BOTSWANA
Qualifications Authority

GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CREDIT ACCUMULATION AND TRANSFER (CAT)

"Building a seamless Education and Training System"

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REVISION HISTORY

Date	Summary of changes	Version

1.0 ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BQA	Botswana Qualifications Authority
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
NCQF	National Credit and Qualifications Framework
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
ETP	Education and Training Provider

2.0 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

2.1 **"accreditation"** means a process of ensuring that education and training providers, and any learning programme of education and training offered, conform to any quality assurance standards set by the Authority.

2.2 **"Act"** The Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA) Act No.24 of 2013.

2.3 **"accredited"** means quality assured, structured, approved.

2.4 **"articulation"** means the linkages between qualifications to enable the movement of learners between and within the three sub-frameworks of the NCQF, and between institutions and within institutions.

2.5 **"Authority"** means the Botswana Qualifications Authority established under Section 3 of the Act.

2.6 **"credit"** means the amount of learning contained in a qualification or part qualification whereby one (1) credit is equated to ten (10) notional hours of learning.

2.7 **"credit accumulation"** means the totalling of relevant credits required to complete a qualification or a part qualification.

2.8 **"credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) system"** means an arrangement whereby the diverse features of both credit accumulation and credit transfer are combined to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace.

2.9 **"credit transfer"** means recognition for study already completed, which counts towards further study. It is a recognition based on formal arrangements which have been negotiated between ETPs and/or based on equivalence as

established by compatible accreditation, qualification or credit transfer systems.

2.10 **"curriculum"** means the requirements for learner achievement of a qualification or part qualification in terms of knowledge, skills, and where relevant, also work experience.

2.11 **"education and training provider (ETP)"** means a person or BQA-accredited entity that provides or organises a learning programme of education and training, including the provision of professional development services.

2.12 **"learning outcomes"** are the building blocks of qualifications. Qualifications may be made up of unit standards as one form of learning outcomes, or statements of learning outcomes, as another form, or a combination of the two.

2.13 **"National Credit and Qualifications Framework, (NCQF)"** means an instrument developed under section 4 (2) (d) for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria, for specified levels of learning achieved;

2.14 **"Notional Learning Hours"** means the estimated learning time taken by the average learner to achieve the specified learning outcomes of the course-unit or programme. Notional learning time includes teaching contact time (lectures, seminars, tutorials, laboratory practicals, workshops, fieldwork, etc.), time spent on preparing and carrying out formative and summative assessments (written coursework, oral presentations, exams, etc.) and time spent on private study. This document suggests that one credit is awarded for 10 notional hours of successful learning activity.

2.15 **"qualification"** means 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.

2.16 **"recognition of prior learning (RPL)"** is the process of identifying, assessing, and recognising what a person already knows (knowledge) and can do (skills), despite the method of acquisition (including formal, informal, and non-formal), without taking them through a formal learning process.

2.17 **"unit standard"** a statement of the outcome of any learning assessed, the type and quality of evidence that represents performance worthy of an award of credits and the context in which that evidence should be demonstrated.

3.0 WHICH PROVIDERS ARE EXPECTED TO IMPLEMENT CAT?

3.1 All BQA-accredited ETPs must have a CAT policy and guidelines, and should be open to both credit transfer and credit accumulation.

3.2 The specific CAT processes between ETPs will either be negotiated between the individual, accredited ETPs or will be guided by national structures and entities established to manage the sub-frameworks of the NCQF as provided for under Section 5 (2) of the Draft Regulations for Qualifications.

4.0 BACKGROUND TO THE NEED FOR A CAT SYSTEM

4.1 Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) is an essential tool in modern curriculum design and qualifications management. It is intended to allow individuals to obtain official recognition after following flexible learning pathways.

4.2 The recognition of credits for purposes of transfer from one qualification/unit to another is determined by the content of the qualification/unit, its comparability and compatibility; the nature, complexity and extent of the curricula associated with the specific subjects/units to be recognised for transfer, and the nature of the assessment used. The key to a functioning CAT system is flexibility. Flexibility means that the system can combine formally recognised credits achieved in different contexts and programmes into different qualifications. Such flexibility allows for learning pathways that are responsive to changing individual career paths, to the evolving needs in society and economy, and to new or emerging fields of knowledge or skill.

4.3 However, flexible curriculum and qualifications must also be purposeful and coherent and must respect the reasonable demands and boundaries of specific disciplines. CAT promises to liberate curriculum and qualifications processes from unnecessary or irrational requirements. In doing this, however, the quality and comprehensiveness of qualifications must not be sacrificed. CAT does not mean a curriculum free-for-all. The implementation of CAT must be rule-governed and must be practised with considerable thoughtfulness and discernment regarding limits and appropriateness.

4.4 The onus for quality implementation of CAT lies with the accredited ETPs. Their

decisions regarding CAT must be discerning and judicious, aligning with BQA, other educational Acts, national policies, regulations, and qualification guidelines. CAT decisions must serve the interests of the students involved, the discipline in question, and the integrity of the ETP. In pursuit of this requirement, each ETP must formulate their own CAT guidelines. ETPs making use of CAT should be able to show that their decisions and actions are consonant with their own and policy and guidelines and must briefly report all decisions and their motivation in the pro forma on the BQA's electronic CAT registry (see annexure 2).

