprises, in projects addressing development of new types of commonly designed qualifications for the continent, digitalisation of qualifications systems and frameworks, recognition of skills of workers and migrants, cooperation with AfCFTA, amongst others.

The current ACQF project can support the preparatory steps towards such a network, notably the elaboration of a concise feasibility and legal analysis, exploratory membership meetings, drafting of statutory and planning documents, capacity development, communication actions and provision of targeted technical expertise.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: list of participants

1. Representatives of ACQF AG

   <u>Countries:</u> Cameroon, Morocco, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa.

   <u>REC:</u> SADC (SADC Secretariat, by delegation)

   <u>Institutions:</u> Association of African Universities (AAU), African Curriculum Association (ACA), Africa Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities (AFTRA), African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN), Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Association of Arab Universities, ATUPA-CAPA, CAMES, Forum for African Women Educationalists, IUCEA, African Early Childhood Network (AfECN), ILO (Geneva), IICBA-Unesco, UNESCO (Pôle Dakar), EU Delegation to AU.

2. Other invitees

   Angola, Ghana, Seychelles, Tunisia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

3. **ACQF project team:** Eduarda Castel-Branco, Essete Abebe, Deodonne Kunwufine, Eusebius Juma Mukhwana, Jean Adotevi, Jeffy Mukora, Kaylash Allgoo, Coleen Jaftha

4. **AUC ESTI:** Acting Head of Education division, Team Education division

---

ANNEX 2: Agenda of the meeting

Objectives of the meeting – ACQF Advisory Group Nº 3

The meeting aims to update the Advisory Group on progress since the ACQF AG nº 2 (08/04/2021) and present the initial proposal of the approach towards the ACQF Policy and Technical document.

The feasibility analysis of the ACQF as a sustainable policy instrument is the first important milestone of the ACQF development process in 2021. The project team submits the complete draft report of this analysis for consultation with the Advisory Group and welcomes comments and suggestions contributing to further development of the proposals.

The ACQF Advisory Group is invited to consider a proposal concerning the Network of National Qualifications Frameworks' agencies, and of a *champion* for the ACQF.

The next consultation meeting with ACQF Advisory Group is envisaged in December 2021, to discuss the first draft of the ACQF policy and technical document (main elements).

Objectives of the ACQF project and vision of the ACQF

The African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) is a policy initiative of the African Union (AU).

The ACQF is strongly anchored on AU policies and strategies, especially:

- *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*;[1]
- *African Continental Free Trade Area* (AfCFTA);[2]

---

[1] *Agenda 2063*: https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview
[2] AfCFTA: https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36437-treaty-consolidated_text_on_cfta_-_en.pdf; Factsheet on the AfCFTA: https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/faqs/2377-african-continental-free-trade-area-faqs-june-2018-update/file.html

- *Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment* (AU Free Movement Protocol);[3] and

- *Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025* (CESA 16–25).[4]

To develop the ACQF the African Union Commission works in partnership with the European Union (EU), Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation (Germany), GIZ and ETF, in a process technically supported by a specific component of the AU – EU Union (EU) programme "Skills for Youth Employability: SIFA Technical Cooperation". To this end the ACQF development process (further: ACQF project) was launched on 3-4/09/2019 at headquarters of the African Union, in Addis Ababa, and will be completed in September 2022.

The objectives of the envisioned ACQF, as presented and discussed at the ACQF launch workshop are:

- *comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications of all levels and sub-sectors, and support people´s lifelong learning;*

- *facilitate recognition of diplomas and certificates, and support mobility (learners, workers and services);*

- *work in cooperation and complementarity with National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) and Regional Qualifications Frameworks (RQFs) and support creation of a common African education and qualifications area; and*

- *promote cooperation, referencing between qualifications frameworks (national and regional) in Africa and worldwide.*

Key principles of the ACQF are:

- *Inclusiveness of all types of learning and levels of qualifications;*

- *Openness to learners' and stakeholders' needs; and*

- *Innovation-readiness to embrace new forms of learning, new skills and types of qualifications, demanded by social, technological and ecological transformation*

The ACQF project is working and delivering on the planned outputs:

Phase 1: 09/2019-11/2020

- [Continental mapping study](): analysis of the state-of-play and perspective developments of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks (NQF, RQF) on the continent. Thirteen country reports, three regional reports, a Synthesis and a Snapshot infographic complete the collection of the ACQF mapping study.

