



Revised SADCQF

Policy and Guideline



For the learners, workers and citizens of SADC —
a framework of trust, opportunity,
sustainability and innovation.



Draft 5



05/06/2026



For TCCA validation · 17–19 June 2026



Presenter: SADC Secretariat



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Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework

Revised SADCQF: Validated by TCCA, June 2026. To be approved at next Joint Meeting ESTI Ministers (June 2027).



1 Revision process:

- ✓ Decision by Ministers at the Harare Joint ESTI Ministerial Meeting (June 2025).
- ✓ Participative revision through dialogue and co-design of the Policy and Guideline Document: 2 workshops: Pretoria (Sept 2025) and Windhoek (Feb 2026). **Technical Working Group**
- ✓ Evidence-based process: comprehensive survey collected views and orientations from 13 SADC Member States. Analytical report presented at Pretoria workshop and used in the conceptualisation of the revised SADCQF.
- ✓ Use of relevant information and findings from the EQF-SADCQF comparison report (2024).
- ✓ Based on benchmarking and relevant international experience.



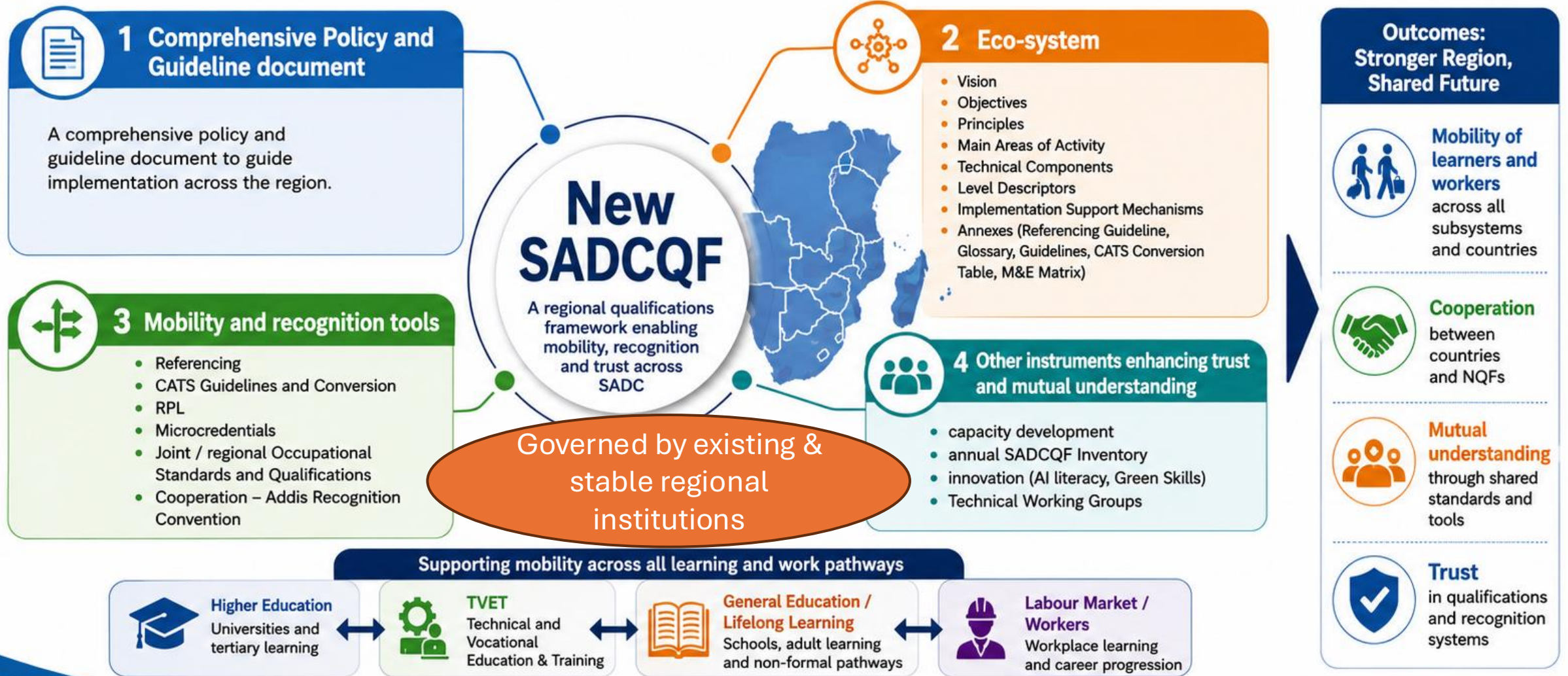
2 Version 5 of Revised SADCQF – result of consultation and gradual evolution:

