

DEVELOPING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL  
QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF)



**GUIDELINE**  **07**

**Monitoring and evaluation in the context  
of qualifications frameworks or systems**

This guideline on monitoring and evaluation in the context of national qualifications frameworks and ACQF is elaborated in the context of the project AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability/Skills Initiative for Africa, Technical Cooperation – Developing the African Continental Qualifications Framework.

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## List of acronyms

ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
AU	African Union
EU	European Union
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NQS	National Qualifications System
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
REC	Regional Economic Community
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
US EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency

## Glossary

Our focus in this manual is on terms not included in the [ACQF thematic brief<sup>1</sup>](#) on qualifications and qualifications frameworks to avoid duplication.

**Assumptions:** hypotheses about factors or risks which could affect the progress of success of an intervention (OECD, 2002).

**Evaluand:** the subject of an evaluation, i.e. a project, programme or policy which is being monitored and evaluated.

**Evaluation:** a periodic assessment which aims to answer specific questions about the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of a policy or programme. Evaluation can also measure the impact, both expected and unexpected, and identify effects that can be attributed to a policy or programme (SADC 2011, 8).

**Impacts** are positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended (OECD, 2019).

**Indicators** are signposts of change along the path of implementation. They describe the way to track intended results and are critical for monitoring and evaluation. (UNDP, 2009, 61).

**Inputs** are the financial, human, and material resources used for the development intervention (OECD, 2002).

**Monitoring** is the regular collection and analysis of information to determine whether or not progress is being made towards an intended result. (SADC, 2011, 8).

**Objectives** are specific results of effects of a programme's activities that must be achieved in pursuing the policy or programme's ultimate goals (US EPA, 2007).

**Outcomes** are changes or benefits resulting from activities or outputs. Short-term outcomes produce changes in learning, knowledge, attitude, skills or understanding. Intermediate outcomes generate changes in behaviour, practice or decisions. Long-term outcomes produce changes in condition (US EPA, 2007).

**Outputs** are the products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes (OECD, 2002).

**Project monitoring** provides information that is used for project management purposes and can include factors such as budget, timelines, staffing and resource allocation.

**Regional qualifications framework** is a broad structure of levels of learning outcomes that is agreed by countries in a geographical region. A means of enabling one national framework of qualifications to relate to another and, subsequently, for a qualification in one country to be compared to a qualification from another country (Castel-Branco 2021b, 6).

**Results framework** is an explicit articulation (graphic display, matrix, or summary) of the different levels, or chains, of results expected from a particular intervention—project, program, or development strategy. The results specified typically comprise the longer-term objectives (often referred to as 'outcomes' or 'impact') and the intermediate outcomes and outputs that precede, and lead to, those desired longer-term objectives (World Bank, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> [https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-1-concepts-and-definitions/@@display-file/file/ACQF%20Thematic%20brief%201%20Concepts%20and%20definitions\\_WEB.pdf](https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-1-concepts-and-definitions/@@display-file/file/ACQF%20Thematic%20brief%201%20Concepts%20and%20definitions_WEB.pdf)

**Results monitoring** focuses specifically on what is happening in a project that has direct bearing on the objectives of the project and implications for achieving the intended outcomes and impact.

**Targets** an objective (constraint or expected result) set by management to communicate programme purpose (for example, maintaining a monthly output level).

# 1 Introduction

This guideline on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in the context of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) and Regional Qualifications Frameworks (RQFs) is launched at a time of broad political agreement among African policy-makers and stakeholders on the need for, and usefulness of, monitoring and evaluation (AU 2016, 23, 24). The African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) will be a Regional Qualifications Framework, the largest in the world. The ACQF is defined as a **common meta-qualifications framework (for referencing)** of ten levels, expressed as learning outcomes, serving as a translation device between different qualifications frameworks or systems and their levels.

The vision of the ACQF should also resonate with the vision and purpose of each country's National Qualifications Framework (NQF); the one should not supersede the other. M&E in the context of NQFs and RQFs should therefore not detract or inhibit the monitoring and evaluation at country level. Indeed, the two processes ought, ideally, to overlap to a large extent.

The M&E guideline is one of 10 ACQF guidelines. The ACQF guidelines give tangible substance to Output 3 of the ACQF Policy Initiative, namely the ACQF policy and technical document. The guidelines are tools to support the practical application and sustainability of the principles, objectives and milestones defined in the ACQF document. The benefits of the ACQF guidelines are envisaged to include:

- Helping, informing, and supporting countries at early thinking or development or implementation stage of NQFs, which require a knowledge base and an orientation to well-presented concepts and applications.
- Providing user-friendly, contextualised knowledge on foundation themes.
- Providing guidance as to how the given themes and policies apply in the context of the ACQF
- Providing support to the ACQF implementers with basic thematic information and clear indications on the application thereof.

## 1.1 Purpose of this guideline

This M&E Guideline is fundamental for development, implementation and review of NQFs and RQFs including the ACQF. The M&E Guideline is intended as a pragmatic conceptual reference and methodological guidance for NQF and Regional Qualifications Frameworks (RQF) implementers helping them develop and establish functional M&E systems.

The purpose and objective of this M&E guideline is thus to:

1. Clarify and deepen the concepts of M&E in the context of NQFs and RQFs (including the ACQF). Although M&E are well established processes, their implementation with regards to NQFs and RQFs are less well developed, and this guideline seeks to fill that gap, particularly in the African context in this regard.
2. Contribute to a common understanding of the ACQF M&E orientation and application across countries and regions to ease the implementation of the ACQF at continental, national and regional levels.
3. Seek synergy between the M&E orientation and complementarity with already existing AU policies and instruments.

4. Outline principles and approaches for M&E, and ways to collect, manage and analyse data, and ways of using data for intelligence (value) in the context of NQFs and RQFs.
5. Provide conceptual and technical orientations to countries and regional economic communities (RECs) to support the improvement and consolidation of their own NQFs and RQFs and links with the ACQF. This reinforces objective 3 of the ACQF which is to work in cooperation and complementarity with the NQFs.
6. Provide a technical orientation to M&E for NQF and RQF implementing bodies and stakeholders, especially the lead institutions managing the NQF and interacting with the (future) ACQF implementation/ steering unit.
7. Generate a set of applicable concepts, principles, criteria, and procedures, as well as tools for strengthening M&E in the ACQF environment.
8. Present and elaborate on specific tools culminating in an ACQF handbook.
9. Be applicable in different circumstances, based on internationally accepted concepts and tools.

A key message of this guideline is that designing and implementing monitoring and evaluation at national and regional levels must be viewed as interconnected processes albeit with distinct activities i.e. there must be an alignment between the undergirding philosophy of the NQFs and RQFs and the way they are monitored and evaluated. Alignment will allow M&E to support and enhance the ability of the NQFs and RQFs to achieve their objectives.

## 1.2 Guideline structure

This monitoring and evaluation guideline comprises a trio of documents: (1) a synthesis guideline, (2) a technical guideline and (3) a training module:

1. Technical in-depth guideline: This document forms the core of the trio of documents. It will be presented as a short handbook: for clarification and technical support. This will be used by implementers, practitioners, and other groups.
2. Synthesis version: This version is a shortened version for policy purposes. It will be used primarily by policy institutions, and other groups, and has a key purpose to provide policy orientation.
3. Training module: This version will form part of the knowledge base and used for the ACQF Training programme and ACQF e-learning platform.

## 1.3 Target users

The main target users of this monitoring and evaluation guideline are:

### Primary target users

- Members or stakeholders of steering groups/ implementation groups for the ACQF.
- National Referencing Committees/ National Coordination Points and policy advisers involved in education and training.
- Implementers and practitioners of NQFs and NQs and RQFs, including awarding bodies and quality assurance agencies, professional governing bodies, training and education providers, teachers and trainers as well as teacher and trainer staff associations.



## Secondary target users

- The public and those who self-identify as being affected or stakeholders in the M&E for NQF and RQF processes.

In summary, individuals and institutions actively involved in designing and implementing monitoring and evaluation in the context of NQFs and RQFs will find this guideline useful.

## 1.4 Links between the M&E guideline and other ACQF guidelines

The ten ACQF guidelines have a key intention to contribute technical and methodological support to countries participating in the ACQF process. The monitoring and evaluation guideline (Guideline 7) links with the other nine ACQF guidelines. All the guidelines have some links to each other whether explicit or implicit. For example:

- The monitoring and evaluation guideline (Guideline 7) has an explicit link to:
  - Learning outcomes (Guideline 1)
  - ACQF levels and level descriptors (Guideline 2)
  - Validation of learning (Guideline 4)
  - Registration of qualifications (Guideline 6)
  - Innovation and technology in NQF/NQS and ACQF (Guideline 9), and
  - Quality assurance (Guideline 5)
- The monitoring and evaluation guideline also links explicitly to the integrative guideline (Guideline 10) as any of the eleven thematic areas related to NQF and RQF development can be monitored and evaluated.
- The ACQF, through its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) orientation will encourage M&E thinking across the continent. M&E is intended to support implementation and measure the outcomes and impact of the ACQF.

## 2 Setting the scene

### 2.1 What is an NQF?

A National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a policy and instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at integrating and coordinating qualifications across education subsectors (primary, secondary and tertiary, for example) and improving the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.

The continuum of NQF levels is defined by level descriptors, conceived on the basis of domains of learning, such as knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility (and others). It is a way of structuring existing and new qualifications, which are defined by learning outcomes – clear statements of what the learner must know or be able to do, whether learned in a classroom, on the job, or less formally. The qualifications framework indicates the comparability of different qualifications and how one can progress from one level to another, within and across occupations or industrial sectors (and even across vocational and academic fields if the NQF is designed to include both vocational and academic qualifications in a single framework).

The development of NQFs is the foundation of quality assurance for the following reasons (ACQF, 2021a):

- They are descriptive and conceptual.
- They inform their users of levels of complexity.
- There are particular requirements, connections and rules to identify non- formal and informal learning.

When NQFs are monitored and evaluated, their core characteristics and objectives must be foregrounded.

## 2.2 Context of NQFs and RQFs in Africa

The vision for the ACQF is to enhance comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications from all sub-sectors and levels of education and training; to facilitate recognition of diplomas and certificates, and mobility of learners and workers; to work in complementarity with national and regional qualifications frameworks; to support developments at national and regional levels; and to promote cooperation and alignment between qualifications frameworks (national and regional) in Africa and worldwide (AUC, 2019). M&E is an essential mechanism for attaining the vision.

M&E at the national, regional or continental level are intended to support this vision. In other words, M&E are not ends in themselves; they are means or mechanisms to achieve the ACQF vision. The vision of the ACQF should also resonate with the vision and purpose of each country's NQF or each region's RQF; the one is not intended to supersede the other.

In order to build an M&E system for NQFs as well as RQFs, it is important to understand what is being monitored and evaluated. The mapping study conducted to determine where different countries are in the process of NQF development, examined eleven transversal thematic areas (ACQF, 2021a, 2-3). These eleven thematic areas may be viewed as components of a national qualifications framework or system. These eleven thematic areas are illustrated in a document providing a snapshot of the mapping study (ACQF, 2021c, 3). M&E can be applied to each of the eleven thematic areas or components associated with NQFs and RQFs to the extent that it is present in each country.

