Recognising your Competencies

Editorial

It is with great pleasure that the SQA Team welcomes you to this first edition of our Newsletter for the year 2017. The Authority is pleased to introduce Ms Micole Bistoquet, the new Principal Quality Assurance Officer for Validation who joined the SQA team in March.

In this first half of the year, the SQA has maintained its dynamic interactions with its stakeholders and the general public to ensure that accurate information is provided on overseas training providers and programmes.

Quality assurance activities have progressed smoothly. An accreditation visit to the Seychelles Business Studies Academy (SBSA) was conducted in June. The last audit of the SBSA was in 2015. The accreditation report will be submitted to the SQA Quality Assurance Committee in July for approval. With regards to the development of Unit Standards, the SQA has intensified its working visits to the Professional Centres to ensure that the target set for the year is met. Much attention has also been provided to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The RPL Policy has been finalised and the Guidelines for the implementation of RPL are in the final editing stage. Two other documents that address fees and allowances for RPL Practitioners are also being finalised.

The SQA staff has benefitted from capacity building opportunities. Two officers participated in the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation workshops, a project being implemented by the Government in collaboration with the World Bank.   The CEO attended a workshop held in Pretoria, South Africa in June, and that was hosted by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to SADC Member States piloting the alignment of their NQFs to the SADCQF. The eight pilot countries are: South Africa, Seychelles, Mauritius, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland and Zambia.

There have been challenges in this first half of the year. Progress with programme validation has been very slow with only six applications for validation. The process is totally reliant on tertiary education institutions submitting applications for validation to the SQA.   The Authority has also recorded a slight decrease in the number of qualifications evaluated and certified true copy. Likewise this service is reliant on requests from the clients that visit the SQA. On a final note, we hope that all our esteemed readers find something useful and informative in this edition of our Newsletter.

Validation Process of Programmes of Tertiary Education Institutions

Programme Validation approves for a specified period of time, a specific education and training programme or credit bearing course, offered by an educational and training provider, which leads to the award of a specific qualification or part of a qualification to be registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

By **validating** a programme or credit bearing course, the SQA has ensured that the programme or course has met certain national quality assurance criteria to meet the requirements of the NQF at a specific level. This means that there can be public confidence that the programme or course is at the level at which the provider has pitched it.
A **provisionally validated** programme / credit bearing course meets the majority of the requirements of the NQF to be offered to learners but minor changes are required to achieve full validation status.

A qualification / course registered on the NQF means that there can be confidence that the qualification / course is at the level at which the provider or institution has pitched it.

During the first half of 2017 SQA received six (6) applications for validation of which all were resubmissions from 2016. Five (5) programmes received full validation status while one programme has been provisionally validated. The programmes which received full validation are as follows:

- Bachelor of Education (Primary) and Bachelor of Education (Secondary) of the University of Seychelles (UniSey)
- Certificate in Motor Vehicle Mechanics and Certificate in Mechanical Engineering of the Seychelles Institute of Technology (SIT)
- Advanced Certificate in Fisheries Science and Fishing Technology offered by Seychelles Maritime Academy (SMA)

In all seventy-eight (78) existing locally developed programmes (inclusive of eight (8) credit bearing short courses) have reached the standard for the Authority to award full validation status.

Progress with programme validation has been very slow and there has been a considerable drop in the number of applications for validation from tertiary education institutions for this half of the year when compared to the same period last year.

With at least 26 existing locally developed programmes that are yet to reach the standard for the SQA to award full validation status, it remains one of the Authority's priority that all programmes are validated. We are hopeful that programme validation will gain renewed momentum during the second half of the year.

The secret of getting ahead is getting started. By: Mark Twain

Institutional Accreditation

Institutional accreditation certifies, for a specified period of time, that an institution fulfils the quality requirements of the Seychelles Qualifications Authority and has the capacity to provide education and training programmes leading to the award of qualifications to be registered on the Seychelles National Qualifications Framework; and to assess the performance of learners participating in such programmes.