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The word *credit* in these guidelines is used, unavoidably, in two different ways:

Firstly, there is the general usage implied in the international term *Credit Accumulation and Transfer*. This is quite open-ended and refers to any form of recorded, accredited achievement. It could, for example, be the third year of an undergraduate degree, or the properly assessed results at the end of a free-standing learning programme.

Secondly, there is the formally defined and measured credit, which is central to the BQA's accreditation of qualifications: here, a credit is 10 notional hours of learning at the appropriate level. All qualifications in Botswana are intended to be accounted for in this way.

4.5 The underlying idea of Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) is relatively simple: It should be possible in principle to mix and match the accredited learning already achieved by any individual in the interests of mobility and progression, and specifically for access to new or different learning pathways. Access might be to a course, programme, institution, or qualification where there is a relationship between the new pathway and the already completed and recognised learning (which may consist of a single credit, or of a set of accumulated credits.)[1]

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[1] **Concrete example:** A credit in Public Relations within a diploma programme in Business Studies at college A should be recognised by college B, for example, with a degree programme in Management Studies which also requires credits for very similar assessment and outcomes in Public Relations. In addition to this *transfer,* students should also, in principle, be able to *accumulate* a number of credits achieved over time in different contexts and different ways. As we shall see, there may be complex limitations to the accumulation and transfer involved here.

4.6 CAT relates specifically to the standing and use of *completed and officially recognised credits*. Such credits may be contributed through a successful process of recognition of prior learning (RPL) but are more generally based on completed learning programmes or on elements of completed qualifications. (CAT and RPL share family resemblances but are distinctly different from one another.)

4.7 CAT distinguishes itself therefore from RPL as being part of institutional education and training. In Botswana this means being assessed at an accredited ETP.

4.8 The principles, rules, procedures and practices of CAT especially concern how decisions are made about whether a particular credit (or set of credits) fits adequately with the other required components of the qualification such that they contribute to the qualification. Such decisions are necessary for conferring a qualification, recognising a qualification or gaining access to a process of qualification. These apply whether the need is to establish the ranking of a set of accumulated credits or the appropriateness of transferring credits to a different learning context.

5.0 CHANGING CONTEXTS FOR UNDERSTANDING AND CONSTRUCTING CREDITS

5.1 The need for the explicit usage of CAT emerges from the rapid diversification of global knowledge and skills. CAT is caught, in essence, between the assumptions and practices of *traditional curriculum* (see block that follows)– still very much in force in some institutions – and the forms and practices of what can be seen as *modular and outcomes-based curriculum* (see block that follows).

Note: Traditional curriculum vs modular, outcomes-based curriculum

Traditional curriculum systems of credit transfer

In many traditional (pre-outcomes-based) systems of education and training, a qualification is gained after satisfying a set of prescribed programmes, each with a syllabus, each with its own requirements for progression (most commonly linked to calendar years), and each with an accepted notion of adequate performance, usually enshrined in an exit examination. These

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prescribed programmes are then linked to specified qualifications by means of rules of combination.

In such a traditional system, an explicit policy for CAT may well be superfluous. Nonetheless, *de facto* practices of CAT have been in place for a long time. University programmes in liberal arts, especially, have allowed considerable freedom in combining quite different subjects at different levels into a degree, and in transferring these credits to other universities where there is mutual recognition. Across the academic world, whole degrees – especially with high symbols - tend to be transferable from institution to institution and country to country for purposes of admission to higher degrees. Such transfer is often based on little more than mutual respect across institutions or peer recognition, with no use of systematic or rational evidence.

On the other hand, degrees linked to professional qualifications are generally prescriptive about combinations and progression, with highly specified conditions for qualification, set by agreement between professional bodies and academics. Only limited electives are allowed. These might require a range of assessments from formal examinations to practical performance.

Modular or outcomes-based credit transfer

With the multiplication of fields of competence or specialisation in the 21st Century's knowledge economy, there is a corresponding multiplication of qualifications on offer, alongside wide-ranging learning programmes and short courses, some of which lead to assessed outcomes. New qualifications may be designed in non-traditional ways. There are thus increasingly diversified choices of learning pathways from different bases. We need to explain more, the difference between the CAT application on the traditional curriculum vs the CAT application on the outcomes-based curriculum. What is an outcomes-based curriculum, and how is the CAT application possible or difficult on an outcomes-based curriculum? The introductory paragraph states that CAT is caught between the assumptions and practices of the traditional curriculum and those of the outcomes-based curriculum. This has not been explained further.

As a result, CAT becomes an essential requirement in the national management of qualifications.

5.2 Challenge of 'Credits'

5.2.1 Credits may be understood in different ways that lie on a continuum from, on the one hand, strictly modular credits (or standards or outcomes statements of achieved competence at specified levels) to the graded results of curriculum-based learning on the other. Between these, an array of mixed-mode or hybrid credits can be found.