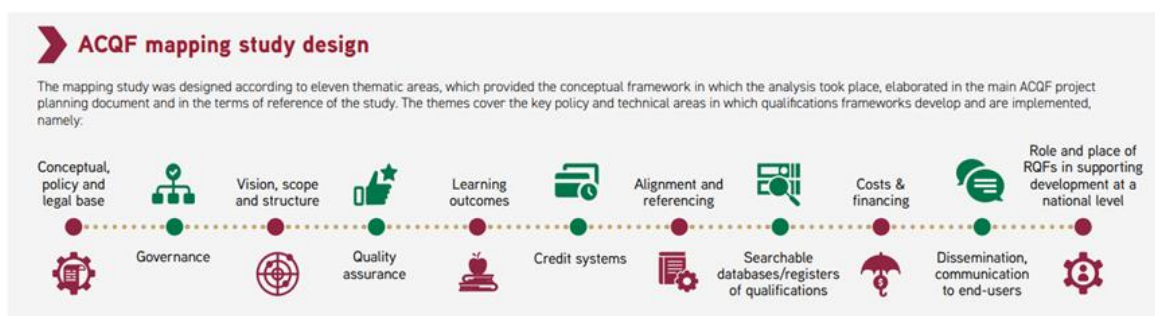


Figure 1: ACQF transversal thematic areas

## 2.2 Core objectives of NQFs

NQFs are associated with a range of strategic and policy objectives, which can be clustered as related to (from ACQF, 2021b: 9):

- **Integration, coherence and permeability** between the learning outcomes and qualifications of sub-systems;

- **Quality, transparency, enhanced visibility and trust** of end-users: by introducing learning outcomes approaches, stakeholders' participation in qualifications development and approval, and accessible users' information through digital and online instruments;
- **Parity of esteem and value of learning in different contexts and sub-sectors:** academic, vocational, formal and non-formal;
- **Inclusion:** qualifications can be obtained via validation of non-formal learning, recognition of experience from work and life, accessible for people with little schooling;
- Regional and global **comparability and recognition** of diplomas and certificates; and
- Wider **societal and economic goals**, in particular: increase the stock of the qualified labour force, enhanced employability of holders of qualifications, strengthen competitiveness and productivity of the economic sectors, align the qualifications system with demand and changing skills needs.

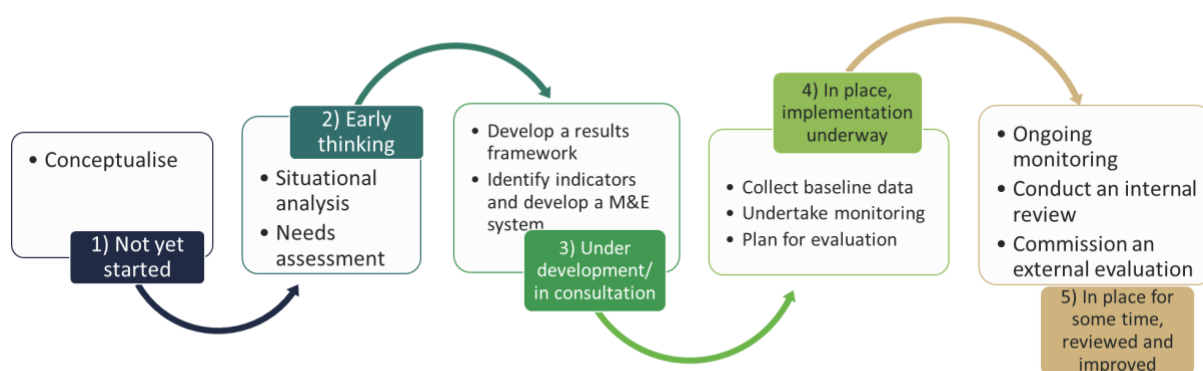
The strategic and policy objectives of NQFs and RQFs in Africa are illustrative of the range of components (eleven thematic areas) associated with NQFs and RQFs generally (notably these will not necessarily relate to NQFs and RQFs in exactly the same way).

### 2.3 Stages of NQFs development in African countries

Qualifications frameworks are at different stages of development and implementation across the African continent; five developmental stages have been identified:

1. NQF not in place and development not started;
2. NQF at early thinking stage;
3. NQF under development/in consultation;
4. NQF in place, approved as a legal act, implementation underway; and
5. NQF in implementation for some time, reviewed and improvements made. (ACQF, 2021a, 172)

Each of these five developmental stages can be accompanied by a set of M&E activities. The diagram below indicates the nature of M&E activities relevant at each stage.



**Figure 2: Relevant M&E activities at each stage of NQF development**

The process of NQF development is dynamic and countries' contexts will not be the same from one moment to another. M&E will be influenced by the stage of development of the NQF as well as existing

data collection, analysis and reporting processes and capacity to analyse, report, use and disseminate data within a country.

**M&E is a mechanism to ensure that the NQF delivers on its goal and objectives and not an end in itself.**

## 2.4 What is the distinction (and connection) between M&E and quality assurance?

Quality assurance is one of the eleven thematic areas that determine the level of development of an NQF or RQF (ACQF 2021c, 3). Quality assurance consists of processes and procedures for ensuring that qualifications, assessment and programme delivery meet certain standards. As such quality assurance forms part of sub-sectors linked to NQFs, for example higher education, general education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

Quality assurance would thus be one aspect of what can be monitored and evaluated in relation to an NQFs. For example, a monitoring indicator might be, ‘number of qualifications or programmes that are quality assured each year’.

Quality assurance is a predominantly operational, administrative process whereas M&E is an analytical process that is focussed on the end results, rather than the instrument for achieving these results. (Guideline 5 elaborates on for Quality assurance in the context of ACQF).

M&E in this context would consider the overarching strategic and policy objectives of the development and implementation of NQFs and RQFs. M&E activities would focus on whether the NQF/RQF is meeting the objectives it is intended to achieve (lifelong learning, inclusion, mobility etc) and whether it is being implemented as intended (activities and steps for doing so, including the extent to which quality assurance is operationalised and conducted).

## 3 Conceptual underpinnings of M&E

Monitoring and evaluation are two distinct and related sets of activities that support the design and implementation of projects, programmes or policies, with the intention of creating feedback and learning loops that inform revisions. Monitoring should be considered from the outset. It is undertaken to keep the initiative on track and provides information to enable decision making about design and implementation. Monitoring data is crucial for evaluation and provides the basis for assessing what a project has achieved or delivered relative to its cost, scale, or duration.

Key features of monitoring and evaluation are summarised below:

**Table 1: Key features of monitoring and evaluation**

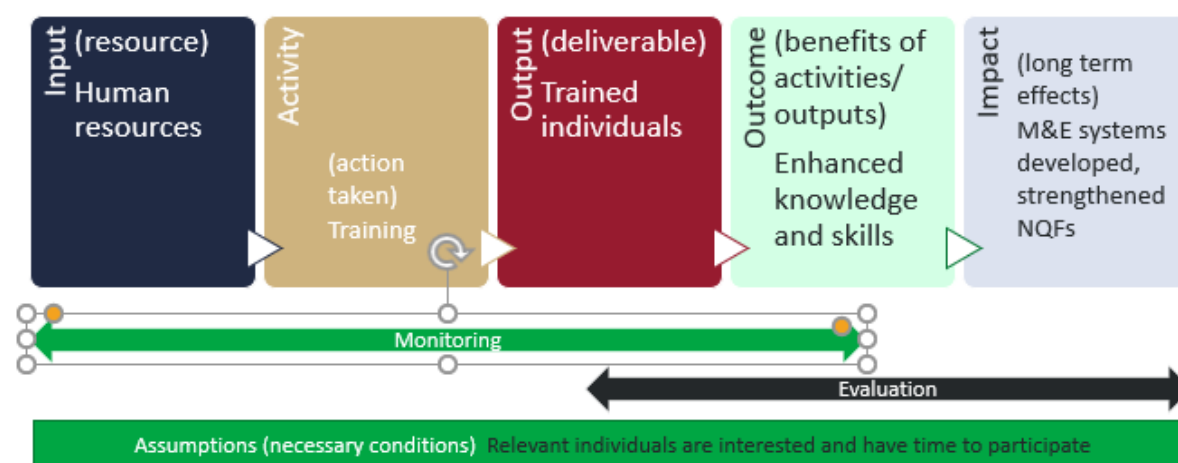
	<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Who does it?</b>	Programme managers and implementation staff	Evaluators working with programme staff and other key stakeholders
<b>Purpose/ interest</b>	Adaptive management	Accountability Learning
<b>Timing</b>	Continuous	Periodic, at key intervals

	Monitoring	Evaluation
<b>Typical scope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of funding and other resources</li> <li>• Implementation including activities, outputs and short-term outcomes</li> <li>• Fidelity</li> <li>• Performance against targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement of objectives</li> <li>• Evaluative criteria (relevance, quality, effectiveness, efficiency, value for money, sustainability)</li> <li>• Outcomes, impact, attribution</li> <li>• Draw conclusions of merit/worth</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	Embedded in programme budget	Dedicated line item
<b>Measures</b>	Indicators and targets	Criteria, indicators and standards
<b>Data</b>	Involves primary data collection (programme data)	Usually involves primary data collection, uses programme & other secondary data, typically draws on multiple data sources
<b>Reporting</b>	Descriptive, performance-related	Explanatory, judgemental, lessons learned

### 3.1 What is monitoring?

‘Monitoring is the regular collection and analysis of information to determine whether or not progress is being made towards an intended result’ (SADC, 2011, 8).

Monitoring begins with developing a **results framework** which articulates how a project, programme or policy will achieve the desired impact. An example results chain for delivery of training on M&E in the context of qualifications frameworks is presented below.



**Figure 3: Results chain for training on M&E in the context of qualifications frameworks**

The **Results Framework** developed to support this guideline is structured according to inputs/activities, outputs, outcome and overall impact. Inputs, activities and outputs are typically the domain of monitoring whereas evaluation (discussed in section 3.2) usually considers outcomes and impact. However, monitoring may also consider outcomes. Additionally, it is important to consider assumptions which underpin the results framework. These terms are defined in the table below.

**Table 2: Different levels in a results framework**

Types of result	Definition	Measurement purpose
Impact	Long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly.	Measure the extent to which the overall goals are being met.
Outcome	Changes or benefits resulting from activities or outputs, changes in learning, knowledge, attitude, skills or understanding, behaviour, practice, decisions or condition.	Measure the extent to which anticipated changes are occurring and objectives are being achieved.
Output	Products, goods and services which result from an intervention.	Measure deliverables.
Input	Work performed.	Measure what has been done in line with plans.

Outcomes are expected/anticipated changes or benefits for target groups and can focus on different aspects of a project, programme or policy and can include:

- **Behaviour:** NQF policies, qualifications and unit standards may contribute to a change in how people perceive different qualifications and how these are treated.
- **Attitude:** For instance, how the creation of an NQF has changed attitudes towards enabling continuous and lifelong learning.
- **Knowledge:** This could be increased knowledge pertaining to how an NQF can facilitate shared learning and open opportunities across sectors.
- **Skills:** Where different education or skills training programmes are being aligned based on qualifications and unit standards, changes in skills could refer to addressing gaps which may have existed in one qualification which may now be addressed in another.

**Time from implementation to outcomes and impact**

Outcomes may be referred to as short-term or immediate (occurring soon after implementation), medium-term or intermediate (occurring 1-3 years after implementation) and long-term (occurring 3+ years after implementation). Impact may occur 3-5 years or longer after implementation and is usually the culmination of a variety of interventions and factors, and not just attributable to one intervention.