The Seychelles Business Studies Academy (SBSA) is on the list of tertiary education institutions earmarked for an institutional accreditation visit by the SQA this year. The first accreditation visit of the SBSA took place in August 2012. The Academy received Provisional Accreditation valid for a period of two years. The Accreditation Visit Report of 2012 highlighted recommendations to be addressed by the institution and this could be monitored through its follow up action plan and quarterly reports. In August 2015, SBSA produced its Self-Evaluation Report which was followed by a Monitoring Visit by the SQA Accreditation Team.

In May 2017, SBSA submitted a new Self-Evaluation Report which explained the work it had undertaken in line with the recommendations of the 2012 and 2015 reports. This was followed by an accreditation visit by the SQA Accreditation Team which was conducted from the 6th to 9th of June 2017. Four local consultants formed part of the Accreditation Team and they focussed on specific areas as shown in the table below .

The Team conducted a series of interviews and collected evidence during the visit. SBSA's management, staff and students provided their full corporation and support to the Accreditation Team. The four consultants presented their initial findings on the last day of the visit. The SBSA staff, the Chairperson and one member of the SBSA Board as well as the representative of the SQA were present for the presentation. The Accreditation Team observed that the SBSA had made significant improvements since the last review in 2015. This achievement has been made possible through the dedication and commitment of the dynamic SBSA team, the invaluable support and contribution from its very active Board, as well as the engagement of the learners not only in their studies but also in the activities undertaken by the Academy.

The Accreditation Report on the SBSA will be finalised in July. The Accreditation Team extends a warm thank you to the Academy for the warm hospitality, patience and understanding during the visit.

Accreditation Team Members and the Director of the SBSA

Group photo of the SBSA and Accreditation Teams

Name	Role
Ms Jacqueline Gertrude	Leader of the Accreditation Team
Mrs Mahrookh Pardiwalla	Accreditation Team Member
Mr. Gerard Vidot	Accreditation Team Member
Ms Jill Tirant	Accreditation Team Member
Ms Prisheila Sophola	Coordinator (SQA Officer)

Meeting of the SADC Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation, 18-20 April 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa

The meeting was attended by Chief Executive Officers and Directors of national institutions responsible for Certification and Accreditation of education and skills training from Member States and the SADC Secretariat to review progress towards implementation of the SADC Qualifications Framework based on the Action Plan developed at the last TCCA meeting held in September 2016. The Seychelles was represented by Ms Fiona Ernesta, member of the TCCA and CEO of the Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA).

The purpose of the three-day meeting was to provide an opportunity for the SADC Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) to meet in order to:

1. Host the first meeting of the SADC Qualifications Verifications Network (SADCQVN) and provide capacity building opportunities for members;

2. Review overall progress towards implementing the SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF) namely development and alignment, quality assurance and verification in line with the TCCA two-year Action Plan for accelerating the implementation of the SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF);

3. Explore the overall structure to be put in place to allow proper functioning of the SADCQF and make a recommendation to Ministers of Education; and

4. Agree on the official launch of the SADCQF.

In line with the above, the meeting addressed the following issues:

a) Establishment of the SADCQVN;
b) Progress on the ratification of the "Revised Arusha Convention on the recognition of studies, certificates, diplomas, degrees and other academic qualifications in higher education in African States" known as Addis Convention;
c) Mobility statistics in SADC;
d) Modernising verification in SADC region;
e) Official launch of the SADCQVN;
f) Overall progress towards implementation of the SADCQF since September 2016;
g) Overall structures that need to be in place to ensure proper functioning of the SADCQF;
h) Progress on the alignment of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) to SADCQF;
i) Official launch of the SADCQF;
j) Implementation update on Quality assurance; and
k) Recommendations for the Ministerial meeting of June 2017.

The meeting of the 18 April 2017 was dedicated to the SADC Qualifications Verification Network (SADCQVN). The meeting considered and endorsed the Terms of Reference of the SADCQVN. A booklet of the SADCQVN which contains verification contact details of the SADC Member States and that had been compiled following input from members was presented.

