

NATIONAL POLICY FOR REFERENCING OF THE NATIONAL CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

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Qualifications Authority

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REVISION HISTORY

Date	Summary of changes	Version

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FOREWORD

A feature of the modern world is the mass movement of goods, services, and people across the globe. Botswana is not immune to these developments. Therefore, it is prudent to ensure that qualifications registered on the National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCQF) are widely recognised in the region, continent and beyond.

Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA) has embarked on a process of developing a national policy for referencing the NCQF to qualifications frameworks of other countries and regions. Our prime aim is to promote comparability and recognition of NCQF qualifications.

The Authority is also committed to promoting mutual trust, strengthening relationships, fostering a common understanding, and sharing knowledge with countries whose qualifications frameworks are referenced to the NCQF.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has developed a regional qualifications framework, the SADC Regional Qualifications Framework (SADC RQF). There are initiatives to develop an African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF). We want to be part of these seminal initiatives since it gives greater recognition to qualifications on the NCQF.

The process of developing this referencing policy is rigorous, interactive, and robust. We have consulted widely with stakeholders, and partner organisations and benchmarked with other referencing initiatives in Europe, Asia, and Australia.

This policy is an important building block in our quest for quality, portability, and accessibility of qualifications.

I wish to acknowledge the sterling work done by the Task team in developing this policy and the stakeholders who gave feedback in the consultative sessions.

Professor Botsalano Mosimakoko (Ph.D)
Chief Executive officer

Date

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
BQA	Botswana Qualifications Authority
ETP	Education and Training Provider
GE	General Education
HE	Higher Education
JTT	Joint Technical Team
LD	Level Descriptor
LET	Local Expert Team
LO	Learning Outcome
MoTE	Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NCQF	National Credit and Qualifications Framework (Botswana)
QA	Quality Assurance
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

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INTERPRETATION OF TERMS

Accreditation	A process of ensuring that education and training providers and any learning programme offered conforms to quality assurance standards set by the Authority.
Act	The Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA) Act No 24 of 2013.
Alignment	A process, used in the SADC Regional Qualifications Framework (SADC RQF), that enables the recognition of qualifications regionally and assists in promoting trust among SADC members. Alignment is a specific form of referencing used in the SADC context.
Authority	The Botswana Qualifications Authority established under Section 3 of the Act.
Credit	The amount of learning contained in a qualification or part qualification whereby one (1) credit is equated to ten (10) notional hours of learning.
Criteria	Statements against which the standards of performance are assessed.
Education and Training Provider	A person or the BQA-accredited entity that provides a learning programme and professional development services.
General Education	All formal, informal and non-formal education and training other than tertiary education.
Harmonisation	The process of making qualifications compatible.
Higher Education	Any studies undertaken beyond the level of secondary education, excluding Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).
Informal learning	Learning that occurs outside a structured, formal learning environment. It is unstructured learning.
Joint Technical Team	A team of experts that conducts referencing of the Botswana NCQF to other national and/or regional qualifications frameworks.
Knowledge	The body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study.
Learning outcomes	Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process.
Level	A stage in the hierarchical system of the NCQF used for grouping learning achievements and qualifications that are broadly equivalent.

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Level descriptor	Characteristics of a learning programme or qualification that would lead to it being assigned to a particular level of learning achievement.
Local Expert Team	An internal BQA team comprising representatives from various departments to provide guidance and advice to the Joint Technical Team on the local context.
National Credit and Qualifications Framework	An instrument developed under <i>section 4 (2) (d)</i> of the BQA Act for the classification of qualifications according to set criteria for specified levels of learning achieved.
Non-formal learning	Learning, which is embedded in planned activities, not always explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, time or support), but which contains an important intentional learning element.
Qualification	A formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.
Quality assurance	Input and output factors, processes and procedures for ensuring that a qualification system, including qualifications, assessment and programme delivery, meet such standards as are determined by the Authority.
Referencing	A process that results in the establishment of relationships between qualifications frameworks and the quality assurance systems that underpin these frameworks.
Sub-Framework	Any one of the three subsidiary sectors: Higher Education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and General Education defined by the NCQF.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 1.1.1 This Referencing Policy is part of the broader framework of the statutory documents that guide the objectives and functions of the Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA), including the *Botswana Qualifications Authority Act, No 24 of 2013*, *Botswana Qualifications Authority (National Credit and Qualifications Framework) (Amendment) Regulations, 2017* and the *Botswana Qualifications Authority (Accreditation of Learning Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations, 2017*.
- 1.1.2 *The BQA Act, No. 24 of 2013, Section 4 (2) (g) specifically provides for the Botswana National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCQF) to ensure international recognition of the national qualifications system and the international comparability of qualifications.*
- 1.1.3 BQA is mandated to undertake referencing of the NCQF to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF) and other qualifications frameworks to ensure regional and international comparability, and recognition of the national qualifications system.
- 1.1.4 The implementation of the Referencing Policy will facilitate specific functions undertaken by the Authority as guided by the *NCQF Regulations 3 (d), (g), (h) and (i)* as follows:
- (d) Comparability and determination of equivalency of qualifications.*
 - (g) Promotion of regional and international recognition of local qualifications.*
 - (h) Promotion of portability of qualifications.*
 - (i) Recognition of international quality assured qualifications.*