Monitoring takes *two forms* - **project monitoring** and **results monitoring**.

- **Project monitoring** provides information that is used for project management purposes and can include factors such as budget, timelines, staffing, resource allocation.
- **Results monitoring** focuses specifically on what is happening in a project that has direct bearing on the objectives of the project and implications for achieving the intended outcomes and impact.

After developing a results framework, indicators are identified for monitoring, structured in line with the results framework. This entails identifying signposts that are indicative of change along the path of implementation (indicators). Indicators provide yardsticks to measure progress and can demonstrate whether there has or has not been progress. Information will be collected about the indicators. Progress can be measured quantitatively, using a numeric target. Qualitative indicators as indicators of progress.

For example, quantitative indicators for the implementation of an NQF could be

- Number of qualifications referenced to the NQF
- Number of RPL applications processed

A qualitative indicator could be

- Stage of development of the NQF (using a rubric which defines each stage of development)

Monitoring is the collection of routine data on specific indicators on a regular basis. This data can be captured manually or electronically and aggregated for each monitoring period, to assess progress towards desired results. Data may be collected at different intervals, for instance on a bi-annual or annual basis but should ideally be collected in sufficient frequency that allows for identifying blockages and course corrections required to continue to work towards achieving the desired results. Data would be reported at country, region and potentially continental levels.

The data that is collected can also be used for different purposes, such as accountability for time and resources (inputs), for results or deliverables produced such as a qualifications framework (output) or outcomes which are the desired results (such as mobility, portability and recognition of qualifications across the sub-region or articulation of qualifications across education sub-sectors). By way of example, the longer-term result could be greater skills mobility and employment in targeted sectors on the continent. NQFs and RQFs can contribute to longer-term results, but there are also a range of other factors that may influence this.

### 3.2 What is evaluation?

Evaluation is a periodic assessment which aims to answer specific questions about the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of a project, programme or policy. Evaluation can also measure the impact both expected and unexpected – and identify effects that can be attributed to an intervention or which the intervention contributes to (SADC, 2011, 8).

Evaluation is often undertaken to measure the outcomes or results of an intervention; and can include a focus on implementation (process evaluation) and measuring the contribution to results or extent to which results can be attributed to an intervention. The latter is described as an outcomes or impact evaluation and includes a specific focus on understanding change that may have happened since the inception of a project, programme or policy<sup>2</sup> and tries to establish the extent to which a particular intervention may have caused or contributed to that change (causation).

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<sup>2</sup> The subject of an evaluation can be referred to as the evaluand.

Evaluations typically include the use of existing programmatic data and collection of both quantitative (statistics and numerical) and qualitative (narrative) data.

Quantitative data is usually closed-ended and should provide a snapshot of the situation. This data can be collected through surveys or a review of reports that may be released by national or regional bodies. Where quantitative targets have been set, this data can be used to establish the extent of progress towards these targets. Collecting quantitative data provides a high-level demonstration of progress but is not typically able to provide any kind of contextual explanation or reasoning as to why something may/ may not have happened.

Qualitative data is more detailed and can provide additional in-depth information that can provide some additional context or explanation as to possible reasons for why something may/ may not have happened. It is not usually generalisable and should usually be considered alongside quantitative data to get a balanced view of how an initiative is progressing.

Evaluation can be done both internally by an organisation implementing a project, programme or policy, or externally by an independent organisation or via a hybrid method (i.e., an internal process supported by an external facilitator). External evaluation can be more costly, and may not lead to skills transfer, unless capacity-building is an explicit objective.

Evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful to identify corrective measures and inform decision-making.

Different *types of evaluation* are useful at different stages of development of an evaluand and can include:

1. Baseline study undertaken at the point of beginning an intervention and used to determine the level of change, from the baseline, over a specific time period.
2. Formative (interim) evaluation is undertaken during implementation to assess progress and assist managers to make decisions about implementation and strategy going forward.
3. Mid-term (process) evaluation which considers implementation to date and looks to identify obstacles that may need to be reconsidered or reviewed. This evaluation will generate a set of recommendations to be considered for implementation in the latter phase of the funding period. This can include a review of processes, project activities or target audiences. In the case of the NQFs, it could include reviewing which qualifications should be prioritised, based on the current needs of the labour market in a respective country, or where qualifications should be placed along a continuum of knowledge. Processes that could be reviewed may include who is involved in the qualifications review process, which institutions are engaged and how often individuals or organisations are convening (among others).
4. Summative or final evaluation is an evaluation that may be calculated at the end of a funding period or implementation cycle. The Summative Evaluation will consider implementation of the project, programme or policy since inception, whether the NQF or RQF is fit-for-purpose and the extent to which recommendations identified in the mid-term evaluation have been incorporated into implementation. This would also include assessing the extent of progress that has been made towards the intended results, any unintended effects, if results are sufficient given the funding that has been made available and the extent to which establishing an NQF or RQF may have contributed to the results.

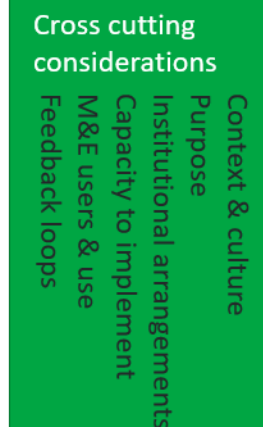


### 3.3 Considerations for establishing an M&E system

The **key components** of an M&E system and cross-cutting considerations for its development are summarised below. These are elaborated on in subsequent sections of this guideline.

## Key components of an M&E system

- Description of the evaluand (project/programme/policy)
- Results framework
- Indicators & targets
- Data sources, methods, instruments
- Data collection
- Data management (MIS) & analysis
- Reporting, dissemination & use
- Evaluation/learning questions
- Evaluation plan



**Figure 4: Key components of an M&E system**

Important **considerations** when developing an M&E system will now be discussed below.

#### 3.3.1 Establish the need and demand for an M&E system

Effective M&E systems need to be fit-for-purpose and there needs to be clarity as to why it is necessary to establish an M&E system, and what it will be used for. This will require ensuring that there is a shared understanding of the need and value of M&E from the early stages of developing an NQF or RQF, and how the information will be used. This also includes ensuring that M&E forms part of the culture of developing and implementing an NQF or an RQF. Ultimately, this will help to ensure that the data collected is of sufficient quality and can be used to inform strategy and implementation. The nature of the policy or programme which the M&E system is being developed for will also influence the complexity of the system.

The creation of an M&E system that is fit-for-purpose, with clear standard operating procedures and engaging individuals with sufficient knowledge and skills can assist with ensuring that data is collected, collated and analysed in line with specified requirements. This also includes ensuring that there is clarity as to who will use the data and for what purpose. Creating a standardised system can also reduce potential for error and enable validation of information collected.

An effective M&E system will generate information that is credible and can be used to track progress, identify course corrections and inform evaluations. Identifying the focus of an evaluation, the key evaluation questions and approaches when an M&E system is being conceptualised will assist to ensure that the M&E system is able to generate the information required for an evaluation.

### 3.3.2 Institutional arrangements for M&E

An important upfront consideration is the optimal institutional arrangement for M&E. This entails considering where the M&E function will be located, reporting lines and links to other related functions (policy, planning, budgeting, quality assurance, research etc) and implementation and management. An array of options are possible and the **optimal institutional arrangements will depend on the organisational context**. M&E is an important management function, but management’s primary focus – implementation – may require substantial problem solving and crisis management and leave insufficient time for reflection and learning. A dedicated M&E unit can help ensure that reflection and learning is prioritised, but a risk of this approach is that management may see M&E as the responsibility of the M&E unit as opposed to an inherent management function (Presidency, 2014). This could create dual responsibility lines and it is therefore critical to define the function and mandate of an M&E unit vis-à-vis programme management, to prevent M&E from being divorced from implementation and management. The function and mandate of an M&E unit should determine where it is located organisationally (Rabie, 2016).

Rabie identifies typical institutional arrangements, in the context of South African government institutions<sup>3</sup>. The pros and cons of four of these and consideration to mitigate the identified cons are summarised in the Table below.

**Table 3: Possible institutional arrangements for M&E**

Description	Pros	Cons	Key considerations
Centralised M&E unit which reports directly to top / strategic management.	Accords symbolic support for and foregrounds the strategic importance of M&E. M&E has direct access to decision makers and informs strategic planning. M&E is independent of specific programmes and likely to be impartial.	Removed from support functions (policy making, finance etc) which M&E should have strong links to. M&E may be perceived as ‘policing’ and/or the focus compliance driven.	Important to provide feedback regarding data and data use; important for the M&E unit to provide support to programmes.
Centralised M&E unit incorporated with other support functions (policy	Easy to create synergy with other support functions. Focus on M&E	M&E unit is lower in the organisational hierarchy with less authority; there	Can work well if M&E is regarded as valuable and a useful

<sup>3</sup> Additional guidance can be found in the following:

- DPME (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation). 2012. *DPME Guideline 3.1.5. Functions of an M&E Component in National Government Departments*. <http://www.dpme.gov.za/publications/Guides%20Manuals%20and%20Templates/Functions%20of%20an%20M%20and%20E%20component%20in%20National%20Government%20Departments.pdf>
- DPME (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation). 2013a. *DPME Guideline 3.1.6. Generic Functions of Monitoring and Evaluation Components in the Offices of the Premier*. [http://www.dpme.gov.za/publications/Policy%20Framework/Generic%20Functions%20of%20Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation%20Components%20in%20the%20Offices%20of%20the%20Premier%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.dpme.gov.za/publications/Policy%20Framework/Generic%20Functions%20of%20Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation%20Components%20in%20the%20Offices%20of%20the%20Premier%20(1).pdf)
- DPME (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation). 2013b. *DPME Guideline 3.1.7. Generic roles and organisational design considerations for M&E components in provincial government departments*. [http://www.dpme.gov.za/publications/Policy%20Framework/Generic%20Roles%20and%20Organisational%20Design%20Considerations%20for%20M%20and%20E%20components%20in%20provincial%20government%20departments%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.dpme.gov.za/publications/Policy%20Framework/Generic%20Roles%20and%20Organisational%20Design%20Considerations%20for%20M%20and%20E%20components%20in%20provincial%20government%20departments%20(1).pdf)

Description	Pros	Cons	Key considerations
making, planning, budgeting etc).	as a performance improvement and learning function.	may be delays in cooperating/ supplying requested information.	support to programmes.
Decentralised M&E officers reporting to a centralised M&E unit (or programme managers).	M&E capacity is disbursed throughout the organisation which can enhance data quality and ensure M&E is responsive to programme needs.	More M&E capacity intensive than other options. M&E officers may be drawn into implementation, organisational politics and develop conflicted allegiance.	Works well when there is a high degree of specialisation and M&E officers need an in-depth understanding of programmes.
Transversal M&E team: implementation staff from each programme/ department represent their respective departments in a transversal 'evaluation task team' or M&E forum.	Relatively easy to implement and does not require top-level buy-in. Opportunities for peer learning, and to share lessons learned across various programmes and departments.	M&E is loosely coordinated and has limited ability to determine mandate and priorities. M&E is not institutionally connected to strategy/ decision making or other support functions. Dual responsibilities (implementation and M&E) limit available for M&E.	Beneficial if an organisation does not have the capacity/top-level buy-in to establish an independent M&E unit. The forum will benefit from top-level endorsement to ensure that time is allocated for participation and findings/ recommendations are shared more widely.