The CEO of Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) presented an overview of the African Qualification Verification Network (AQVN) with regards to its establishment, membership, and upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM) planned for October 2017. The meeting was informed that SADCQVN had been accepted into the membership of the AQVN following an official request for membership from the TCCA. It is to be noted that at present membership of the AQVN is free.

There was a review of progress on the ratification of the Addis Convention (Revised Arusha Convention) by Member States since none of the SADC Member States have as yet ratified the Convention.

The SADCQVN established on 8 April 2017 will improve the movement of learners and workers across the region

This was followed by a presentation on information addressing mobility statistics from Member States with regards to the number of qualifications verified within a particular financial year (April 2015 to March 2016). An excel template to facilitate reporting and processing of statistical information was also adopted.

The first day ended with the official launch of the SADC Qualifications Verification Network (SADCQVN). The second day began with a presentation and plenary discussion on the review of progress on the implementation of the Action Plan for accelerating the implementation of the SADCQF that was finalized at the TCCA meeting of September 2016. The meeting noted several key milestones that have been achieved under the leadership of SAQA: such as the development of the communication strategy, establishment of the social media platforms (twitter and facebook accounts), and development of marketing materials on the SADCQF. There was also a presentation by Joe Samuels of SAQA on the challenges experienced during the last six months with regards to the institutional arrangements to support the Secretariat in the implementation of the SADCQF. Members were in agreement that there was need to ensure that Zambia (the next Member State that would be supporting the Secretariat in the implementation of the SADCQF for the next six months) is not faced with similar challenges.

The meeting considered the structures that need to be established to ensure proper functioning of the SADCQF. It was reported that the TCCA Executive Committee (EXCO) has been established compromising of Botswana, South Africa and Swaziland and the SADC Secretariat, and responsibilities allocated to its members; with Swaziland to lead the Qualifications Verification, Botswana to lead Quality Assurance, and South Africa to lead the alignment of NQF's to the SADCQF.

The meeting also considered the funding proposal for the establishment of the Implementation Unit of the SADCQF and made some inputs to be tabled for consideration of the Ministers of Education during their June 2017 meeting in Swaziland. It had been scheduled to have the official launch of the SADCQF in the evening of that day. However, Member States were not in favour due to implications in-country. After much debate and discussion the meeting unanimously agreed on the official launch of the SADCQF to be an item on the agenda of the Ministerial meeting to be held in June and the evening's scheduled event to be instead 'an awareness raising event towards the launch of the SADCQF in June'. The programme for the evening's event remained unchanged and there was national television coverage.

On the third and last day of the TCCA Meeting the alignment flow chart for alignment of NQFs to SADCQF was presented and discussed as well as the Guidelines for SADC countries to align with the SADCQF. Members expressed need for support with and capacity building for the alignment exercise. To this end, SAQA offered to host a workshop on sharing of experiences and peer learning on NQFs with pilot countries – proposed for May/June 2017. Eight countries have been chosen to participate in the alignment exercise pilot study (Botswana, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia, Namibia, Lesotho and Swaziland). There was a presentation from the Southern African Quality Assurance Network (SAQAN) on the establishment of a regional quality assurance system focusing on higher and tertiary education. The meeting also discussed the issue of credible institutions in the SADC region and agreed that South Africa would compile the list of credible institutions in the region with input from members and will submit to the SADC Secretariat for publishing on the SADC website.

As a final item, the meeting discussed and agreed on issues to be tabled for the Ministers meeting consideration in June 2017.

The Technical Committee of Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) is driving the implementation of the SADCQF.

SQA Officers Participate in Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Workshops

Since early this year, the government of Seychelles in collaboration with the World Bank have started an exercise towards performance monitoring and evaluation. This is part of the government's engagement to measure performance and assess its effectiveness in implementing national priorities.