- ❖ Version 2 circulated in October 2025 for comments and orientations from all Member States. Incorporated into draft 3 for discussion.
- ❖ Presented and discussed comprehensively at the Windhoek workshop, February 2026. All proposals from participants and working groups incorporated.
- ❖ **Current version has 3 main changes:** (a) Vision: more concise formulation; (b) Inserted broad implementation roadmap for 3 years; (c) Inserted revised M&E plan – based on 4 outcomes with respective indicators.





New SADCQF: validated by TCCA (June 2026)



**One Region.
One Framework.
Shared Opportunities.**

Referencing

Referencing NQFs to SADCQF generates full transparency and comparability across the region. This is essential for mutual understanding between countries regarding key features of their qualifications and credentials. To be robust and actionable, referencing is based on commonly agreed and used criteria, evidence, participation and analysis. Referencing is self-improvement.

“Referencing is like an instrospection” – said Mr Mboni Dlamini, Head of Eswatini Qualifications Authority”

Level descriptors

Learning
outcomes
approach (incl. in
CATS, RPL)

Qualifications in
the NQF

Quality assurance

Criterion 1

Criterion 2

Criterion 3

Criterion 4

SADCQF REFERENCING CRITERIA (NQF TO SADCQF)

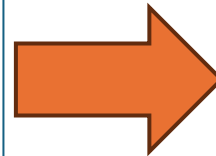
Table 1: SADCQF referencing criteria – adapted from ACQF Policy Document

Referencing criteria	
1	There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the SADCQF.
2	The national qualifications frameworks or systems are based on learning outcomes principles and related to arrangements for recognition of prior learning (including non-formal and informal) and, where appropriate, to credit systems.
3	There are transparent processes and procedures for including qualifications in the NQF or for describing the place of qualifications in the NQS and information on qualifications is accessible, trustworthy, and verifiable in a national register(s) of qualifications.
4	The national quality assurance system for education and training refers to the national qualifications framework or system and is consistent with the principles of quality assurance of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF).

Revised SADCQF: comprehensive, innovative, action oriented

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What is new (2017)?



1. Strategic concept: vision-objectives-scope-principles
2. Areas of activity
3. Technical components
4. Level descriptors: aligned to ACQF
5. Implementation and support mechanisms
6. Referencing guidelines
7. Conversion table ECTS-CATS
8. Monitoring and evaluation matrix



3.1 Vision

Vision of the revised SADCQF

- *A trusted, inclusive and responsive regional qualifications framework that supports lifelong learning, recognition of qualifications, skills and micro-credentials, and contributes to regional development and integration, mobility, employability, innovation, social justice and sustainability across the SADC region.*



3.1 Vision (2)

Impact

- The revised SADCQF aims to enhance **employability** through increased mobility and to support the region and its Member States in advancing innovation, as well as the **green, digital, and technological transformation of their economies and societies**, industrialisation, and the promotion of **decent work and entrepreneurship** for all people, in both rural and urban areas.

Continental and Global role

- The SADCQF actively contributes to continental integration through strengthened cooperation with the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF), and the Addis Recognition Convention.
- SADCQF is fully compatible and aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goals 4, 8, 5, 10 and 13.