Source: adapted from Rabie, 2016

### 3.3.3 Identify data users and roles and responsibilities of individuals undertaking data collection

Within an M&E system, there may be a range of people involved in the collection, collation, and analysis of data. These individuals may have a different role in the design and implementation of an NQF or RQF and use the data for different purposes. It is crucial that the roles and responsibilities of individuals are clearly understood, and that possibilities for error in the collation and analysis of data are avoided, as this has a risk to implementation, if the data is not used effectively.

Identifying who will use the data and confirming roles and responsibilities for collecting and using data will help to ensure use.

By identifying the users, it will be easier to ensure that the data collected is serving their needs, and to remove any redundant data from the data collection process. These uses can include:

- Reviewing progress against targets.
- Identifying gaps or delays in implementation.
- Reviewing timelines if activities have not happened as planned.
- Informing decisions about expenditure and accountability.

Users may require information for different purposes - but are predominantly NQF committees/entities, accreditation bodies, those responsible for the implementation of the NQF and education sub-system representatives.

Accreditation bodies need to know what progress is being made in accrediting materials and trainers, sub-system representatives need to know what may be required to enable articulation between education sub-systems.

In a small organisation or programme, the same person is responsible for collecting and using the data. In others, this may be the responsibility of different people. Either way, it is important for data collection to happen routinely, and for information to be used. Where monitoring and reporting may form part of a broader job description, it will become very important to confirm roles and responsibilities for these additional tasks.

The credibility of an M&E system is influenced by the quality of data that it is able to generate, and that it is regarded as credible and trustworthy. Trustworthy information means that it can be tracked back to the source and verified, that collation and analysis processes are clear and that there are quality checks in place to identify possible capturing or analysis errors. People with the necessary training and skills are required to implement and oversee this.

Other considerations include how the data may be used as part of an evaluation, and ensuring that it can be collated and can be used for this purpose.

### 3.3.4 Organisational capacity to implement an M&E system

It is important to establish what capacity exists to design and implement an M&E system. This includes understanding whether there are any other M&E systems already developed and in use and how these are currently utilised, understanding the existing capacity and processes within a national M&E system, including what information is collected that can be used, without duplicating resources and effort. A national system may also be able to assist with building the capacity of individuals who are tasked with monitoring the NQF at country or regional levels.

Other factors to consider include who has the skills to be able to implement and manage an M&E system, whether there are any other data systems in place currently and the quality and functionality of these, and what kinds of technology are available to support the development of a data system. This can include, but is not limited to, database software, data analysis software and reporting systems (Morra-Imas and Rist, 2009).

In addition to the technical capacity that is needed to effectively implement an M&E system, there needs to be a supportive culture to collecting and using monitoring data and evaluations to inform decision-making. This will assist with ensuring that people are invested in collecting accurate information at the right time, in the right intervals and submitting it for collation and analysis. This is central to achieving learning, contributing to the purpose of the ACQF and ensuring there are feedback loops to inform review and revision, aligned with its implementation and use.

Organisational capacity includes knowledge and buy-in to the purpose of collecting information, sufficient staff to be able to monitor progress and the necessary tools and templates to enable monitoring.

There are a number of practical things that can be done to encourage the development of a culture supportive of the collection and use of M&E data. These include the following<sup>4</sup>:

Mechanism	Example of interventions to promote use arising in the cases
<b>Awareness of the potential of (M&amp;E) evidence (M1)</b>	Training senior managers in the public service Training/awareness raising on evidence Training of citizen groups to <u>analyse</u> and <u>utilise</u> data to demand accountability and better services
<b>Agreement/ understanding/ commitment (M2)</b>	Dialogue processes to build agreement and commitment Evaluation steering committees to formalise partnerships
<b>Access to M&amp;E evidence (M3)</b>	Producing accessible short reports and policy briefs Workshops Knowledge repositories
<b>Interaction and trust (M4)</b>	Dialogue processes Knowledge brokering Workshops/ breakfast meetings Networks and communities of practice
<b>Ability and confidence (M5)</b>	Capacity-building (learning-by-doing, workshops/ training) Coaching/mentoring Experiential learning Online learning
<b>Institutionalising/ formalising use of M&amp;E evidence (M6)</b>	Management responses/improvement plans Embedded support e.g. knowledge brokering <u>Institutionalisation</u> of national evaluation systems Making public the analysis

**Figure 5: Applying interventions to facilitate use.**

Source: Goldman, 2022, p18.

### 3.3.5 Development of a Results Framework

Prior to identifying indicators or targets, it is imperative that there is a shared understanding of what the overall objectives are, and an understanding of how these will be achieved. This includes articulating the steps that need to take place to be able to achieve the desired results, and sequencing these accordingly. The Results Framework provides a means of continuously collecting and analysing information on indicators as a way of establishing progress towards results. Each of the components of a results framework is accompanied measurable indicators, as depicted in Section 4.2.

A results framework is comprised of

- Impact (Long-term desired change)

<sup>4</sup> For additional reading see: Additional reading: <https://www.routledge.com/Using-Evidence-in-Policy-and-Practice-Open-Access-Lessons-from-Africa/Goldman-Pabari/p/book/9780367440077>.

- Short and medium term outcomes (Changes in behaviour/perceptions)
- Outputs (deliverables)
- Inputs/Activities

The intention is that each of these stages are measurable and can be used as a yardstick of progress. The intervention may have more than one activity, produce more than one output or outcome, but is working towards one overarching impact.

### 3.3.6 Agree on indicators

Indicators provide a means to measure progress and are identified in the project formulation and planning phase. Indicators used to monitor and report on the extent of progress should include indicators that measure delivery of outputs, attainment of outcomes and how the intervention may contribute to longer-term changes in circumstances. Indicators need to be well-defined to ensure that there is no possibility of misinterpretation of the unit of measurement. Indicators are accompanied by a definition which provides the basis for reporting.

Well formulated indicators consider the CREAM principles, as indicated below:

CREAM indicators	
Clear	Precise and unambiguous
Relevant	Appropriate to what is being measured
Economic	Obtainable at reasonable cost
Adequate	Able to provide sufficient information on performance
Monitorable	Easily monitored and able to be independently validated

**Figure 6: CREAM principles applied to indicators**

Indicators need to be carefully selected to ensure that they do not overburden individuals responsible for collecting and analysing them. Indicators should be able to track progress and changes and identify where planning or implementation may be emerging differently to what was expected. Indicators should be reported in relation to targets which are set.

Indicators will focus on compliance with process and implementation (outputs), changes in behaviour, attitude, knowledge and skills (outcomes) and impact - how qualifications frameworks may have enabled lifelong learning, progression, inclusion and mobility.

As an NQF or RQF exists within an overall policy framework and strategy, indicators will need to measure progress with policy formulation, implementation, collection and incorporation of feedback based on implementation.

### 3.3.7 Identify sources of data

When identifying indicators, it is essential to ensure that collecting the information is feasible and can be done without too much burden. This includes identifying what is the data source, and then what kind of data collection method can be used.

Data that is collected can be primary or secondary in nature.

- **Primary data** is data that is collected directly from an individual or system. It can be described as raw data that is not yet analysed and has been collected as part of a data collection process which can be manual or electronic in the form of interviews, observations reports, workshop assessments or training questionnaires.
- **Secondary data** is data that already exists and has been analysed for other purposes. This could be data that has been analysed as part of national monitoring surveys or processes such as a Population Census, Education and Training results or reports of other national surveys which collect data related to education and training, employment and highest educational qualifications achieved. This information could be in the public domain or may have to be requested from relevant agencies.

Identifying existing data sources that can be used as part of monitoring activities reduces the burden on individuals responsible for data collection, and the time required to collect information.

All data that is collected for monitoring purposes needs to be of sufficient quality and free from errors such as omissions, misinterpretations, absence of source documents and arithmetic mistakes for quantitative data. This can be avoided through standardising data collection and entry processes, ensuring that there is regular training for all staff on data collection collation and entry irrespective of how long they have been in the role; identifying potential sources of error, ensuring data validation in digital tools with restrictions on fields to be used, verification by a second person who has not been responsible for entering data and preventing data redundancy where data may be collected and captured but is not used.

Important data quality considerations include the following:

**Table 4: Data quality considerations**

Descriptor	Definition
Validity	Measures what it intends to measure
Reliability	Will produce the same results/calculations if repeated (consistency)
Integrity	Truthful and represents what it is defined as
Precision	Accurate and free from errors
Timeliness	Collected within the stipulated time period and available for use
Completeness	Information that is captured is complete without missing data

Steps to ensure data quality should be captured in Standard Operating Procedures included in an M&E plan.

### 3.3.8 Developing a data collection strategy

After identifying **what** information needs to be collected and **where** it could be found (data sources), it is important to determine **how** you may collect that information. This is your data collection strategy.

The data collection strategy will identify ways to collect information. Examples could be through surveys of a particular sub-group or population, interviews with key stakeholders, observations or through the review of secondary data.

Even with the strategy and data source being identified, it is still necessary to determine the **feasibility** of collecting the information, and how accessible it will be. If it is not easily accessible, alternative data collection strategies will need to be developed.

### 3.3.9 Selecting realistic targets

At the beginning stages of an intervention, it is essential to understand the context in which activities are going to be implemented and the stakeholders involved in development, implementation and feedback. Understanding the context will assist with understanding the likely timelines for implementation. Where there may be a long timeline between project set-up and implementation, it is better to set lower targets in the early stages, and to increase these further on into implementation.

Measurement has two components:

- Baseline measures that reflect the state of a particular programme or activity at the point of beginning a project, programme or policy. This provides the basis for measuring the extent of progress over time.
- Targets which are the improvement that is expected to happen through the development or implementation of a project, programme or policy.

These targets are set at the beginning stages of an intervention and monitored frequently (e.g., quarterly or bi-annually) to establish the extent of change. Where there is limited progress, there is an opportunity to try and gather additional information to understand possible reasons for this.

A good target is one that can demonstrate progress and is feasible to monitor. The target does not need to be high, for it to be regarded as good and should consider how long it may take something to happen. If targets are identified for an activity that may take a long time to complete, targets will need to be lower to demonstrate progress, as compared to an alternative outcome or result that may be achieved sooner.

### 3.3.10 Developing an M&E plan

It is important to develop a consolidated document – an M&E plan - that outlines the approach to M&E and details key processes. An M&E plan provides guidance to all individuals involved. It clearly outlines the overall logic (results framework) and indicators linked to this, includes a definition for each indicator, data sources and specifies how information is collected and stored, who is responsible for collection, collation, quality control and analysis and outlines processes for ensuring data quality, analysis and reporting.



### 3.3.11 Using M&E information to inform decision-making

Monitoring occurs on an ongoing basis as a means of establishing progress, identifying barriers and where course corrections may be required in the development or implementation of a policy or programme.

Evaluation takes place at identified points in design and implementation, with a specific focus on areas of interest such as the extent to which implementation is proceeding as planned, effectiveness of processes and systems and preliminary indications of outcomes etc.

Together, the information collected and analysed as part of monitoring activities and evaluation exercises can equip decision-makers to make evidence-based decisions. Evaluation is most effective if it is designed with use in mind and recommendations are practical and implementable, given the context.