In his State of the Nation Address, the President made reference to Accountability, Transparency and Good Governance, as three aspects necessary to move our country forward and which will also be the bedrock of the government's work for the next four years. To achieve this, the Government of Seychelles has adopted the result based management (RBM) tool as it provides a framework to achieve this in a simple way across all Government departments. The four main pillars of the RBM include: strategic planning (SP), project performance based budgeting (PPBB), performance monitoring and evaluation (PM&E), and performance monitoring system (PMS). The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MoE&HRD) and its Agencies were selected for the first pilot phase of the project.

There were two workshops in total with the first one in April was based on devising monitoring tools by designing better performance indicators. The second workshop in June was based on harmonising reporting methods by creating a common monitoring template. The workshops were attended by officials of the MoE&HRD and representatives of the Ministry's

Agencies namely: Seychelles Qualifications Authority SQA), Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), Institute for Early Childhood Development (IECD) and Agency for National Human Resource Development (ANHRD). At the end of the sessions and under the guidance of the World Bank consultants, the participants had managed to design an integrated reporting template, which the Ministry and its agencies will use for reporting.

The idea is that the reporting is done in a more precise and concise manner so as to allow for and facilitate effective decision making. Currently the Ministry is in the third phase of the RBM which is the strategic planning phase.

SQA's Vision

A credible, valued and efficient organization which, as custodian of a high quality national qualifications framework puts the needs of learners at the centre of an open, responsive and integrated qualifications system which recognizes their competencies and enables them to develop to their fullest potential

SQA's Mission
To develop and enhance a national qualifications framework that elevates and recognizes competencies whilst promoting quality education and training
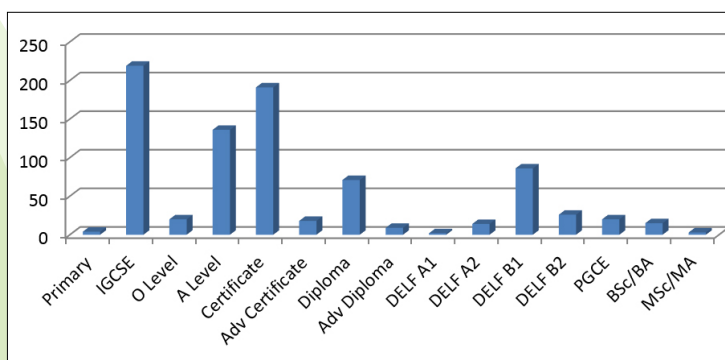
Evaluation and Certification of qualifications

Certification of Qualifications

Certification of qualifications is a process which establishes the authenticity of qualifications. The SQA welcomes clients on a daily basis for this service. The requests for this service have come mostly from secondary school leavers and Advanced Level graduates applying for further studies in the Professional Centres locally, the University of Seychelles and higher education institutions overseas. A total of 834 qualifications have been certified true copy from January to June. These include 219 IGCSEs, 191 certificates, 136 A' Level certificates and 86 DELF B1. This total represents 36 certificates below the total certified in the same period in 2016.

Table 1 and Graph 1 below show the qualifications that were certified true copy by type from January to June 2017.

Qualifications	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	TOTAL
Primary	1	1	1	1			4
IGCSE	38	62	28	23	47	21	219
O Level	3	4		3	5	5	20
A Level	17	34	15	15	38	17	136
Certificate	35	55	32	23	38	8	191
Adv. Certificate		1	1	8	7	1	18
Diploma	15	14	7	10	17	8	71
Adv. Diploma	3		1	3	1	1	9
DELF A1	1		1				2
DELF A2	4	3	1	2	2	2	14
DELF B1	12	26	14	12	17	5	86
DELF B2	1	10	5	1	5	4	26
PGCE	6	4	8	1	1		20
BSc/BA	1	1	2	3	4	4	15
MSc/MA						3	3
Total	137	215	116	105	182	79	834

Table 1

Graph 1

Evaluation of Qualifications

The process of evaluation of qualifications establishes the level of qualifications against the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). For this service, it is required that applicants submit their original certificates for verification as well as the academic transcript and proof of identity. The evaluation process may require that the Awarding institutions are verified. As and when necessary, the SQA liaises with the Awarding Bodies for information.