5.2.2 In effect, then, some credits are awarded based on the assumed time demanded to complete the credit (sometimes known as "notional hours" – the approach favoured by the BQA). Other credits are awarded based on assessed knowledge or competencies. Yet others are awarded based on a system where a completed qualification of one kind, or at one institution, is treated as equivalent to a number of years in a related qualification, perhaps at a different institution.[2] Some credit systems require a whole cluster of credits to be completed in the same year; others allow credits to be accumulated from various sources over a lifetime. (Where appropriate, however, the age of a credit is considered in the interests of currency.)[3]

5.2.3 The difference in the form and nature of credits makes comparison and combination of different types of credit complex, challenging and in some instances impossible. In a fully achieved standards-based NQF (or NCQF) it is theoretically possible to match and fit credits into coherent, flexible qualifications. In such a perfect system it should be possible for a computer to approve or disapprove the accumulation and transfer of credits

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[2] A typical example: An Electronic Engineering Diploma from a TVET College might be credited with a year or two towards an Electronic Engineering Degree at a university.

[3] BQA has made it clear that the Framework System they are managing is a credit system. As a result, all programmes that they approve to be offered in the system have credit values attached to them. Thus, qualifications based on unit standards and those that are not, especially short programmes/modules (non-unit standards based) must all be allocated credit values before they can be approved. Assessment will be against the outcomes and credit will be awarded for competence. These credits will accumulate to make a full qualification. With TVET, this aims in principle at credits making a qualification that can be attained through RPL or formal learning or a combination of both. With General Education and Higher Education sub-systems, they may opt for a situation where a certain percentage of the qualification can be attained through RPL and CAT.

automatically according to matrices of levels, outcomes and assessment criteria.

5.2.4 But no NQF has achieved anything like this level of comprehensiveness, coherence and compatibility. Different forms of credit are seen by some to reflect inherent features of knowledge and skills development. Different disciplines, competencies and skills are formed within traditions, and perhaps also within necessary epistemic frameworks, that resist reduction to a one-size-fits-all approach that allows readily for mixing and matching.

5.2.5 An additional point of difficulty is the institutional construction of knowledge. University departments have hard-won and valued approaches to a distinctive curriculum. This curriculum may be designed with a view to progression in the key discipline, with closely-knit linkages to required sub-disciplines, all leading to a unique and coherent whole. It is difficult, in such cases, for the department to readily transfer the credits of a student from the same discipline in another university into, say, the third year of its programme. CAT procedures will only work in such a situation with processes of negotiation, persuasion, and perhaps with assessment and supplementation. (See discussion of Communities of Trust in a later section.)

5.2.6 In a country like Botswana, with a relatively small population and a manageable number of institutions of learning, it might be possible to impose a uniform approach to credits and qualifications design. But this is rendered impossible by Botswana's location in a global knowledge system. Its own education and skills development systems are modelled on different approaches to credit received, especially from traditions in the United Kingdom. In addition, it draws in many foreign nationals bearing existing credits and qualifications, especially from the SADC region. CAT in this context must often make use of practices developed elsewhere for the evaluation and recognition of foreign qualifications.

5.3 CAT Concepts

5.3.1 CATS is a learner-centred system based on the principle of the transparency of learning, teaching and assessment processes. It is integrated into the planning, delivery and evaluation of study programmes and enables student mobility by recognising learning achievements. The key features of NCQF CATS are outlined.

a) Credits means the amount of learning recognised through qualifications registered on the NCQF, measured in terms of notional learning hours. Credits express the volume of learning based on the defined learning outcomes and their associated NCQF level and workload. On average, 120 NCQF credits are allocated to the learning outcomes and associated level and workload of a full-time study year or its equivalent. In Botswana, 1 credit is equivalent to 10 notional learning hours.

b) Learning outcomes are statements of what the individual knows, understands and can do upon completion of a learning process. The achievement of learning outcomes must be assessed through procedures based on clear and transparent criteria. Learning outcomes are attributed to individual educational components and to programmes. They are also used in the NCQF to describe the level of the individual qualification. Credits provide little information on their own; they become more practical and useful when they are linked to levels of study that provide further information on the relative complexity, depth and breadth of learning. Credits become more useful when they are linked to both learning outcomes and levels. This facilitates the process of recognition by those responsible for making the associated judgements and avoids confusion. The more information provided about credits, the more useful they become.

c) Level descriptors, as the nomenclature suggests, provide a description of each of the ten levels on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The purpose of such description is to assist a writer of standards, qualifications or part qualifications in designing a qualification by allocating

a level to a unit standard or a qualification, and to formulate outcomes and criteria for assessment that could clearly indicate the level of knowledge of a learner required to achieve the unit standard, qualifications or part qualifications successfully.

d) Workload is an estimation of the time the individual typically needs to complete all learning activities such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, work placements and individual study required to achieve the defined learning outcomes in formal learning environments. One credit (or credit point) is equated with 10 hours of notional learning time (the time, on average, a learner takes to achieve the specified learning outcomes). That means that 120 credits represent one year of study (in terms of workload); normally, 60 credits are given for six months (a semester) and 40 credits for a term (a trimester). Similarly, a module allocated 30 credits should require students to commit approximately 300 hours of work to achieve the learning outcomes for that module at a particular level. A study programme of 2400 notional hours would be equal to 240 credits, and a programme of 4800 notional hours would equate to 480 credits. A three-year bachelor's degree would consist of 360 credits, whereas a master's degree comprises 120 to 180 credits. The use of credits at the doctoral level varies from 240 to 360, depending on the respective country requirements.