Evaluation is only useful to the extent that the information generated is used and informs decision-making. Evaluation findings could include feedback from users and service providers, barriers to implementation, and capacity needs which can be used as part of a review and re-design process. Evaluation information can also provide guidance as to the extent of review needed to ensure the NQF or RQF continues to meet its objectives or needs to be reviewed.

## 4 Monitoring and evaluation - use in the ACQF

This chapter is focussed on understanding the rationale for M&E within NQFs and RQFs, and elaborates on this using case examples. It is structured according to the key elements of an M&E system, and the considerations to be given as to how information is collected, analysed and used. It includes a Results Framework (which can be customised) for an NQF and a results framework for the ACQF.

### 4.1 Why monitor and evaluate NQFs and RQFs

There are a variety of reasons why M&E is necessary and useful in the context of NQFs and RQFs.

In the absence of M&E, there is a risk that the process of developing NQFs and RQFs becomes a formality are they not implemented. M&E should be responsible for tracking the progress of the NQFs and RQFs, keeping implementation on track, ensuring that quality results and informing stakeholders about their results. M&E is crucial to understanding the progress being made towards the major objectives of respective NQFs and RQFs, including the ACQF, and the conditions and factors associated with effectiveness M&E will expose methods and areas that may not be working at all and need to be reconsidered and revised in order to achieve the desired results. M&E can enable NQFs and RQFs to be dynamic; converging to meet different stakeholder needs and adapting to changing circumstances (ACQF, 2021a). M&E can also be used to ensure accountability, direct public resource allocation and inform decision making (Presidency, 2007), hence being a directive for priorities in NQFs and RQFs. NQFs are relatively new in most contexts and to date, there has been limited documented evidence of their effectiveness and impact. On this basis, it is important to monitor and evaluate NQFs in terms of their intended and actual impacts and outcomes (Morrison, 2020, 3). The body of evidence that exists on the development and implementation of NQFs, can be enhanced, and lessons learned can be applied when developing other NQFs, and the ACQF.

M&E will assist with understanding the nature of implementation of the NQFs and RQFs including the ACQF. M&E would take place at the level of articulating towards a common framework and then implementation or application of the respective NQF or RQF. For instance, assessing progress with respect to the development and adoption of a legislative and policy framework, establishment and functioning of a governance system, the stage of development and completeness of an NQF, engagement in the NQF development process, the application of level descriptors and levels, quality assurance, recognition of prior learning (RPL), referencing and the registration of qualifications and learners on relevant databases. This includes ensuring that accredited programmes and qualifications reference to the NQF, supporting articulation between qualifications, enabling progression and supporting collaboration across education subsectors (general education, TVET and higher education). In the case of the ACQF, M&E should also establish the extent to which there is uptake of resources and capacity development initiatives and the extent to which these are utilised to strengthen NQFs.

Evaluation will identify anomalies and suggest steps to be put in place to resolve them. For instance, whether qualifications reference to the NQF or NQFs reference to the ACQF, whether there is uptake of RPL, whether a learning outcomes approach is being utilised, the identification of programmes and qualifications that teach similar concepts at similar levels, but are regarded differently, with one of higher value than the other. There is also scope to investigate the extent to which trust is being established/developed between stakeholders, there are multiple pathways (which transact education subsectors) to acquire skills and there is mobility, portability and recognition of qualifications. Evaluation can establish the extent to which the NQFs and RQFs respond to challenges, and create opportunities for more flexible and responsive education and training systems – according to key stakeholder groups.

NQFs and RQFs are expected assist with identifying gaps in provision and facilitate integration of formal and non-formal learning, alongside vocational qualifications, which is envisaged to assist with overcoming barriers to entry into the labour market. Evaluation requires considering the extent to which NQFs and RQFs are meeting the purposes they set out to do. This includes considering relevance, implementation, effectiveness and, where appropriate, the extent of review and redesign that has taken place. Evaluation should consider aspects such as the extent to which an NQF or RQF facilitates inclusion, enabling people who may ordinarily be locked out of the labour market to participate.

To be able to monitor progress towards development and implementation of an NQF or RQF, it is necessary to undertake a baseline of what exists, both in terms of existing qualification frameworks at country and regional level and the current landscape of provision (both formal, informal, nationally accredited providers, international qualifications, academic and vocational). Countries that formed part of the ACQF (2021a) mapping study, can draw on that to determine their baseline.

## 4.2 Creating an M&E System

Establishing an M&E system is a process of co-creation, and should consider the available resources to implement the system, in order that it can serve its intended purpose.

### 4.2.1 Institutional arrangements for M&E of an NQF or RQF

The institutional arrangements for M&E of an NQF or RQF should be considered as part and parcel of the institutional arrangements for governance and management of the NQF or RQF. Governance is usually the

mandate of a board - although the exact arrangements will depend on the organisational structure of the NQF and legislation - whilst it is management's task to implement the agreed policy and strategy set by the Board. It is recommended that a national authority (unit/agency) is tasked with implementation of an NQF and management usually comprises executives of the main organisation tasked with managing and implementing the NQF (ACQF CDP, 2021). It would therefore be important for the M&E unit to work closely with the NQF implementers and managers – providing data to inform implementation and guide course correction AND for the M&E unit to have a reporting line to the NQF governance structure – to provide information to enable them to monitor the performance of NQF management and ascertain whether the agreed policy and strategy are effective. It is recommended that 'the responsibilities and possible institutional arrangements that can support effective implementation of an NQF' be clarified, 'by reviewing both existing institutional capacities and the need for additional capacities' (ACQF CDP, 2021, 5). The function, responsibilities and location of the M&E unit should be considered when this assessment is undertaken.

#### 4.2.2 Results framework for the ACQF and an NQF

One of the first steps is the creation of a **Results Framework**, which outlines the various steps to be followed to be able to achieve the intended results. The process of developing a Results Framework can be done collaboratively within a team and provides the basis for developing a common understanding of the objectives of a project, programme or policy and the steps to be followed to achieve the intended results.

Two results frameworks have been developed to accompany this guideline, one for an NQF and another for the ACQF, these are presented overleaf.

Notably, the results frameworks could be customised to be applicable to specific national and regional contexts. The NQF results framework could be applicable both to a context in which the NQF is at an early stage of development - in which case the main focus would be on the activities and outputs in the middle and on the right - AND to a context in which the NQF has been in place for some time and a review in planned/ has been undertaken. In the latter case the focus would be on ALL activities and outputs (including those on the left) AND outcomes and impact.