A total 134 qualifications were evaluated from January to June 2017. This figure represents 56 qualifications below the total qualifications evaluated in the same period in 2016. It is required that returning graduates have their qualifications evaluated as they enroll for employment in the public sector. The countries with the highest number of qualifications evaluated in this period are the United Kingdom (48), Seychelles (28) and Australia (11).

Table 2 and Graph 2 below show the distribution of qualifications evaluated by country of origin from January to June 2017.

Countries	No. of Qualifications Evaluated	Countries	No. of Qualifications Evaluated
United Kingdom	48	Canada	2
Seychelles	28	China	1
Australia	11	Belgium	1
South Africa	10	Germany	1
India	9	Kenya	1
Tanzania	3	Italy	1
USA	3	Reunion	1
Madagascar	4	Russia	1
Ireland	4	Sri Lanka	1
France	3	Thailand	1
Grand Total: 134			

Table 2
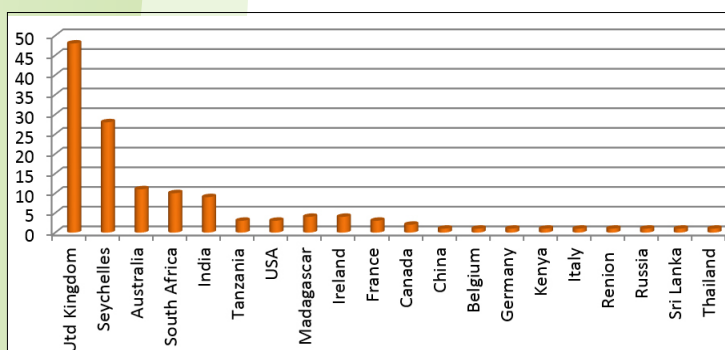
Graph 2

Workshop on the Alignment of NQFs to the SADCQF

A sharing of experiences and peer learning workshop on the alignment of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) to the Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework (SADCQF) was held on 07-08 June in Pretoria, South Africa, at SAQA House. This was a follow up to the meeting of the SADC Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) held on 19-20 April 2017 where SAQA offered to host a workshop on sharing of experiences and peer learning to Member States piloting the alignment of their NQFs to the SADCQF. The eight pilot countries are: South Africa, Seychelles, Mauritius, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, and Zambia.

The Seychelles was represented by Ms Fiona Ernesta, member of the TCCA and Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) and Mr. Jean Michel Domingue, Chief Executive Officer of the Tertiary Education Commission and Vice-chairperson of the SQA Board.

The purpose of the workshop was to:

1. Provide a peer-learning opportunity for the eight pilot countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia;

2. Provide a platform where pilot countries can share alignment ideas and expertise;

3. Work systematically through the ten alignment criteria and self-assessment exercise to ensure a consistent understanding of the criteria and what it means for SADC and its Member States;

4. Ensure that all pilot countries complete a first draft of their evidence-based self-assessment exercise with evidence;

5. Ensure that all pilot countries complete the related road map towards achievement of the criteria; and

6. Ensure that all pilot countries submit a first draft of the completed self-assessment exercise to the TCCA Chairperson for sign-off before attendees leave the workshop.

Summary of the Workshop Proceedings
The Chair of the TCCA and Chief Executive Officer of SAQA, Mr Joe Samuels explained that the objective of the workshop was to complete the Self-Assessment exercise. This was followed by a short session where each workshop participant introduced themselves and voiced their expectations of the workshop. Expectations included amongst others:

- To have a draft Self-assessment completed;
- To gain a firm grip on alignment;
- To have an understanding of what needs to happen in country;
- To learn and deliver learned practice to country counterparts;
- To set clarity and develop common understanding.