- [Capacity development programme:]() In 2020 the ACQF completed a first programme of 7 multi-lingual [Peer learning webinars](), sharing knowledge on 22 experiences of Qualifications Frameworks (17 NQF and 5 RQF), with an average of 60-70 participants per webinar.

Phase 2: 11/2020-09/2022

- Analysis of options and scenarios for the ACQF as a policy instrument and enabler of the above-indicated objectives and principles. Milestone: end June 2021.

- ACQF policy and technical document supported by an Action Plan, and technical guidelines. Milestone: by September 2022.

- ACQF capacity development and networking: based on peer learning, blended training, support to countries in developing qualifications frameworks, and knowledge creation through conferences

---

[3] AU Free Movement Protocol, Article 18: 'The States Parties shall establish a continental qualifications framework to encourage and promote the free movement of persons': https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/african-union/1965-protocol-to-the-abuja-treaty-free-movement-of-persons-right-of-residence-and-establishment-adopted-29-january-2018/file.html

[4] CESA 16–25: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/29958-doc-cesa_-_english-v9.pdf

and joint activities with education and training institutions. The mix of activities contributes to awareness raising, mutual trust, creation of a network of trained experts, and will be supported by the ACQF website and an e-learning platform. Peer Learning Webinars 2021 (5 sessions): roll-out of the experience of 2020, with a more diverse scope of themes and cases, including NQFs, quality assurance, recognition, registers and data bases of qualifications and TVET reforms, and RPL.

Agenda
Multilingual meeting (English-French-Portuguese)

Time (GMT+3)	Session – main topics	Responsible
12.30-13.00 Session 1	Opening and objectives of meeting Opening remarks Tour de table – Advisory Group	Mr Hambani Masheleni Acting Head of Education Division Dr Mahama Ouedraogo, Director ESTI - AUC
13.00-13.30 Session 2	ACQF project: progress after the Advisory Group meeting Nº 2 (8 April 2021) • Work plan update • ACQF Guidelines • Capacity development programme • Support to countries	AUC ESTI ACQF project experts
13.30-14.15 Session 3	ACQF feasibility analysis: report • Presentation of main findings and recommendations of the report • Plan of outputs: proposal • Questions and answers	ACQF project experts
14.15-15.00 Session 4	Towards the ACQF policy and technical document • Initial proposals on the objectives and outline of the document • Discussion on defining features, milestones, buy-in	AUC, ACQF experts
15.00-15.20 Session 5	Towards a Network of African National Qualifications Agencies (councils, authorities) • Rationale, goals, composition – initial proposal	ACQF expert
15.20-15.30 Session 6	Conclusions. Wrap-up. Next steps. Closing remarks	ACQF project coordinator, AUC ESTI – Education division

Shared documents

- For session 1:
    - ACQF AG 3-1 - Agenda
    - ACQF AG-2 (08/04/2021)– Meeting report
- For session 2:
    - 2.1 Concept note on ACQF Guidelines
    - 2.2 ACQF Capacity Development Programme 2021 – detailed plan
    - 2.3 ACQF training programme – detailed plan
- For session 3: ACQF Feasibility report. June 2021
- For session 4: Note – Towards the ACQF policy and technical document
- For session 5: Note – Towards a Network of African National Qualifications Agencies
- Others: ACQF Mapping Study 2020 – collection of reports

Drafted: Eduarda Castel-Branco, ecb@etf.europa.eu