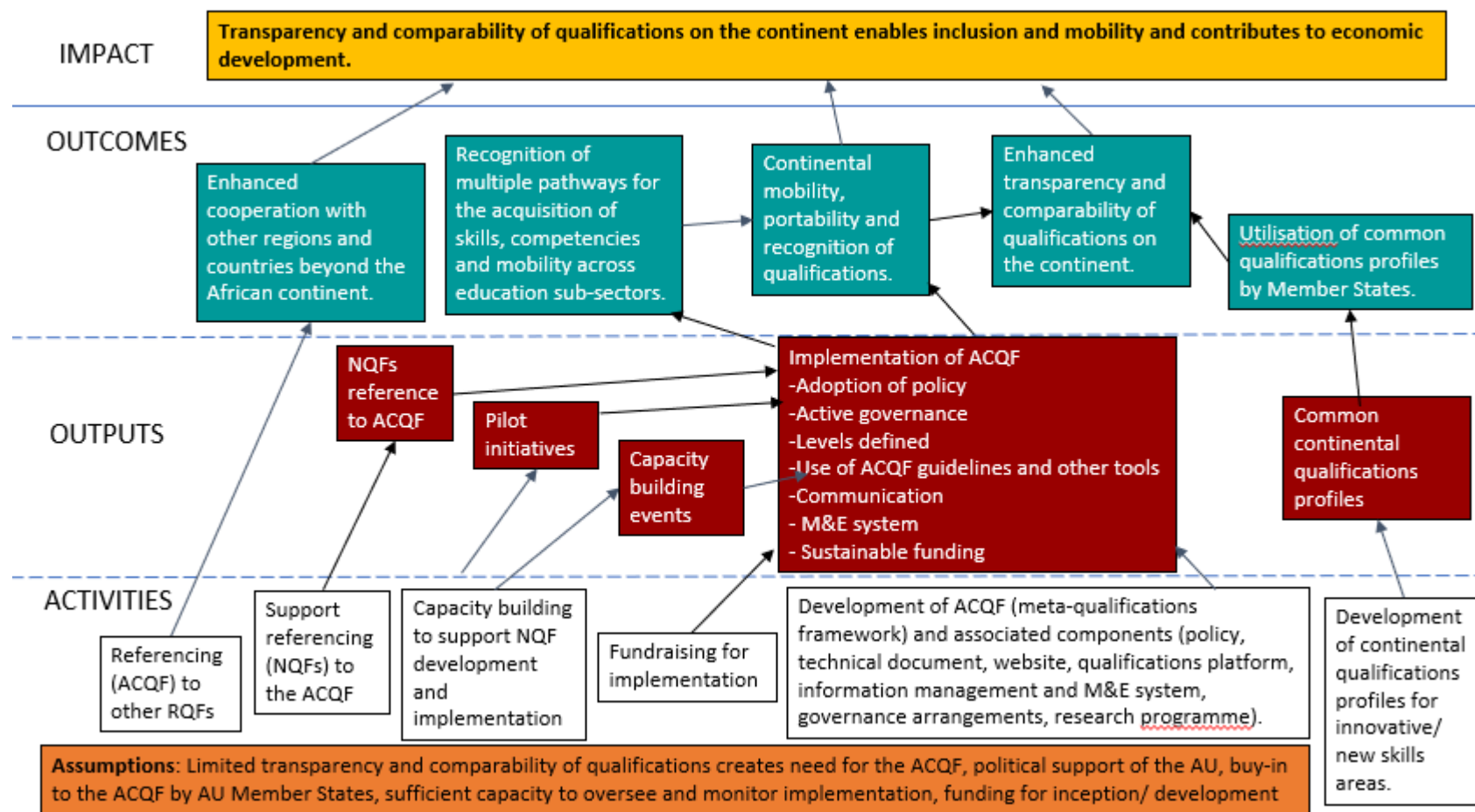


Figure 7: ACQF results framework

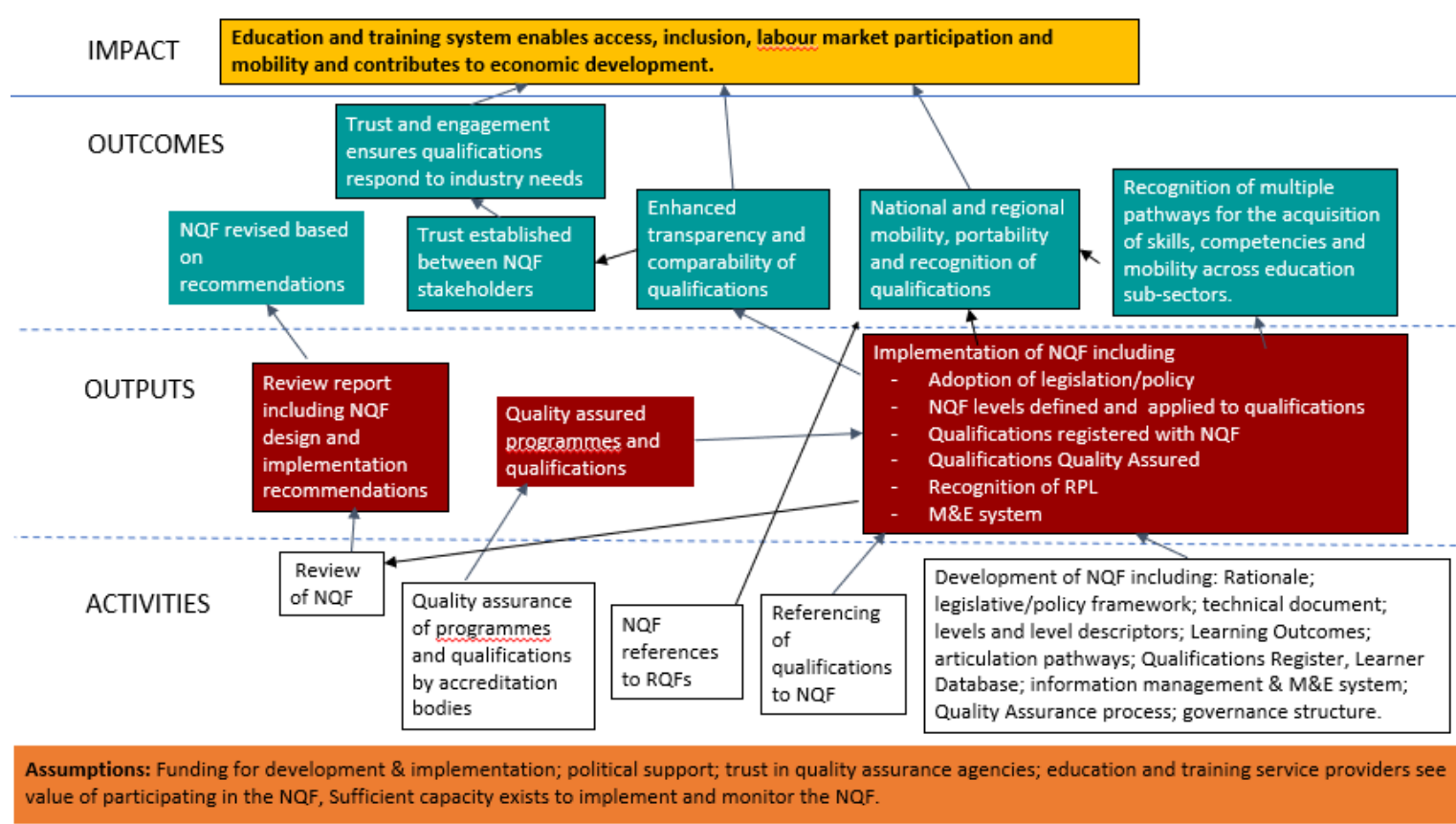


Figure 8: NQE results framework

### 4.2.3 Identifying indicators

A results framework provided the basis for identifying indicators; indicators are typically identified and measured at all levels of the results framework. This includes at activity/output<sup>5</sup>, outcome and impact levels.

As part of the development of this guideline and training manual, a core set of indicators have been identified and are proposed for the M&E of NQFs and the ACQF. The digital M&E tool which is being developed as a companion to this guideline contains the proposed core indicators in a format (Excel) that is customisable for different contexts. Whilst Member States are encouraged to develop a customised set of indicators which are relevant and important to their context, it is proposed that a **core set of indicators** is agreed upon and data collected on these by all countries utilising the ACQF. After agreeing on these core indicators, they need to be clearly defined (i.e. what will be measured) and the sources of data, data collection instruments, frequency and timing and who will be responsible for data collection, collation/management, analysis, quality assurance and reporting confirmed. This will ensure that these processes are undertaken in a standardised manner and will make it possible to aggregate information upwards from national to regional and continental levels.

Data should also be collected in sufficient detail that it is possible to disaggregate it for important sub-groups that have been identified (e.g. education sub-sectors, males, females, children, youth and adults, disabled and non-disabled persons, individuals from specific geographical areas and so on).

The table below outlines the proposed core indicators an NQFs and the ACQF:

**Table 5: Proposed NQF and ACQF core indicators**

Indicator description	Indicator type	Unit of measurement	Level of measurement	Link to ACQF transversal theme
Existence of an NQF	Output	NQFs (Yes/No)	Member State, AU	Conceptual, legal and policy basis
Stage of development of NQF	Output	NQFs (scale 1-5)	Member State, AU	Conceptual, legal and policy basis
Number of NQFs and RQFs referenced to the ACQF	Output	NQFs, RQFs	AU	Alignment and referencing
Number of RQFs the ACQF is referenced to	Output	RQFs	AU	Alignment and referencing
Number of qualifications registered on the NQF	Output	Qualifications	Member State	Database/ register of qualifications
Number of RPL applications processed	Output	RPL applications	Member State	
Extent to which NQF implementation is costed and progress is tracked against expenditure	Output	NQF (scale tbd)	Member State	Costs and financing
Number of Member States utilising ACQF guidelines	Outcome	Member States, rubric	Member State, AU	Role and place of RQFs in supporting development at a national level

<sup>5</sup> Output indicators (which are the results or products of activities) re usually identified and measured as opposed to activity indicators (which may also be referred to as process indicators).

Indicator description	Indicator type	Unit of measurement	Level of measurement	Link to ACQF transversal theme
Number of youth and adults who have accredited qualifications	Outcome	Individuals	Member State	Cross-cutting
Number of Member States using ACQF common continental qualifications profiles	Outcome	Member States and qualifications profiles	Member State, AU	Alignment and referencing
Inbound mobility ratio	Impact	Students, country	Member State	Cross-cutting
Outbound mobility ratio	Impact	Students, country	Member State	Cross-cutting

The indicators presented above focus on establishing and implementing an NQF and establishing and implementing the ACQF and measuring their envisaged outcomes, they are aligned with the results frameworks. They can also be cross-referenced linked to the ACQF transversal themes, as illustrated in the far-left column.

#### 4.2.4 Data sources

Monitoring data can be collected from a range of sources to assess progress in the development, implementation and outcomes of an NQF and RQF. At an NQF level, this data can include information from the general, TVET and higher education and training sub-sectors, industry and trade bodies and statistical agencies, on the nature of qualifications, demographic data and levels of education within the general population. Where information may already be collected or reported elsewhere, those responsible for reporting should obtain information through these already existing data sources to avoid duplication of effort. Statistical agencies are custodians of national surveys and population statistics, and may be in a position to incorporate important questions in national surveys. This could, but not be limited to, include information about skills and qualification status of migrants and would benefit from portability and recognition of qualifications. This is particularly important where skilled individuals may not be able to work in the area of their training due to lack of comparability in qualifications. Data provided by the Higher Education sector could include higher education system progression rates.

At ACQF level, secondary data sources could be provided by those responsible for the various transversal themes (i.e., conceptual, policy and legal base; governance; vision, scope and structure; quality assurance; learning outcomes; credit systems; alignment and referencing; searchable databases/ registers of qualifications; costs and financing; dissemination, communication and end-users; and role and place of RQFs in supporting development at a national level).

#### 4.2.5 Data collection instruments

Data Collection instruments can be developed to collect specific information which has not previously been collected. Potential data collection instruments can include surveys and structured, semi-structured and unstructured interview guides. Establishing standardised data collection tools across contexts will support the collection of similar data, which can contribute to ensuring that subsequent steps of data management and analysis occur smoothly.

Data that is collected should be captured and reported in standardised instruments to reduce the risk of errors. These standardised instruments could be electronic or paper-based. Instruments need to include fields such as the date, details of the person completing the instrument, the site where information is being collected and include fields for quality control and verification. Instruments should be structured to collect only information that will be analysed and reported on, which will reduce the burden of collecting unnecessary data which may not be used. Instruments should include all fields that need to be reported on. Data should be captured in line with the indicator definitions.

Once data collection instruments have been developed, individuals responsible for collecting and capturing information should be trained in the use of the instruments to ensure there is a clear understanding of the instruments including each field, and the potential for errors.

#### 4.2.6 Data management

Data management is an important part of the process, and the conceptualisation of M&E should consider from the onset how data will be stored and maintained. Two important options for data storage are relational databases and non-relational databases.

Relational databases are stored like spreadsheets with fields defined in column headings and each row indicating a discrete entry or instance. Non-relational databases store more and different types of information, including documents, timelines and larger files such as video. A key feature of both types of databases is that they can be queried across one or more inputs for information, graphs, trend analyses and so forth. Databases are covered in some detail in training module 9 on innovation and technology.

An important consideration for data management is the *interoperability* of systems and data inputs. Interoperability, quite simply, is the ability of different components or systems to exchange information meaningfully. Setting up your internal data collection methodologies and tools to facilitate interoperability is one of the easiest ways to do this. A good example is dates and dating. Let's say an indicator of interest is the number of youth with accredited qualifications. You could simply ask for age, e.g., 'How old are you?' to determine whether or not an individual with a qualification is classified as a 'youth'. However, if multiple rounds of data collection are required, or years later you want to reach out to only students who are 28 in that year, for example, your dataset could now look very complex. You might have to look at data collected over many years and perform calculations for each year to determine current age. This is why there is a preference to collect 'date of birth' rather than asking for the age of a participant.

Another important consideration of interoperability is *semantic interoperability*. This is the level of interoperability which deals with meaning. A good example in some NQFs of a space which has *not* achieved interoperability is the use of the word 'credit'. The meaning of 'credit' may differ by institution, referring sometimes to notional hours (the total time expected to master learning outcomes), sometimes to hours spent by the instructor or in-class time, and sometimes just to course completion. This makes comparison of 'credit requirements' difficult, and emphasizes the importance of indicator descriptions. It must be clear what is meant by the term 'credit', even if this may differ from some institutional practices. Institutions must then undertake the necessary calculations or adjustments to align to a national (or international) framework.



If interoperability is achieved, data systems can exchange information seamlessly, and as a result a greatly expanded pool of information can be leveraged for analysis and subsequent decision-making. There are a number of examples particularly in the labour market intelligence space. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) has a series of dashboards generated through the collection of international interoperable data sets<sup>6</sup>, and the European Training Foundation has also worked with Tunisia and the Ukraine to leverage big data for labour market intelligence<sup>7</sup>. In South Africa, the PSET CLOUD initiative<sup>8</sup> seeks to improve the interoperability of government data to provide useful insights to not only government, but also citizens, in order to improve decision-making in the area of education and training. The insights generated by initiatives such as these can feed into not only monitoring and evaluation, but also qualifications review and revision, and it is hoped they will contribute to reducing the skills supply and demand mismatches.

#### 4.2.7 Analysis methods

Data that is collected can be used for different purposes, and this will inform the nature of analysis that is undertaken.

This can include thematic analysis of qualitative data (interviews, focus group discussions and reports) which entails the identification of themes emerging in the data, to answer research and evaluation questions. This analysis method can be used with primary data that has been collected, or through a review of secondary data sources.

Additionally, there are possibilities for quantitative analysis i.e., descriptive (count, percentage, minimum, maximum and range) and inferential. Descriptive statistics provide high level information about the data set and seek to establish possible associations between each of the indicators/variables. In the NQF or RQF context, this could be the percentage of qualifications with learning outcomes at an NQF level, and the number of countries that have referenced to an RQF (RQF/ACQF level).

Descriptive statistics may be followed by inferential statistics. Inferential statistics entails establishing the predictions about what the data shows and the probability that the data could be generalisable to the broader population (Monsen, 2017).