e) Allocation of credits in NCQF-CATS is the process of assigning a number of credits, legislation or practice permitting, to entire qualifications/programmes or units of learning. Education and training institutions use the 10-hour credit which means that each credit awarded equates with 10 notional hours of successful learning. The notional learning time encompasses all time (formal classes, self-study, reading, searching the internet for information, writing assignments) spent by the learner in pursuit of achieving the designated learning outcomes. The emphasis is on the term 'notional' because it is well known that the actual time which learners need to achieve designated learning outcomes varies considerably. It is based on how long it would take an average full-time

student entering a university and studying that subject, at that level, for the first time would take to gain the knowledge, skills and understanding to achieve the learning outcomes. So it is presumed that an 'average' student will take 200 hours to successfully achieve a 20-credit module. Credit allocation works as follows:

(i) NCQF Notional Learning Hours are the number of hours an average learner needs to achieve specified learning outcomes. Notional learning hours include teaching contact time (lectures, seminars, tutorials, laboratory practicals, workshops, fieldwork, etc.), time spent on preparing and carrying out formative and summative assessments (written coursework, oral presentations, exams, etc.) and time spent on private study, whether in term-time or the vacations.

(ii) Taught or contact time will vary according to the mode of delivery, but notional learning time will not. All learning relevant to the learning outcomes should be considered when notional learning time is being estimated. Consideration should also be given to the level at which the learning is being offered. Notional learning time is not equivalent to the actual time that any particular learner needs to spend to achieve the learning outcomes. The real time will vary according to the individual's capability, degree of prior experiential or other learning and the mode of learning, for example, in the case of work-based learning, the actual time spent in the workplace may greatly exceed the notional time required to achieve the specified learning outcomes. Any prior skill or knowledge required of the learner should not be included in an estimate of notional learning time.

f) Credit provides a means of quantifying learning outcomes achievable in notional learning hours at a given level. For NCQF, one credit is awarded for 10 notional hours of successful learning activity. There is a need to harmonise credit allocation by agreeing on a common credit transfer system to facilitate intra-SADC academic mobility.

i) Credits are based on the workload that takes into account:

- Lectures,
- tutorials,
- practical work,
- seminars,
- internships,
- projects,
- fieldwork,
- self-directed work,
- assessment
- etc.

ii) A course may be divided into Learning Units:

- 1 Credit = 10 hours of learning
- A semester module is typically 14 -16 weeks and a year module is typically 28 – 32 weeks
- This translates to about 60 credits per semester
- 1 academic year = 120 credits
- Example to calculate credits:

$$\text{Total} = \frac{\text{lectures+ tutorials + practical works + internships + projects + assessment}}{10}$$

For example, a semester module (based on 14 weeks) with 4 hours of lecturing per week, 2 hours of laboratory practical work per week, 4 hours of self-directed learning per week, and 6 hours of formative and summative assessment would typically be:

4x14 (lecture) + 2x14 (practicals) + 4x14 (self-study) + 4 hours of project + 6 (assessment) = 150 total student learning hours

$$= \frac{150}{10} = 15 \text{ credits}$$

- Credits are presented as whole numbers.
- The emphasis of credit is on measuring student workload towards achieving intended learning outcomes rather than teaching load (contact hours).
- Notwithstanding the link between credit and notional learning time, the emphasis of assessment should be upon learning achieved and not time spent.
- Credit is awarded for the achievement of specified learning outcomes. No additional credit can be awarded for achievement above the threshold level (although such achievement can be recognised through the award of marks or grades).

iii) Translated into credits, we may get the following scenarios:

- A one-year Certificate of Diploma (NCQF Level 5): 1200 notional study hours = 120 credits.
- A three-year Bachelor's Degree (NCQF Level 7): 3600 notional study hours = 360 credits.
- A one-year Bachelor Honours Degree (NCQF Level 8): 1200 notional study hours = 120 credits.
- A four-year Bachelor's Degree (NCQF Level 8): 4800 notional study hours = 480 credits.
- A five-year Bachelor's Degree (NCQF Level 8): 6000 notional study hours = 600 credits.
- A two-year Master's Degree (NCQF Level 9): 2400 notional study hours = 240 credits.
- A three-year Doctoral Degree (NCQF Level 10): 3600 notional study hours = 360 credits.

g) Types of Credit Transfers

i) Vertical Credit Transfer: Credits earned from a lower level can be transferred to a higher level within the same institution or sub-framework. Example: credits earned in a qualification at NCQF level 6

can be transferred to a qualification at NCQF level 7.

ii) Horizontal Credit Transfer: Credits accumulated from a qualification can be transferred to a similar qualification at the same NCQF level. The qualifications can be within the same or different institutions. Example can be a transfer of credits of one programme from one institution to another.