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of the policy is to:

- 1.2.1 Outline principles, criteria and processes that enable the BQA to establish relationships between the NCQF and other qualifications frameworks quality assurance systems, without necessarily making adjustments to either frameworks.
- 1.2.2 Guide the referencing of the NCQF to other national, regional and international qualifications frameworks to address the demand for national, regional and international recognition of qualifications.

1.3 TARGET AUDIENCE

The policy is intended for:

- 1.3.1 Policymakers and planners in Botswana, the SADC region, Africa and beyond who wish to gain further understanding of the commonalities and differences between the NCQF and referenced qualifications frameworks.
- 1.3.2 Education and Training Providers (ETPs), awarding bodies, employer associations, professional bodies, statutory councils, relevant regulatory bodies, employers, learners and workers will also be the beneficiaries of the Referencing Policy.
- 1.3.3 Individuals seeking to understand qualifications registered on the NCQF and the quality assurance system that underpins the NCQF, as well as an understanding of the qualifications referenced to the NCQF.
- 1.3.4 Strategic partners for education and training cooperation and engagement between other countries or regions, particularly in key policy areas of strategic importance to Botswana and SADC.

1.4 UNDERSTANDING REFERENCING

- 1.4.1 Referencing is a process that results in the establishment of a relationship between qualifications frameworks and the quality assurance systems that underpin the education and training systems.
- 1.4.2 Referencing seeks to make a statement about the broad compatibility of qualifications frameworks without necessarily requiring adjustments to either of the qualifications frameworks.
- 1.4.3 Referencing is a process that makes qualifications transparent and easier to understand across different countries and regions. This is achieved through use of comparable levels, level descriptors, a credit system and a quality assurance system.
- 1.4.4 Regional and international recognition of the NCQF qualifications can be achieved by referencing to regional and transnational qualifications frameworks.
- 1.4.5 In the SADC context, alignment is used to refer to a regional reference point (the SADCQF) for comparing qualifications in SADC Member States Alignment is a specific form of referencing that enables the recognition of qualifications regionally and assists in enabling trust among SADC member states.

1.5 BENEFITS OF REFERENCING

- 1.5.1 The comparison of the NCQF and other qualifications frameworks contributes to “mutual trust”, by enhancing opportunities for future cooperation between Botswana, other countries and regions.
- 1.5.2 Referencing contributes to a better functional understanding and appreciation of NCQF qualifications and the referenced qualifications frameworks.
- 1.5.3 By broadening and deepening the functional knowledge and understanding of respective qualifications frameworks, transparency in the qualifications frameworks

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can be elevated, which, in turn, enhance opportunities for future cooperation between Botswana and other countries.

1.5.4 Referencing enables the analysis and documentation of the technical and conceptual characteristics of other qualifications frameworks and the NCQF in their operational contexts.

1.5.5 Referencing systematically identifies key elements of comparability in a mutually beneficial way for qualifications framework communities.

1.5.6 Referencing promotes learner and labour mobility between countries.

1.5.7 Referencing promotes lifelong learning.

1.6 ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT REFERENCING

1.6.1 There is no single method for referencing. Qualifications frameworks are embedded in the country or region's educational traditions and policy priorities. These inform methodological considerations.

1.6.2 Referencing shall be based on mutual agreement between referencing parties.

1.6.3 The BQA referencing process applies to countries/regions with or without qualifications frameworks. Where countries/regions have frameworks, the process entails identifying the 'best fit' of levels of the frameworks. In instances where countries/region do not have qualifications frameworks, the process entails identifying the 'best fit' of qualification types to the level of the NCQF.