If different data collection methods and sources of data are used, there is value in triangulating and comparing the findings from different data collection methods and sources. Triangulation involves the process of combining various sources of data with a view to verifying the evidence collected, identifying any gaps and areas of inconsistency. These data sources can be quantitative and qualitative. Combining and comparing data sources also assists with developing a more comprehensive evidence base, whereby quantitative data can provide a snapshot of a situation and qualitative data may be able to explain and describe why results will have occurred (or not). By triangulating, one can get a deeper understanding of a specific situation/context.

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<sup>6</sup> These can be explored at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools>

<sup>7</sup> For more details, see: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/events/big-data-labour-market-intelligence-lmi-building-system-online-job-vacancy>

<sup>8</sup> For more details, see: <https://psetcloud.org.za/>

## 4.2.8 Reporting, dissemination and use

After collecting and analysing, data should be collated and findings reported to the agencies or individuals involved in the development or implementation of the NQF and the ACQF when in place. These individuals should have already been identified (see Section 3.3.3) and may include the board or other governance structure, the national agency responsible for implementation/management, and social partners (employers, education institutions etc). Reporting should be in line with agreed upon timelines, and reports prepared that are tailored to the users' needs. It may be necessary to develop reports in different formats for different users e.g. infographics which provide a visual overview of key trends and comprehensive and technical reports. Country-level data related to the implementation of an NQF may be reported as part of broader, overall higher education reporting and results. Intentional capacity building to use M&E data is recommended (see Section 3.3.4).

Accurate and up-to-date monitoring data makes it possible to track progress, manage activities and provides the basis for decision making about ongoing implementation, and policy and programme design, development and refinement. Establishing organisational buy-in will be influenced by whether individuals see the purpose of monitoring data collection and how it is used. Data is only valuable if it is used. This can take the form of using data to inform or justify decisions, or considering the implications of results, and making decisions based on evidence. This confirms the value of the data collection and analysis process.

Monitoring data can be supplemented by evaluations at predetermined intervals.

## 4.2.9 Evaluation

Evaluation can be undertaken to gather feedback on implementation, with the intention to review the NQF or ACQF. Evaluating policy requires considering whether the policy is being implemented as intended, and whether it is achieving its intended outcomes and impact (e.g. transparency and comparability of qualifications, access and inclusion, labour market participation and mobility).

Evaluation should be planned from the inception stages of developing a project, programme or policy. This includes identifying when an evaluation will be undertaken, what questions will be answered, what methods will be used, the types of data to be collected and the sources of data. Templates for an evaluation plan and evaluation Terms of Reference (ToRs) are included in Appendix B.

Possible **evaluation questions** for an NQF could include:

1. How effectively were stakeholders engaged in the development of the NQF? Are there indications of ownership of the NQF by intended users?
2. To what extent has the NQF been implemented? What are the enablers of and barriers to implementation?
3. Which processes for achieving the objectives of the NQF have proved more or less useful?
4. How effective has the NQF been in enabling labour market mobility for graduates and employees?
5. To what extent has the NQF been able to support the achievement of inclusive life-long learning?
6. What areas of the NQF require further consideration to maximise its results?

7. How has the NQF been able to adapt to the dynamic nature of the education and training system?
8. How well has the NQF been able to respond to changes in the labour market and related implications for qualification status?

A number of the above evaluation questions could also be applicable for an evaluation of the ACQF. The following evaluation questions may also be considered:

9. How has the ACQF been able to adapt to the dynamic nature of the education and training system in participating countries?
10. To what extent has there been uptake of the various ACQF capacity building initiatives?
11. To what extent has the ACQF and its various capacity building initiatives assisted countries to develop their own NQFs?

Evaluation can be undertaken internally from within an organisation, or by an independent team that is external to the organisation, or in some instances, an internal team may work alongside an external team (hybrid model).

Considerations when planning an evaluation include extent of data that is already available, the nature and extent of primary data collection required, who should be involved in the different phases of the evaluation (e.g. planning, data collection, analysis, reporting and dissemination), who the main users of the evaluation will be and who will influence how the findings of an evaluation are used.

Utilisation-focussed evaluation is focussed on the intended use and users of the evaluation, and ensuring that the evaluation is undertaken in a way that will maximise use (Patton, 2012). This includes considering users during the evaluation, and users of evaluation findings (such as decision-makers, policy makers, accreditation bodies).

Available budget will influence the nature of the evaluation and consideration must be given to ensuring that evaluation is suitable given the stage of development/implementation of the evaluand and the purpose of the evaluation. In its early stages, where an NQF or the ACQF has been recently established, it would be more appropriate to undertake a formative evaluation which is intended to assess progress in implementation and feed into a review. It would be premature to attempt to assess outcomes and impact and such an evaluation would be unlikely to generate useful information that can inform decision-making.

Appendix A contains case examples of evaluations which have been undertaken of NQFs in four different country contexts, including two in Africa (South Africa and Cape Verde).

The impact of developing and implementing an NQF cannot be easily measured, as it is not possible to remove the influence of other factors within the education and training system. By way of example, while an objective of an NQF may be to increase the number of people with formal qualifications, and the number of people graduating with qualifications may increase following the development of an NQF, it may be because of a wide range of factors (e.g. including because a tuition subsidy has been introduced). This means we cannot **attribute** the increase in qualifications to the NQF, but we may be able to say that the development and implementation of an NQF **contributed** - among other factors - to this result.

**Contribution analysis** provides one means of establishing how a policy or programme may have played a role in achieving the intended result. It is a process which includes inferring causality and how and why changes may have occurred. Contribution analysis can be used at three levels (INTRAC, 2017).

Minimalist contribution analysis which has a focus on outputs and involves confirming that activities included in the results framework have happened and the outputs have been delivered (such as development of NQF).

Contribution analysis of direct influence is focussed on confirming that activities within the direct influence of the policy have happened, but it is not necessary to establish whether this influence may have contributed to any further indirect change (such as advocacy for the recognition of qualifications across education sub-systems).

Contribution analysis of wider influence which is focussed on establishing how indirect influence may have contributed to further wider changes in the education and training system (such as referencing of qualifications on the continent contributing to increased mobility).

**Outcome Harvesting** is another possible means to determine the impact of an NQF or RQF. This approach begins by looking at the end point after implementation of a policy or programme and working backwards to identify the outcomes of that policy or programme. It is not rooted in measuring against a predetermined set of objectives but is rather focussed on determining whether the NQF or RQF may have contributed to changes which have occurred. It is recognised as well-suited to a dynamic initiative where the outcomes and impacts are not yet clear (Better Evaluation website, undated).

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Case examples of M&E of NQFs in different contexts

This annexure contains case examples of four countries; two in Africa (South Africa and Cape Verde) and two in Europe (Ireland and Slovenia). All the case studies were selected to demonstrate the complexity of evaluating NQFs, but also to illustrate the use value of considering the evaluation of aims and objectives as early as possible, and the potential implications they might have on monitoring activities that relate to those objectives. Together the cases are expected to be useful as a guideline that users could learn from, particularly countries considering commissioning/undertaking an NQF review. Further guidance in this regard can be accessed in evaluations of NQFs globally discussed in two ILO reports (Allais, 2010, 2017).

#### **Implementation Evaluation of the National Qualification Framework Act (2008) [South Africa] Evaluation Framework and Analytical Plan**

In an attempt to change the skewed and largely dysfunctional system that disadvantaged many at the benefit of a few, the [South African] NQF was seen as a pivotal framework wherein transformation **could take place**.

The overarching vision for the NQF was a contribution to the full personal development of each learner and the social-economic development of the country.

The NQF Act (2008) defines the NQF as ‘a comprehensive system approved by the Minister for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications’, and sets out the objectives of the NQF as to:

- Create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;
- Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths;
- Enhance the quality of education and training;
- Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.

Change [brought about by the South African NQF] is based on the fundamental logic that **if** ‘a comprehensive system for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications’ is established, **then** it will lead to:

- Functioning single national integrated national framework for learning achievements,
- Improved access to, mobility and progression within education, training and career paths, and
- Enhanced the quality of education and training.

These outcomes collectively contribute to the longer-term impacts of:

- Full personal development of all learners;
- Social and economic development of the nation at large; and
- Accelerated redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.

It is hard to isolate the contribution of the NQF to these impacts from that of the broader education and training system. In describing the impact of the NQF, policymakers have used the term ‘contribution’. This may imply that policymakers see the NQF as broader and enabling framework that could benefit learners and society without necessarily thinking of the causal mechanisms through which these changes are achieved.

These objectives have been broken down in **seven** immediate and **three** intermediate outcomes. The intermediate outcomes focus on the medium-term benefits of the NQF. These are:

- Enhanced quality of education and training
- Public credibility of the NQF system

- Improved access to a pool of skilled foreign labour

The seven immediate outcomes identified in the theory of change are:

- Policy coherence and alignment
- A functioning single integrated qualifications system that is context-appropriate
- Improved country capacity for the classification, development, registration & publication of national qualifications
- South African qualifications achieved by the learner are of acceptable quality and internationally comparable
- Improved learner access, portability, progression, articulation of qualifications
- Informed choices about qualifications, providers and career paths
- Public credibility of professions

An indicator matrix, including data sources, linked to the all ten outcomes as well as evaluation questions are developed in this plan.

DNA Economics. 2017. Implementation Evaluation of the National Qualification Framework Act (2008) Evaluation Framework and Analytical Plan (pp 6, 9, 11, 18-26)

## Monitoring and Evaluation and the National Qualification Framework in Cape Verde

The **National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of Cabo Verde has 10 years of experience** and has been operationalised as an instrument of the National Qualifications System (SNQ). This is a fundamental characteristic that marks the nature and functions of the NQF and its interconnection with the other instruments of the SNQ.

The SNQ comprises the instruments necessary for the promotion, development and integration of training offer and qualifications, and the evaluation and certification of competences enabling professional, human, and social development of the individuals and responding to the needs of the economic system. The SNQ is operationalised by the combined action of the following instruments:

- **The NQF (in Portuguese: QNQ)**
- The CNQ
- The credit system
- The individual register of qualifications and competences
- The system of monitoring, evaluation and quality improvement of the SNQ
- The system of recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC)

By legislation ([Decree-Law 4/2018](#)), the NQF is **monitored**, as part of the system of monitoring, evaluation and quality improvement of the SNQ. Monitoring and evaluation of the SNQ and NQF is a competence of the public institutions in charge of education and training policies. The social partners, in articulation with the public organs, shall participate in monitoring and evaluation of the NQF/SNQ.

Drawn from Castel-Branco, E. 2021a. African Continental Qualifications Framework Mapping Study. Country report- Cabo Verde. (pp 5, 6)

Castel-Branco (2021a) does not outline the methodology that is used to monitor and evaluate – further details can however be accessed from the following:

República de Capo Verde. 2018. Boletim Oficial. [http://snq.cv/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/1.-Novo-RJG-SNQ\\_BO-N.%C2%BA-04-I-Se%CC%81rie-JAN-2018.pdf](http://snq.cv/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/1.-Novo-RJG-SNQ_BO-N.%C2%BA-04-I-Se%CC%81rie-JAN-2018.pdf)

República de Capo Verde. 2017. PLANO ESTRATÉGICO DA EDUCAÇÃO CABO VERDE. [https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/plano\\_estrategico\\_da\\_educacao\\_cv-vfinal.pdf](https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/plano_estrategico_da_educacao_cv-vfinal.pdf)

## Evaluation of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

The NFQ was launched in 2003, and established a ten-level system of knowledge, skill and competence for the recognition of all types of learning. This ranges from Level 1 Certificates which recognise basic learning, to Level 10 for Doctoral Degrees and Higher Doctorates. The NFQ provides an objective basis to specify the breadth and depth of knowledge required to achieve awards at each level, as well as mapping out the relationships between the different levels.