iii) Diagonal Credit Transfer: Credits earned at one NCQF level can be transferred to a higher level between institutions or across NCQF sub-frameworks. E.g. transferring credits earned from a lower level to a higher level in a different institution or sub-framework.

h) Modalities of Credit Transfer

i) Block Credit Transfer: it entails transferring credits from a group of courses or a whole programme to a receiving programme without the need for course-by-course assessments for credit transfer. A typical example: An Electronic Engineering Diploma from a TVET College might be credited with a year or two towards an Electronic Engineering Degree at a university.

ii) Course Exemption: It entails exempting an individual from a specific course or module of a programme based on the learning achieved in previous studies. This is applicable to both completed and uncompleted programmes.

i) Quality Assurance of CAT Systems

Effective implementation of the CATS Guidelines requires effective institutional quality assurance systems to be set up.

Implementors are encouraged to:

i) Develop robust quality assurance systems that are coordinated and homogeneous with the National Credit and Qualifications Framework.

ii) Develop subject benchmark statements for various programmes to ensure the comparability and compatibility of the programmes.

iii) Periodically review and improve policies and plans that enable effective

implementation and quality assurance of CATS.

iv) Promote and support education quality research and evaluation efforts that lead to improved credit transfer mechanisms and performance.

v) Solicit and encourage international organs and institutions to support national initiatives for an integrated and harmonised education and training system for the realisation of effective credit accumulation and transfer system.

j) Recognition of Prior Learning for CAT

Education and Training Providers should be competent to award credits for learning outcomes acquired outside the formal learning context. This could be through work experience, voluntary work, participation in the activities of various social and community groups, independent study and others, provided that this non-formal and informal learning satisfies the requirements for accessing or gaining advanced standing and/or credit for the qualifications or components sought.

5.3.2 The recognition of learning gained non-formally and informally may need to be mediated to enable transitioning into formal learning contexts. RPL processes could be followed by the award of the same number of credits associated with the relevant parts of the formal programme. As for the CAT processes, providers are encouraged to follow the principle of supplementary should it be needed following RPL processes.

The underlying principle is that credits awarded through RPL processes shall be of equal standing to credits awarded through other forms of assessment.

6.0 STAFF TRAINING

Staff should be trained in each department or subject area, so that they can be granted the formal authority to award credits for non-formal and informal learning based on transparent criteria that must be outlined in institutional policies.

7.0 GUIDING VALUES AND PRINCIPLES FOR CAT IN BOTSWANA

7.1 All qualifications in Botswana are expected to be defined eventually in terms of credits. However, there will always be a need to deal with the more general notion of a credit touched on above. The need arises from legacy qualifications, from qualifications gained in other countries or in imported systems and from qualifications or credits gained in global business and technical contexts.

7.2 In principle, the NCQF is modular. Its forward-looking intention supports the following features:

    7.2.1 Qualifications would be developed in small chunks, with the unit standard being the smallest award (minimum one credit)

    7.2.2 Learners could choose to learn and gain credits for a unit standard or group of unit standards at any time

    7.2.3 The unit standards would be linked to a qualification in the Framework System (currently, most unit standards are linked to specific qualifications except Generic Unit Standards, which can be selected and included in any qualification being designed)

    7.2.4 Candidates could keep adding attainment of credits linked to a qualification at different times and at different institutions

    7.2.5 Once the unit standards making up a qualification are all completed, the system should 'flag' that a qualification has been achieved

    7.2.6 The learner can then be requested to pay the fee for issuance of a certificate and the certificate will be issued

    7.2.7 The system should be designed such that all credits attained would be reported to the Authority which will keep a national database of all learning.

8.0 UNDERPINNING VALUES FOR A CAT SYSTEM TO BE EFFECTIVE

8.1 Rationality: requires that provisions, decisions and actions regarding CAT be based on adequate evidence and reasons. The qualifications system must be rational and reasonable. A refusal to give effective recognition to already achieved credits in applications for admission or the granting of a qualification needs to be rational – i.e. based on adequate evidence and reasons – and not arbitrary. Arbitrary decisions,

which are not acceptable, could include reference to traditions or policies that are irrelevant to the case at hand, or might be based on the whim of an administrator or the prejudiced assumptions of an institution about another institution. Rationality also includes a commitment to fairness, which means especially that all applicants for recognition in terms of CAT are treated in a way that could be considered comparable to the treatment of students already admitted or granted qualifications.

8.2 Efficiency: education and skills development are costly and rare resources. CAT should eliminate duplication of effort on the part of individual students and institutions. It should facilitate the development of learning and the production of qualifications. The quest for efficiency through CAT must not, however, compromise the quality of standards or qualifications.

8.3 Quality: refers especially to the fitness-to-purpose of qualifications in general, and of specific credits and their combination with other credits in a programme. It also refers to perceived notions of what constitutes adequacy, goodness or excellence in particular disciplines or skills domains. CAT decisions must serve quality.

9.0   PRINCIPLES GUIDING AN EFFECTIVE CAT SYSTEM IN BOTSWANA

9.1 Decisions to recognise the accumulation and transfer of completed credits must be made in ways that serve the rationality, efficiency and quality of the system.