The workshop progressed with a presentation by Mr. Joe Samuels that shed light on the SADCQF Implementation Model, the SADCQF alignment road map, the SADCQF alignment criteria, and the way forward with the full implementation of the SADCQF,

which encompasses the implementation of the Addis Convention. He emphasized on the following:

1. The Self-Assessment is the first step in the alignment process but self-assessment is not part of the alignment;
2. There is an alignment report that will result from the alignment process;
3. Without quality assurance (QA) in place, the building of trust as encapsulated in the SADCQF Implementation Model cannot happen. Member States must use the SADC QA guidelines developed to align their QA mechanisms;
4. For alignment to work, Member States must have all the elements of the SADCQF Implementation Model in place, with all elements of the model running parallel to each other.

The presentation was followed by a lively questions session in which several issues and concerns were clarified.

The real work started from then on with Coleen Jaftha of SAQA as facilitator. Piloting Member States had as task prior to the workshop to start completing the Self-Assessment template and Namibia agreed to use what it had achieved with the Self-Assessment template as guide. This was projected and the presenter from the Namibian delegation proceeded with explaining and clarifying information for each question of each criterion of the template.

Work on the completion of a first draft of the Self-Assessment exercise continued and occupied the main part of the second and last day of the workshop and all pilot Member States in attendance were able to submit a first draft to the TCCA Chairperson by the end of the day. The draft will need to be refined in country and Self-Assessment Alignment report produced and approved by the National Alignment Committee (to be set up as the next step) prior to its submission to the SADC-QF Sub-committee in August for approval at the SADC TCCA meeting of September 2017.

There were several concerns that needed clarification and these were addressed prior to the close of the workshop. Issues of relevance to Seychelles were as follows:

- Who appoints the National Alignment Committee (in the Seychelles context, is it the SQA Board or the Minister?).
- Letter of appointment on the National Alignment Committee to read: You are invited to serve on the National Alignment Committee …

- To include the organization that will drive the process in the letter: in our case to include that the SQA will drive the process.

- To include some background of the NQF in the Alignment Report.

Finally, participants articulated their learning from the two-day workshop, which were then compared to expectations of the first day; it was found that expectations (and subsequently the objectives) of the workshop had been met

Participants harnessing energy towards the completion of the first draft of the Self-Assessment Template

Participants harnessing energy towards the completion of the first draft of the Self-Assessment Template

Progress on Standards Development

The SQA has the overall responsibility for setting of standards for local programmes (Level 3 to 6 of the NQF). Standards are developed by National Standards Setting Committees (NSSC), following which they are evaluated by a Core Standards Committee (CSC), and are then approved by an Executive Committee (EXCO) if they meet all NQF requirements. Approved standards are registered on the NQF for a period of five years after which they are reviewed for re-registration.

The SQA in 2017 continues to conduct one on one training sessions for the Professional Centres. The aim of the sessions is to give more in depth knowledge on standards development to the developers. The focus for the development of unit standards for 2017 is in the areas of Engineering and Construction, Health, Tourism and Art & Design. At the time of writing, unit standards for a total of fifty (50) qualifications are at different stages of development/review or have been approved for registration on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as follows:

- Unit Standards for twenty one (21) qualifications have been approved for registration on the NQF.
- Unit Standards for five (5) qualifications are undergoing final revisions;
- Unit Standards for eight (8) qualifications are being reviewed to satisfy the revised format adopted by SQA as of 2012;
- Unit Standards for sixteen (16) qualifications are being developed for the first time.

Sensitization is also ongoing with other fields and sectors. At the moment discussion is taking place with the Ministry of Land Use & Habitat to develop unit standards for a qualification in Land Survey.

The SQA hopes to intensify its efforts in one to one training with various institutions to ensure standards are developed and approved.