### Scope and Terms of Reference

The review provided an initial policy impact assessment of the NFQ. This review was designed to inform future NFQ policy development, implementation and evaluation, and address the following aspects of the impact of the NFQ, and the role of QQI [Quality and Qualifications Ireland] in this context:

- Awareness of the NFQ and its contribution to transparency of the system and of qualifications more generally;
- Quality of teaching and learning – contribution of the NFQ to ensuring that qualifications are responsive to the needs of the economy, society and the individual, including the quality of awards, and the facilitation of recognition of national and international qualifications;
- Promoting qualification progression – role of the NFQ in the development of integrated pathways between qualifications and facilitation of learner progression;
- International mobility – contribution of the NFQ to improving the international mobility of qualifications;
- Employability and employment – including the extent to which the NFQ has impacted the optimal matching of learners with employment opportunities, as well as the extent to which the NFQ has contributed to the development of labour market policy; and,
- The role that QQI plays in promotion and implementation of the NFQ and future policy priorities for the NFQ.

### Methodology

In examining the above areas of impact, this review encompassed the following tasks:

1. Development and administration of an online survey of national stakeholder views on both the impact of the NFQ to date and future policy priorities for the NFQ.
2. A series of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders were conducted to examine the role and contribution of the NFQ to policy objectives.
3. Data collected were analysed and a written report of findings concerning the initial impact of the NFQ to date and policy priorities for future NFQ development was prepared.

A four-phased methodology and work programme was applied by the Indecon team in to complete the review as detailed above. The approach was designed to rigorously address each aspect of the terms of reference.

### Caveat re limitations of review

It is important to note that there are limitations to the determination of the precise impacts of a framework such as the NFQ, which essentially plays a facilitative role in the context of a wider education and training system. In particular, the effects of the NFQ are indirect in nature, and the NFQ is understood as an enabler

rather than a driver of change. These features mean that determining the causal relationship between the NFQ and its impacts on society and the economy is challenging. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the emerging body of knowledge about the impact of qualifications frameworks in Europe and beyond.

Overall, through the extensive inputs provided via the survey research and based on bilateral semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, this impact assessment has found a generally high level of support for the NFQ and a positive assessment of the NFQ's contribution under a number of headings.

Indecon. 2017. Policy Impact Assessment of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications. Ireland: QQI (pp ii-ix, 8-11)

## Evaluation of the Slovenian qualifications framework (SQF) and the register of qualifications of the SQF

The Slovenian Qualifications Framework (SQF) is a unified system of qualifications in the Republic of Slovenia for the classification of qualification into levels with regard to learning outcomes. The SQF includes all types of qualifications that can be gained in Slovenia. The purpose of the SQF is to achieve transparency and recognition of qualifications in Slovenia and the EU.

[T]he first large-scale evaluation carried out among a diverse range of users who use the SQF and SQF Register for various purposes ... show that the SQF is positively accepted among users and that they positively evaluate its contribution to the transparency and orderliness of the education system, together with the transparency of qualifications. At the same time, ... the SQF has contributed to the systematic organisation of the education system in those areas that were properly developed before its introduction.

The aim of the evaluation is to determine how different stakeholders assess the utility, recognition and visibility of the SQF and their understanding of the framework.

There are four main objectives of the evaluation:

1. We want to find out how stakeholders understand the SQF.
2. We want to find out how stakeholders use the SQF.
3. We want to find out to what extent the SQF is recognised among the stakeholders.
4. We want to find out whether the SQF has an influence on the educational system and what this influence is.

### Areas of the evaluation and research questions

Based on the identified purpose and objectives, we defined four areas of evaluation:

Table 1: Areas of the evaluation

Objectives of the evaluation	Areas of the evaluation
------------------------------	-------------------------

1. Determine how the stakeholders understand the SQF.

**P1. UNDERSTANDING THE FRAMEWORK AMONG THE STAKEHOLDERS**

2. Determine how the stakeholders use the SQF.

**P2. USE OF THE FRAMEWORK AMONG THE STAKEHOLDERS**

3. Determine the extent of recognition of the SQF among the stakeholders.

**P3. RECOGNITION OF THE FRAMEWORK AMONG THE STAKEHOLDERS**

4. Determine whether the SQF has an influence on the educational system and what this influence is.

**P4. ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE SQF ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

Within each field of evaluation, the following research questions were identified

1. UNDERSTANDING: We want to find out how stakeholders understand the SQF, namely:

- How do they understand the underlying logic, purpose and goals of the framework?
- How do they understand each type of qualification?
- How do they understand the relationships between types of qualifications?

2. APPLICATION: We want to find out how stakeholders use the SQF, namely:

- How and for what purposes the SQF is used in the various subsystems; education (general, vocational, higher education, adult education) and the labor market?
- To what extent is the SQF used in national education policies?
- Is and how is the SQF used in the transition between different qualification subsystems?
- Is the SQF being used and how is it being used to meet the mobility needs of students, students and staff?
- Is and how is the SQF used in the recognition of qualifications?

3. RECOGNITION: We want to find out how the SQF is recognized among different stakeholders, namely:

- Is the SQF recognized among individuals (high-school students, students, job seekers)?
- Is the SQF recognized by representatives of the key stakeholders: representatives of ministries, representatives of student organizations, representatives of high-school school student organizations, high-school representatives, representatives of faculties, representatives of career advisers of the Employment Service of Slovenia?
- How high is the visibility of the current activities of NCP in promoting SQF?

4. ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE SQF ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: We want to determine whether the SQF descriptors are used in the creation of programming documents, namely:

- How do SQF descriptors affect the format of learning outcomes (updated vocational standards, catalogues for practical training, selected PUD (on-the-job training) plans)?

#### **Research methods and techniques:**

- • Focus groups
- • Interviews
- • Surveys
- • Qualitative analysis of national documents

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

##### **RECOGNITION OF THE SQF REGISTER BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

From the data obtained, it can be concluded that the level of awareness of the SQF Register among the studied general public is low five years after its establishment, as four-fifths of the Slovenian respondents are not yet familiar with it.

##### **USE OF THE SQF REGISTER BY THE GENERAL AND PROFESSIONAL PUBLIC**

From the data obtained, it can be concluded that the level of awareness of the SQF Register among the studied general public is relatively low.

The SQF Register is primarily used to provide information on existing qualifications, for the needs of one's own education and training and for the needs of work practise and, to a lesser extent, for mobility purposes.

The SQF Register is widespread among the professional public, but is rare, as it is most frequently used by the latter only once a year or several times a year.

##### **UNDERSTANDING OF THE SQF REGISTER BY THE PROFESSIONAL PUBLIC**

The understanding of the SQF Register among the professional public is good: The SQF Register is assessed as a transparent system, the components of the description of qualifications are generally well understood and the descriptions of learning outcomes are usually sufficient to represent the qualification.

Ermenc, K. S., Mikulec, B. & Biloslavo R. 2020. Evaluation of the Slovenian qualifications framework and the register of qualifications of the SQF. Ljubljana : Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (pp 6-7, 21–24, 102-107)

The report of this evaluation also contains a chapter titled, 'Approaches to assessing the impact of National Qualification Frameworks' (pp 15-19)

Appendix B: M&E Templates and Tools

Indicator reference sheet

Indicator	Definition	Data Collection Tool	Frequency of data collection	Individuals responsible for collecting data	Individuals responsible for quality control	Individuals responsible for use

## Evaluation plan template

Cite this template as: JET Education Services. (2020). *Evaluation Plan*. Johannesburg: JET.

An evaluation plan will assist with defining the scope and focus of an evaluation. It assists with building clarity and should be conceptualised from the inception of a policy process, though may be written up in a formal template at the point of undertaking the evaluation. This plan also assists with building consensus as to the purpose and value of evaluation with the individuals involved in planning and managing/undertaking an evaluation.

### Background and contextual information

Background to the intervention, focusing on:

- Progress to date
- Context that informs the need for evaluation

### Purpose of the evaluation

Describe the overall purpose of the evaluation, focusing on:

- The broad objectives of the evaluation

### Evaluation questions

- Evaluation questions that provide structure and are informed by the objectives of the evaluation

### Scope of work and activities to be conducted

- Time period to be evaluated
- Recommended evaluation approach

### Timelines and deliverables

- Timeframe for the evaluation, including key dates and
- Deliverables such as a report, presentation, revised results framework or tools

### Users and uses of the evaluation

- Individuals within accreditation agencies, policy makers, qualifications agencies, ACQF or other RQF bodies

### Management arrangements

Roles and responsibilities of individuals involved in designing, managing and implementing the evaluation.



## Evaluation terms of reference template

Cite this template as: JET Education Services. (2020). *Terms of reference for evaluation*. Johannesburg: JET.

This document was developed as a resource to assist programme and project managers and other stakeholders in preparing Terms of Reference (ToRs) for an evaluation. It was developed by the JET M&E division, drawing on relevant grey literature and professional experience. A proposed outline for the evaluation ToRs is presented below.

### Cover page

### Table of contents

### Abbreviations

#### 1) Introduction and Background

- Background information about the organization
  - o Where is responsibility for the initiative located within the organization?
- Background information about the programme/project being evaluated
  - o Alignment with other international/national/provincial/local initiatives
- Rationale for commissioning the evaluation

#### 2) Description of the programme/project being evaluated

- Problem statement
- Geographic location
- Purpose/goal
- Programme theory (theory of action, theory of change, logic model etc, detail can be put in an annexure)
- Description of previous implementation phases (if any) and current implementation plan
- Key stakeholders involved in the programme/project and description of their roles
- Description of internal programme monitoring data (and secondary data) which is being used for monitoring purposes

#### 3) Evaluation scope of work

- Evaluation purpose (developmental, formative, summative, learning etc)
- Primary and secondary evaluation users and their potential uses
- Evaluation criteria (for example: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability)
- Evaluation questions
- Proposed/suggested methods (if any)
- Expected deliverables including plans, data collection instruments, reports, presentations, data/meta-data, capacity building/skills transfer
- Timelines
- Arrangements for managing the evaluation (reporting lines, steering committee, frequency of meetings etc)
- Required competencies of the evaluator/evaluation team (e.g. knowledge of the context, knowledge of the sector/area, knowledge of research methods, knowledge of evaluation, developmental/capacity building approach, composition of the team including involvement of black researchers, language requirements, interpersonal and communication skills)
- Required structure and contents of the proposal, including page limit, referees and example(s) of work if required.
- Explanation of how proposals will be scored

#### **4) Information regarding how to respond**

- Pre-registration required (if any)
- Compliance documentation required (if any)
- Briefing (if any)
- Process and contact person for the submission of technical questions
- Process and contact person for submission of procedural questions
- Process for submission (online, via email, in-hard copy, number of copies required etc)
- Shortlisting (if applicable)
- How shortlisted/successful bidders will be communicated with
- Timelines

#### **References**

#### **Annexures**