9.2 All CAT decisions must be made with attention to their validity and to the reliability of the evidence on hand.

9.3 All CAT decisions must be made after attention has been given to the purpose and context of the application.

9.4 Individual learners should be granted recognition of credits already achieved when seeking access to available programmes of learning or qualifications if a reasonable case can be made for the relevance and comparability of the credits.

9.5 Decisions to recognise credits or award qualifications based on such credits, or to transfer a credit to a new learning context, or to accept the accumulation of diverse credits, are primarily the responsibility of the ETP to which application has been

made. These decisions must be made in line with the institutional and CAT policies and guidelines.

9.6   Regarding accumulation: It is in principle possible to build a full qualification out of a range of credits completed over time. This poses a problem especially in relation to the expectation that a qualification should have coherence and focus and should represent a hierarchical growth of knowledge and competence. The BQA through its qualification development bodies has the option to impose general limits on the proportion of credits allowed to be accumulated as a contribution to a qualification. This would inevitably be arbitrary and would override important differences in the nature of the credits concerned. Instead, the BQA expects specific institutions, disciplines or skills domains to set reasoned allowances for accumulation in their institutional policies.

9.7   In rare cases where a candidate wishes to be awarded a full qualification entirely composed of accumulated credits, the BQA requires that a RPL process be used. Here the candidate must build a portfolio with guidance from an RPL Practitioner to provide adequate evidence for the award of the qualification. CAT can only work optimally if qualifications are designed to articulate with other qualifications in the same or related fields. The system must therefore work towards *articulation by design*.

9.8   Credit transfer is relevant where a qualification is like another qualification and where a unit in a qualification is like a unit in another qualification. The recognition of credits for the purposes of transfer from one qualification/unit to another is determined by the content of the qualification/unit, their comparability and compatibility; the nature, complexity and extent of the curricula associated with the specific subjects/units to be recognised for transfer, and the nature of the assessment used. Ascertaining this comparability is made easier with subject benchmark statements – jointly agreed statements on content and quality, expressed as the related competences and learning outcomes. This methodology allows for authentic comparison while respecting the diversity of curricula and paths of learning. (SADC, 2021)

10.0 RULES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CAT IN BOTSWANA

10.1 CAT decisions that relate entirely to standardised outcomes within the NCQF must follow the credit values and rules of combination within the stated standards.

10.2 Refusals of recognition of apparently relevant credits must be made on reasoned and evidence-based grounds.

10.3 Refusals of recognition or access should be open to challenge, review, mediation by the BQA (who will act as the final mediator on such issues).

10.4 Advisory and mediation services must be available for difficult cases; the BQA must offer these under conditions to be specified in regulations. The BQA may delegate such services to an external agency.

10.5 The currency of credits needs to be considered in CAT decisions. The prescription of a period for currency (say, "No credit may be more than 5 years old") is problematic. In some disciplines and skills domains, new knowledge is produced with great speed, and credits may rapidly become irrelevant. In other disciplines or skills, the knowledge and competence may be of long duration and may grow with experience. Institutions or qualification development bodies need to build rules regarding currency into their policies and guidelines. These rules may be differentiated for different disciplines.

10.6 ETPs must exercise extreme caution in allowing the use of the same modules in a variety of related learning programmes in order, for example, to achieve economies of scale. Although the NQCF allows, in principle, the accumulation of multiple 10-hour credits, individual institutional policy and guidelines must adopt clear positions on the extent to which credits can be accumulated and might be reused.

10.7 Some rules of CAT include the following, which may need to be reviewed and agreed with all key stakeholders before they can be adopted.

a) Credit can only be used/transferred once (one cannot use one subject towards two separate qualifications)

b) CAT can only be used in part of a qualification, not the whole qualification. All credits for fundamental and elective components can be transferred, but only 70% of the core credits are transferable. The remaining 30% can be obtained through RPL or training and assessment to achieve the whole qualification.

c) If one applied for CAT and exemptions permitted, these only count towards the qualification applied for.

d) It is possible to use non-formal (corporate) but assessed and properly trained/structured courses for credit as well. The following rules apply:

   i. Content must match the unit standard at least 80% (This needs matching of the internal training to unit standards by an independent party).

   ii. Credits should be formally assessed (even if not for credit) and results must be recorded.

   iii. Employers must issue a statement of results.

   iv. Training should be formalised (notes, course objectives, classroom or online, etc.)

11.0 PROCEDURES FOR CAT IN BOTSWANA

11.1 It is a requirement for all ETPs applying for registration and accreditation with BQA to submit their CAT policies. The policies and guidelines should align to the CAT policy and guidelines. Where possible, common policy and guidelines for an entire sub-framework would be preferable to individual ETP policies.

11.2 All CAT decisions within the scope of the NQCF must be reported to BQA to enable the BQA to exercise its responsibilities in terms of quality assurance and framework maintenance.

11.3 A student applying for the recognition of previously awarded credits or accumulation of credits may be expected to provide credible evidence and motivate for the relative comparability of those credits in the new context of application or use.