2. OBJECTIVES AND COMMITMENT

2.1 POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the policy are to:

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- 2.1.1 Promote recognition of qualifications awarded in other national and/or regional education and training systems, enhance portability of qualifications, and the mobility of learners and workers.
- 2.1.2 Strengthen relationships and shared commitment between the countries and/or regions whose qualifications frameworks are referenced.
- 2.1.3 Foster mutual trust, transparency, and a common understanding between the countries and/or regions.
- 2.1.4 Promote qualifications on the NCQF.

2.2 POLICY COMMITMENT STATEMENT

The Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) is committed to:

- 2.2.1 Empowering, guiding and working with BQA as the lead organisation in the implementation of the Referencing Policy.
- 2.2.2 Ensuring adequate human and financial resources for referencing projects.

3. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

3.1 The Referencing Policy covers all levels and sub-systems of the NCQF

3.2 The Referencing Policy covers the following different directions of referencing:

- a. **Upward referencing:** Between a qualifications framework with limited scope, to a qualifications framework with a comprehensive scope (e.g. sectoral to national, national to regional).
- b. **Peer referencing:** Between two qualifications frameworks with a similar scope (e.g. national to national).

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- c. **Downward referencing:** Between a qualifications framework with a comprehensive scope and a qualifications framework with a limited scope (e.g. regional to national, national to sectoral).

3.3 The Referencing Policy covers the following levels of referencing:

- a. **Primary:** Direct cross-referencing of level descriptors and qualification types.
- b. **Secondary:** Mapping level descriptors and qualification types to a regional qualifications framework to which other NQFs have been referenced.

4. POLICY PRINCIPLES

4.1 KEY PRINCIPLES OF REFERENCING

4.1.1 The key policy principles underpinning referencing shall include the following:

- a. Mutual co-operation and trust in the referencing process.
- b. Transparency of process and outcomes during the referencing.
- c. Level-to-level or qualifications type comparability in the referencing process.
- d. Inclusion of assessment and moderation systems of learning.
- e. Inclusion of quality assurance systems.
- f. Promotion of harmonisation of frameworks, qualifications, and accreditation systems.
- g. Application of the 'best fit' principle between the learning outcomes and level descriptors.
- h. Inclusion of recognition of prior learning and credit accumulation and transfer systems.
- i. Alignment, as a specific form of referencing, to enable articulation with the SADC RQF.

5. RESOURCING AND IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

BQA shall ensure the following:

- 5.1.1 Appointed members of the Joint Technical Team are suitably qualified and experienced in accordance with the Joint Technical Team appointment criteria.
- 5.1.2 There is adequate infrastructure for referencing, such as organisational and administrative support, human resources, physical facilities and funding.
- 5.1.3 The Joint Technical Team is provided with the scope of the referencing; frameworks; guidelines containing criteria and procedures for referencing; and the methodology employed.
- 5.1.4 Advocacy shall entail generating political, economic and social interest, consulting stakeholders, and seeking the support of other regulatory bodies in education and training.
- 5.1.5 The BQA shall promote public awareness of the importance of referencing the NCQF through media campaigns, conferences, workshops and networking.
- 5.1.6 The outcomes of the referencing process shall be communicated to the public.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 BOTSWANA QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

- 6.1.1 Provide a single contact point for referencing.
- 6.1.2 Engage with the representatives of other qualifications frameworks to participate in the referencing process.
- 6.1.3 Ensure that the referencing process is transparent, open and accessible.
- 6.1.4 Provide access to information to stakeholders on referencing matters.
- 6.1.5 Promote stakeholder participation in referencing.

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- 6.1.6** Establish the Joint Technical Team, consisting of representatives from Botswana and the country of reference to conduct referencing on behalf of the BQA.
- 6.1.7** Consider the recommendations of the Joint Technical Team referencing report and make a final decision.
- 6.1.8** Establish a Local Expert Team (LET) to assist with referencing.
- 6.1.9** Consult with the SADC Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) for the alignment of the NCQF with the SADC RQA, and/or the NQFs of SADC member states.

6.2 JOINT TECHNICAL TEAM

- 6.2.1** The role of the Joint Technical Team is to conduct referencing and produce recommendations in the form of a referencing report for consideration by the BQA.
- 6.2.2** At the outset of the referencing process, the following shall be clearly outlined to the Joint Technical Team and other individuals involved:
 - 6.2.3** The scope of the qualifications frameworks:
 - a. The criteria and procedures used for inclusion of qualifications.
 - b. The learning outcomes.
 - c. The methodologies used.
 - d. Stakeholder involvement in the referencing process.
 - e. The selection of international experts.
- 6.2.4** The membership of the Joint Technical Team shall consist of representatives from:
 - a. BQA;
 - b. An oversight body in the country/region being reference to; and
 - c. One or more international expert (s) who is not from the country/region involved in the referencing process.