SADCQF Revision

Objectives

Nine strategic directions for a trusted, inclusive and future-oriented regional qualifications framework

- Q** 1. Quality, transparency, comparability, trust in qualifications and credentials
- CI** 2. Continuous improvement and resilience of education and training systems
- NQF** 3. Development of NQF and related policies
- EQ** 4. Efficient and fair recognition of qualifications and credentials
- AI** 5. Development knowledge & skills for green-blue-digital / AI transition
- ∞** 6. Expansion of LLL for all groups, esp. NEETs
- IKS** 7. Recognition and valorisation of IKS
- REG** 8. Regional and continental integration, just and sustainable development
- M&E** 9. Skills intelligence, Monitoring & evaluation based on modern data systems

From transparency and trust to future skills, inclusion, integration and data-driven implementation

3.4 Guiding Principles

Pragmatic and forward-looking principles underpinning transformation, trust and accountability.



Roadmap: eight Areas of Activity



The operational foundation for implementation, institutionalisation and growing impact.

1 Regional & global alignment

Conventions, ACQF, EQF and QA networks

2 NQF development & referencing

NQF updates, referencing reports and communication

3 Quality assurance coherence

Regional QA guideline, tools, data and community of practice

4 Recognition & mobility

Joint qualifications, micro-credentials, standards and MRAs

5 Digitalisation & recognition

Registers, QCP, verifiable credentials and skills intelligence

6 Capacity development

Guidelines, peer learning, training and methodological packages

7 Monitoring arrangements

Inventory, skills intelligence, results framework and data system

8 Evaluation

Thematic, comparative and impact studies for improvement

Eight interrelated areas connect policy, tools, support, evidence and impact.

5. Technical Components of the SADCQF



- The effective implementation of the revised SADCQF relies on a **coherent set of technical components** that ensure **coordination, transparency, and sustainability** across the region.



- These components provide the **institutional and operational backbone** of the SADCQF, linking policy vision with practice and enabling Member States to cooperate effectively in advancing lifelong learning, recognition, and mobility.

The technical components comprise:



1.

Governance arrangements



2.

Core instruments and guidelines



3.

Articulation and lifelong learning tools



4.

Digital systems for qualifications management



5.

Communication, dissemination and advocacy mechanisms

Technical components: 2. Core instruments and guidelines



The SADCQF is operationalised through a set of instruments, inventories, and guidelines that translate its principles and objectives into practical methodologies and procedures and enable coherent action.



These instruments include:

1



The SADCQF Policy and Guideline: direction, structure, and procedures for referencing, and implementation.

2



The Inventory of NQFs and Related Policies, regularly updated by TCCA and thematic working groups to capture progress, policy developments and new demands across the region.

3



Thematic Guidelines and Manuals on key areas such as RPL, CATS, micro-credentials, qualifications design and articulation, referencing, green skills and quality assurance.

4



Methodological toolkits and templates to support practitioners and national teams in development of qualifications and pathways, monitoring, and review.

5



Reporting and communication templates that ensure consistency and transparency in information shared across Member States.

6



Monitoring and evaluation framework of SADCQF.



These instruments contribute to policy coherence, comparability, and effective implementation of the SADCQF at both national and regional levels.



9. Annexes Toolkit

Practical tools that help users apply, interpret and monitor the revised SADCQF.

Why the annexes matter



**Support
implementation**



**Improve
consistency**



**Facilitate referencing
and credit transfer**



**Strengthen
monitoring and
learning**

9.1

Annex 1: Glossary of key terms



Defines the main concepts
and language used in the
SADCQF.

9.2

Annex 2: Referencing guidelines (short version)



Provides a concise guide for
linking national frameworks
to the SADCQF.

9.3

Annex 3: SADCQF Guidelines in force



Lists the guidelines already
adopted and available
for use.

9.4

Annex 4: SADCQF Guidelines in development



Shows the priority guidance
tools currently being
prepared.

9.5

Annex 5: Conversion table ECTS-SADC CATS



Helps compare and
translate credit values
across systems.

9.6

Annex 6: Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix of SADCQF



Presents indicators and
data sources to track
progress, outcomes
and impact.

1) Micro-
credentials
+
2) Green
Skills



Together, the annexes turn the SADCQF into a practical toolkit for **implementation, cooperation and continuous improvement.**