11.4 The provider receiving the application is committed to weighing up the evidence, and must where possible access readily available evidence, but cannot be expected to conduct complex searches from remote sources.
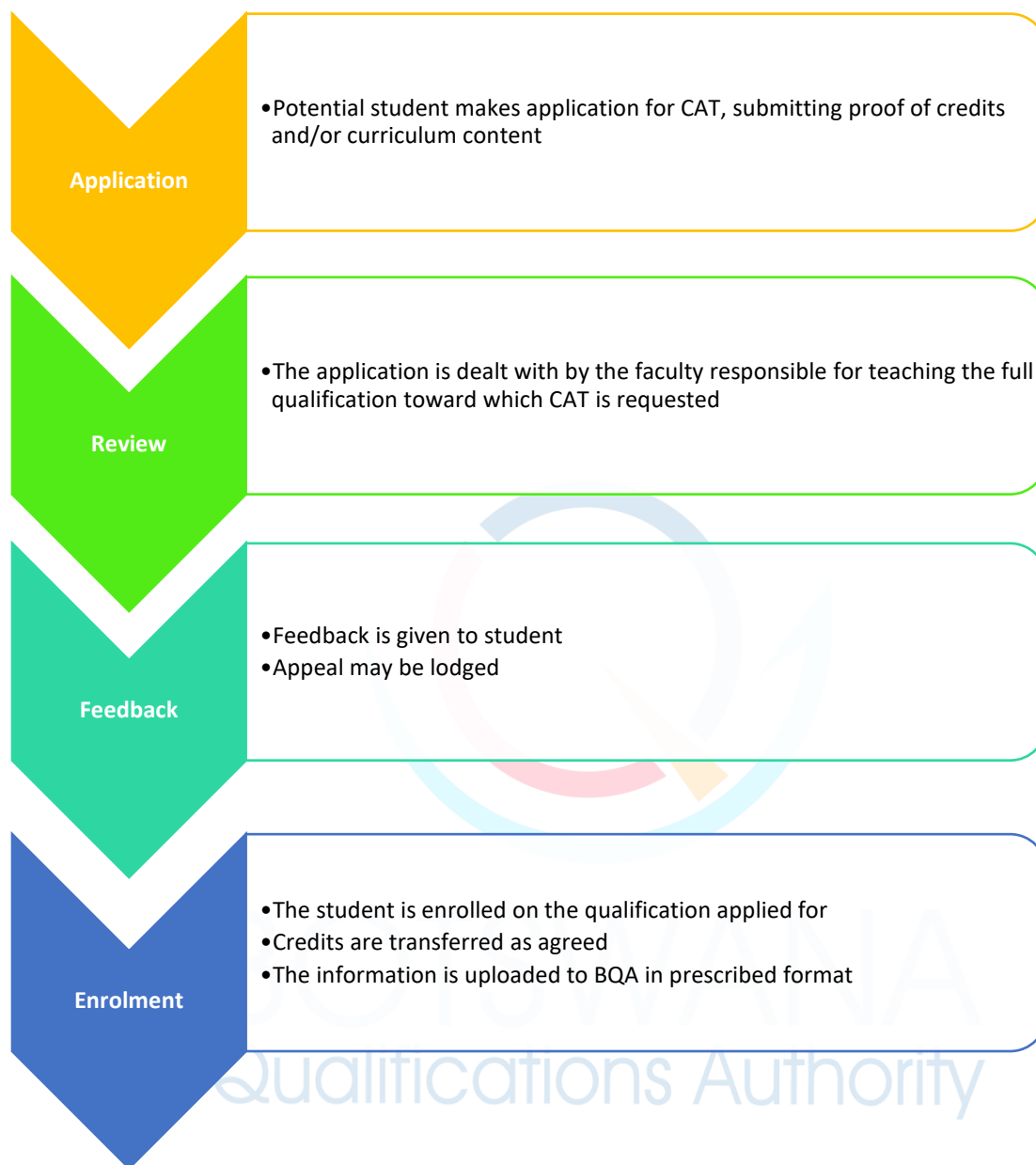
12.0 CAT PRACTICES: THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITIES OF TRUST

12.1 The only thing that will work in the long run is careful, evidence-based consideration of the candidate seeking access, helped by an essential community of trust in the credibility of credits.

12.2 Studies of CAT and RPL, and indeed, of the working of NQFs, indicate that there is

no substitute for the development of *communities of trust* when promoting rational, fair and efficient processes for quality. Communities of trust cannot be legislated into life but can be nurtured by promoting communication and contact among providers of education and skills development working in related disciplines or domains. Communities of trust are established over time. CAT is not a quick fix - it is a systemic process that should be established incrementally.

12.3 The role played by assessed learning in the consideration of CAT links CAT with quality assurance practices (institutional and systemic). This means that a quality assurance body such as the BQA has a vital role to play in establishing communities of trust. Accredited ETPs should have credible assessment practices in place within accredited learning programmes. These should put learning programmes and assessment practices of institutions on a par.

12.4 To be constructive of communities of trust, such communities need to have well-facilitated encounters, especially regarding issues of quality in curriculum and assessment. It must be a key deliverable of the BQA and the BEC to host such encounters, to nurture justified trust, and to encourage the providers or interested bodies to organise encounters through which values can be shared and trust developed.