6.3 LOCAL EXPERTS TEAM

6.3.1 Provide guidance and advice to the Joint Technical Team of the local context.

6.3.2 Consult stakeholders.

6.3.3 Review the referencing report and make recommendations to the BQA.

6.3.4 The composition of Local Expert Team shall include:

- a. BQA senior management representatives.
- b. BQA representatives from the NCQF Services, Business Development and Quality Assurance functions.
- c. Representatives from the BQA Quality Assurance Committee.
- d. Representatives from BQA Qualifications Framework Maintenance Committee.
- e. Additional members that are external to the BQA as appropriate and feasible.

7. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 POLICY IMPERATIVES

There is a need to:

- 7.1.1 Increase the knowledge and understanding of stakeholders of the purpose of referencing
- 7.1.2 Define concepts such as, but not limited to, formal, informal and non-formal learning.
- 7.1.3 Foster co-operation and support from the foreign authority whose national or regional framework is to be referenced.
- 7.1.4 Source local and external expertise to conduct referencing.
- 7.1.5 Co-ordinate referencing activities.
- 7.1.6 Acquire resources for implementation.
- 7.1.7 Build trust during the conduct of referencing.
- 7.1.8 Conduct awareness and information campaigns on referencing.
- 7.1.9 Ensure that all communication with the foreign Authority follows official protocols.

7.1.10 Develop policy implementation guidelines.

8. CRITERIA, PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURES

8.1 REFERENCING CRITERIA

- 8.1.1** It is paramount to ensure the integrity of the referencing process, including the consistency and transparency of describing how the referenced qualifications framework links to the NCQF.
- 8.1.2** The BQA and country/region of reference shall agree on referencing criteria to be applied.
- 8.1.3** BQA, as initiator of the referencing project, shall adopt ten criteria for referencing as a guide.

8.2 TEN REFERENCING CRITERIA

Criterion 1: The structure of the education and training systems are described in terms of:

- a. *The essential structure of the two education and training systems covering ages, stages and pathways of education provision has been described.*
- b. *All education and training sectors such as General Education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education have been described.*
- c. *General statistics relating to the education and training system have been provided.*

Criterion 2: The responsibilities and legal basis of national/regional bodies involved in referencing are clearly determined and published by the main public authority responsible for the referencing process.

- a. *Relevant bodies that have a legitimate role in the referencing process have been informed about the decision to conduct referencing.*
- b. *The roles and responsibilities of these bodies have been clarified.*
- c. *The bodies that will be part of the Joint Technical Team are identified.*

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- d. *The Joint Technical Team is constituted, has resources and a work plan.*
- e. *The Joint Technical Team roles and responsibilities are clear and allocated.*
- f. *The communication with the broader stakeholder constituency is clear, prepared and organised.*

Criterion 3: There is a clear and demonstrable link between qualification levels in the Botswana NCQF and level descriptors of the other qualifications framework.

- a. *The NQ/RQFF is adopted and implemented.*
- b. *The level descriptors (LDs) are clear, complete and understood.*
- c. *The level descriptors are implemented.*
- d. *The level descriptors clearly indicate vertical progression.*
- e. *There is a method to present the demonstrable link of the level descriptors.*
- f. *The diagram showing the level-to-level links is attached.*

Criterion 4: The procedures for including qualifications in the NQF are transparent.

- a. *There is legislation that defines key principles, roles, and responsibilities for developing, approving, and accrediting qualifications.*
- b. *The key bodies and their roles are identified.*
- c. *The NQF/RQF Levels are in an agreed and transparent format.*
- d. *The levels and inclusion of qualifications in the NQF/RQF are based on transparent interactions of the relevant bodies.*
- e. *The levels and inclusion of qualifications in the NQF/RQF are quality assured by relevant bodies.*
- f. *The NQF/RQF is inclusive and based on various types of qualifications.*
- g. *The database of qualifications up-to-date, accessible and transparent for users.*

Criterion 5: The qualifications framework is based on learning outcomes and links to non-formal and informal learning and the national credit system.