- Unit Standards being reviewed in new format
- Unit Standards being developed for the first time
- Unit Standards for final corrections
- Unit standards Approved by EXCO
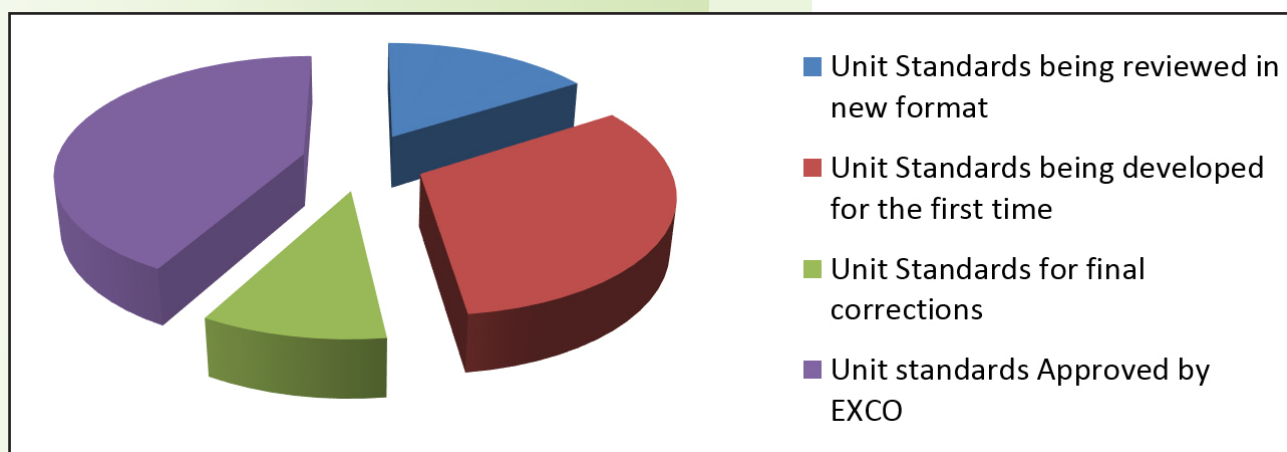
What is the SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF)?

The SADCQF is a regional mechanism for comparability and recognition of full qualifications, credit transfer, creation of regional standards and facilitation of Quality Assurance (QA). It consists of a set of agreed principles, practices, procedures and standardised terminology intended to:

- ensure effective comparability of qualifications and credits across SADC;
- facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications among Member States;
- harmonise qualifications, and create acceptable regional standards.

Purpose

The main purpose of the SADCQF then includes:

1. Providing a mechanism for comparability and recognition of qualifications in SADC;

2. Facilitating mutual recognition of qualifications in all Member States;
3. Harmonising qualifications wherever possible;
4. Promoting the transfer of credits within and among Member States and even beyond; and
5. Creating SADC regional standards where appropriate.

The SADCQF will promote co-operation and partnerships within SADC. It will also promote peace and prosperity through quality human resource development and increased mobility in the Region. It is expected that the SADCQF will enhance co-operation and development in the SADC region by contributing to the fulfilment of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training and the overall objective of the SADC Treaty for a common future.

The SADCQF will also contribute to the:

- development and implementation of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) in Member States;
- harmonisation between NQFs in Member States;
- review and strengthening of national assessment and accreditation systems; and
- facilitation of agreement on entrance requirements to higher education and training
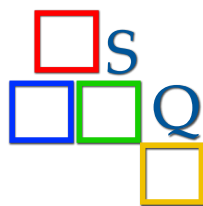
Within the SQA

Incoming staff

The SQA welcomed a new member in its family, Ms Micole Bistoquet, the new Principal Quality Assurance Officer for Validation. Ms Bistoquet is not new to the field of education and without a doubt her vast experience in teaching and education management will help to heighten the SQA's efforts towards ensuring quality education and training nationally.

Birthdays

The following SQA staff members celebrated their birthday between the months of January to June 2017.

Mrs Hilda Julie
Mrs Sandra Adela
Ms. Dona Monthy
Mr. Bernard Dubois

Happy Birthday !!!

S Q