12.5 Figure 1: Steps in the typical CAT process

Application
- Potential student makes application for CAT, submitting proof of credits and/or curriculum content

Review
- The application is dealt with by the faculty responsible for teaching the full qualification toward which CAT is requested

Feedback
- Feedback is given to student
- Appeal may be lodged

Enrolment
- The student is enrolled on the qualification applied for
- Credits are transferred as agreed
- The information is uploaded to BQA in prescribed format

13.0 CAT APPLICATION PROCESS

13.1 The candidate applies to the accredited ETP to embark on a qualification. On reviewing the requirements for the qualification, they note that they may have some existing credits that can be transferred to the new ETP. They may discuss their

previous education with the receiving ETP and decide to apply for CAT.

13.2 The receiving ETP may request supporting documentation, such as:

13.2.1 Proof that the credits/modules have been passed previously.

13.2.2 Course outlines.

See appendices for:

CAT 001: CAT application form

14.0 REVIEW OF ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

14.1 Over time, ETPs will develop reciprocal articulation agreements to guide the CAT processes between them. The development of these articulation agreements will be specific and detail the transfer of credits from one programme to the other to facilitate smooth progression in the programme of study. However, in the transitional period, each request for CAT may need to be dealt with on an individual basis and recorded to set a precedent for the next request.

14.2 Course-to-course articulation and block credit transfer should be assessed by academics at the departmental level. They will conduct a rigorous scrutiny of the curriculum presented by the CAT applicant and compare this to the module/qualification on offer by their own institution.

14.3 Guidelines will be set by each ETP, but it is recommended that, as long as at least 80% of the curriculum content is similar, the student should be able to apply successfully for CAT.

14.4 Transfer of credits shall be subject to the approval of the Head of Department during the transition phase (prior to a comprehensive and binding articulation agreement). All decisions regarding credit transfer should be accompanied by clear explanations and reasons provided for the decision taken.

15.0 FEEDBACK TO THE STUDENT

The ETP will be required to give the student written feedback on the outcome of their application for CAT. If the application is denied, the reasons must be detailed. The student has the right to appeal the decision. They may also appeal with the BQA.

16.0 ENROLMENT

16.1 The ETP will then enrol the student in the qualification and ensure all agreed credits are transferred.

16.2 Note: whether the CAT application is successful or not, the application and outcome must be reported to the BQA annually. See annexure 2 for the form to ensure this happens.

17.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

17.1 Monitoring and evaluation processes should be put in place for purposes of quality assurance.

17.2 There should be deliberate efforts to develop data collection strategies that will give appropriate feedback.

17.3 Institutions should create CAT databases that will feed into the CAT database system maintained by the Authority.

17.4 The monitoring should focus on, amongst others.

17.4.1 Verifying the validity and equivalence of credits.

17.4.2 Assessing the system's effectiveness in facilitating student mobility and flexibility.

18.0 REVIEW AND EVALUATION CYCLE

These guidelines shall be reviewed in consultation with relevant stakeholders every three (3) years or earlier if deemed necessary.

19.0 APPENDICES

CAT 001: CAT application form

CAT 002: Form to report CAT activity and outcome to BQA

CAT 001: CAT application form

Please complete this form in block letters with a black pen.

Submit via email to _____ or deliver to: _____

SECTION A: Personal details

Surna		Initial		Title (e.g. Mr.,	
First Name: (max 3)					

Date of Birth:	D	D	M	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	Age:		Yrs.	Gender:	M	Male	F	Female

ID / Passport Number:												Botswana Citizen:	Y	Yes	N	No

Residential Address:	
	Code:

Postal Address:	
	Code:

Tel (work):		Tel (home):	
Facsimile:		Cellular:	
E-mail:		Home language:	

SECTION B: Prior studies	
Name of previous education provider	
Where is this provider located (town, country)?	
What qualification did you enrol for?	
Motivation for your CAT request	
Please attach: Proof of qualification or part-qualification achievement Note: Module/subject outlines may be requested	

SECTION F: Acceptance of terms and conditions

I, (full name) _____ID number _____

state that the above information is true to the best of my knowledge. In signing this application form, I accept the terms and conditions.

Applicant's signature:		Date:	D	D	M	M	Y	Y	Y	Y

OFFICE USE ONLY

Booked/confirmed:			Invoiced	INV no	
Paid by candidate			Proof?		
Date:	D D M M Y Y Y Y	Rec No:		E	En g.	Ts Other: h w an e

Terms and conditions:

1. TBA.
2. XXX reserves the right not to register candidates (right of admission is reserved). Should this happen your full fee will be refunded.

CAT 002: Form to report CAT activity and outcome to BQA

Each ETP will report quarterly to the BQA on its CAT activities using the format below

Name of ETP		Person responsible for the report	
Quarter covered in this report		Contact email for person completing the report	

Original ETP name	Country / local (if local – where are they located?	Name of student	Age/gender of student	Name of qualification / part qualification completed	Specific unit stds or subjects identified for CAT	Name of qualification / part qualification enrolled on	Outcome of the application (awarded / not awarded)	Reasons for award or non-award of CAT