- a. *The Learning Outcomes (LOs) approach is included in relevant legislation.*

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- b. The Learning Outcomes approach is agreed in all or in some sub-sectors / qualifications. List them.*
- c. The Learning Outcomes approach practised in all or in some sub-sectors / qualifications. List them.*
- d. The Learning Outcomes of qualifications take account societal and labour market needs. There are studies to support this.*
- e. The classification of qualifications in the NQF is based on a comparison of Learning Outcomes of the qualification.*
- f. The recognition of non-formal and informal learning is defined and agreed at policy level.*
- g. The recognition of non-formal and informal learning is applied in all or some sectors.*
- h. The assessment of Learning Outcomes apply to, formal, non-formal and informal learning.*
- i. The recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning is related to the NQF.*

Criterion 6: The qualifications frameworks and quality assurance systems are described and the bodies responsible for quality assurance state their unequivocal support for the referencing outcome.

- a. The qualifications frameworks and quality assurance systems are operational.*
- b. The design and award of qualifications are explicit and transparent.*
- c. The quality assurance procedures refer to context, inputs, process, and output dimensions, while giving special emphasis to outputs and learning outcomes.*
- d. The quality assurance of learning outcomes refers to planning, implementing, reviewing, and feedback.*
- e. Quality assurance measures include qualification requirements for teachers / trainers, assessor, accreditation, and external evaluation of providers of programmes.*

Criterion 7: The referencing process shall include a stated agreement from the relevant quality assurance bodies.

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- a. *The referencing process includes a stated agreement from relevant quality assurance bodies.*
- b. *The relevant quality assurance (QA) bodies are adequately involved and informed about the referencing process.*
- c. *The relevant QA bodies agree and validate the content of the referencing report.*

Criterion 8: Representatives from other countries who are experienced in the field of qualifications are involved in the referencing and reporting.

- a. *Representatives from other countries are involved in the referencing process.*
- b. *The referencing report states who was involved; explains why these experts were invited; how they were involved in the process (roles, activities); at what stage; and how their feedback was considered.*

Criterion 9: One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the BQA and shall address each of the referencing criteria.

- a. *The bodies involved in referencing are clearly defined.*
- b. *There is agreement with the referencing process and target date for presentation of the referencing report.*
- c. *The structure of the referencing report is based on the stipulated criteria.*

Criterion 10: The official platform of the country/region must provide for a public comment process for the referencing report.

- a. *There is a clear plan to revise and finalise the referencing report before publication on the country's official platform.*
- b. *The responsibility for publication of the referencing report is agreed upon.*
- c. *The referencing report considers stakeholder comments and recommendations.*

- d. *There is provision for the presentation of the referencing report.*

8.3 REFERENCING STAGES

Referencing shall consist of six stages:

- Stage 1:** Agree on an overarching referencing framework with the country/region of reference.
- Stage 2:** Present the referencing criteria to serve as a proposal to the country/region of reference.
- Stage 3:** Collect and capture evidence in a report (endorsed by the country/region of reference).
- Stage 4:** Publish findings.
- Stage 5:** Make referencing visible.
- Stage 6:** Review findings and update referencing.

8.4 STRUCTURE OF REFERENCING REPORT

The report shall include:

- a. **Statement** - a short statement that specifies the basis for the report (for example, is it a first version or an updated one) or how long it will be valid.
- b. **Executive summary** – a short overview of the results of the referencing process, and a summary of the information related to the ten criteria and procedures.
- c. **Description of the national/regional qualifications systems** – a short presentation of the qualifications systems (including quality assurance, pathways and access to programs) and the NQF/RQF (design features, aims and functions, stage of the development process) – the description should focus on information relevant for understanding the answers to the ten criteria.

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- d. **Background information** – a short description of the process for preparing the report (referencing process).
- e. **The ten criteria for referencing of national/regional qualifications levels to the NCQF** – the main part of the report, addressing each criterion separately.
- f. **Further information** – a short presentation of, for example, plans, intentions and next steps regarding the NQF/RQF development and implementation; challenges expected or already met in this process; the expected impact of the NCQF implementation; any intentions for evaluating and revising the decisions presented in the referencing report.
- g. **Annexes** - for example, list of institutions or experts involved in the preparation of the report, examples of qualifications, statements from national/regional stakeholders and/or international experts, and relevant legal texts.

9. POLICY REVIEW AND EVALUATION

9.1 REVIEW AND EVALUATION CYCLE

- 9.1.1 This Policy shall be reviewed and evaluated in consultation with relevant Stakeholders every five (5) years.

10. APPROVAL

This policy was approved by and signed on behalf by:

Issue No:	Version	Name	Designation	Signature	Date

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