
STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING INTERNATIONAL
RECOGNITION OF SAMOA QUALIFICATIONS
DECEMBER 2010

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Introduction

SQA Mandate

One of SQA's mandates as included in the SQA Act 2010 is to: *work with overseas government agencies and other organizations to recognise overseas qualifications in Samoa and **to achieve international recognition for qualifications awarded in Samoa*** (SQA Act 2010 4.n).

Purpose of this Document

This document outlines a draft Strategy for the Achievement of International Recognition for Samoa Qualifications as mandated in the SQA Act 2010. The Strategy is informed by a Situational Analysis of the rationale and processes utilised by other countries to achieve international recognition of their qualifications. The document may serve as a reference point to establish where SQA is at in working towards the goal of achieving international recognition for Samoa qualifications.

Alignment with SQA Corporate Plan & PSET Plan

This strategy is not separate from the PSET Plan 2008-2016 or the rolling SQA Corporate Plan. It may be seen as an expansion of how to achieve the objective of international recognition of Samoa qualifications, which is referred to in the PSET Plan and the SQA Corporate Plan.

Review

It is recommended that this Strategy be reviewed annually to reflect progress made as well as other initiatives for international recognition of Samoa qualifications.

SECTION 1: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

1.1 THE JUSTIFICATION FOR INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF SAMOA QUALIFICATIONS

There are several arguments for the promotion of international recognition of Samoa qualifications.

- a) Facilitates international labour mobility for individuals educated and trained in Samoa
- b) Indirectly enhances remittance flows when Samoans educated and trained in Samoa obtain employment overseas and send back remittance to their families
- c) Benefits to Samoa in the form of experience and knowledge obtained during overseas employment when individuals return to work in Samoa

- d) Helps ensure the brain drain from Samoa is utilized and not wasted in the overseas destination country
- e) Indirect assurance that Samoa's post-school education and training system is on par with overseas systems...

1.2 HOW DO QUALIFICATIONS BECOME INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED?

There are several paths to achieving international recognition of qualifications, as documented by international examples.

a) Bi-lateral Agreements

This is an agreement between two countries regarding the mutual recognition of qualifications obtained/ utilised within their borders.

The [Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement \(TMMRA\)](#) between Australia and New Zealand is an example of this type of agreement. The TMMRA operates on two basic principles. Firstly, a good that may be legally sold in Australia may be sold in NZ and vice versa, regardless of sale-related differences. Secondly (and of more relevance), a person registered to practice an occupation in Australia is entitled to practice an equivalent occupation in NZ and vice versa, *without the need for further testing or examination*.

b) Qualification Recognition Assessments carried out by Qualification Recognition Agencies

One of the effects of increased globalization is increased labour mobility and the need for processes to facilitate recognition of qualifications obtained outside a country's borders. Many countries have established government agencies which are tasked with evaluating foreign qualifications for recognition within the country, or providing information to facilitate foreign qualification recognition.

Examples of such agencies in the Pacific are:

New Zealand	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
Australia	Trades Recognition Australia National Office for Overseas Skills Recognition Australian Skills Recognition Information

c) Multilateral Agreement/ Regional Agreement

This is an agreement between three or more countries to recognise qualifications obtained in each country for access to further study opportunities and employment. Examples include the

regional conventions on the recognition of higher education studies and qualifications initiated by the UNESCO in the 1970s and 1980s.

As one of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Samoa is a possible party to the [Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific](#). This Convention was revised in 2009 to reflect changing needs in qualification recognition processes.

The Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific sets out expectations regarding:

- The competencies of the qualification recognition authority
- Basic principles related to assessment of qualifications
- Access to higher education
- Recognition of periods of study and qualifications
- Recognition of qualifications held by refugees and displaced persons
- Information on assessment, accreditation and recognition matters

1.3 WHAT NEEDS TO BE IN PLACE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF LOCAL QUALIFICATIONS?

a) The Qualification is Quality Assured using Internationally Accepted Processes

From [Chiba Principles \(2008\)](#) for Quality Assessment:

- Quality assurance at institutional or programme level should be undertaken on a cyclical basis
- Stakeholders participate in developing standards and criteria for assessment
- Standards and criteria are publicly available and applied consistently
- Formal procedures are in place to avoid conflict of interest
- Assessment includes institutional self-assessment
- Assessment includes expert external assessment involving a site visit
- Assessment includes publication of a report including decisions and recommendations
- There are follow-up procedures to review actions regarding recommendations in report
- An appeal mechanism is in place
- QA is inclusive of different areas of focus i.e. institution – program - both

b) The Quality Assurance Agency meets Internationally Accepted Standards

It should be evident to stakeholders that the quality assurance agency is structured and managed according to the following key principles:

From the [Chiba Principles \(2008\)](#) for Quality Assurance Agencies:

- Independent and have autonomous responsibility for operations
- Clearly defined mission statement, goals and objectives
- Human and financial resources are adequate and accessible
- Policies, procedures, reviews and assessment reports are fully and clearly disclosed to the public
- Documentation of all processes and standards is clear and evident
- Periodic review of activities, effects and value
- Cooperates with other agencies and other stakeholders across national borders
- Undertakes research and provides information and advice

c) An internationally comparable National Qualifications Framework

National qualifications frameworks establish a standard of reference for comparing qualifications within and outside of a country's borders. This is possible because national qualification frameworks provide:

- Description of qualifications in terms of a single set of criteria/characteristics
- Ranking of qualifications on a single hierarchy of levels, each with distinct level descriptors
- Description of a qualification's learning outcomes or components, which are assigned a quantifiable value in terms of notional learning hours expressed as credits (10 notional learning hours = 1 credit)

d) Design of Qualification Recognition Tools

One example of a qualification recognition tool to facilitate the recognition of qualifications from different education and training systems is the [European Diploma Supplement](#).

The Diploma Supplement is a document attached to a higher education qualification aiming at improving transparency and at facilitating recognition. It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended.

This tool was initiated by UNESCO and revised jointly by UNESCO, the European Commission (EC) and the Council of Europe Central information agency. Since adoption for use within the European Commission, Australia has adopted the use of the [Australia Higher Education Graduation Statement](#) (AHEGS), which has the same purpose and follows the same principles.

Another example of a qualification recognition tool is the design of a multi-national qualifications framework to map qualifications from different countries. Examples include the Pacific Qualifications Register, Transnational Qualifications Framework and European Qualifications Framework. The success of such tools depends on the policies governing such frameworks as well as commitment by the relevant countries to their use.

1.4 SKILLS RECOGNITION – EXTENDING THE OPTIONS FOR A MOBILE LABOUR FORCE

While most recognition agreements and conventions concentrate on recognition of studies and qualifications, some countries like Australia have developed a system of skills recognition for individuals wanting to work in Australia. This type of recognition focuses on what individuals know how to do, regardless of whether they hold foreign credentials or not. Skills recognition is possible when occupational standards or competency standards for work in certain professions are clearly identified.

SECTION 2: THE STRATEGY

Phase 1: Strengthening our Position

Timeframe: Within 2-3 years

Activities during Phase 1 would focus on strengthening our position in terms of Samoa qualifications and SQA processes, so that we are better placed to negotiate and discuss recognition of Samoa qualifications with overseas countries/agencies.

Activities to be conducted during Phase I:

- a) Internal Review of SQA QMS
- b) External QA/Review of SQA's policies and processes; purpose is to assure external bodies that SQA's activities align with international quality assurance standards
- c) Promote QA of PSET to PSET Providers as a stepping stone to getting their qualifications internationally recognised

- d) Quality assure the majority of formal PSET providers and qualifications offered in Samoa
- e) Establish information sharing links with relevant international agencies
- f) Establish formal relationship with PQR/SPBEA
- g) Explore becoming part of a regional convention for qualification recognition such as the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention for the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education

Phase 2: Negotiate & Establish Qualification Recognition Agreements

Timeframe: Within 3-5 years

Once all Phase 1 activities are completed, SQA should be better placed to discuss qualification recognition or mutual recognition agreements with different countries.

Activities to be conducted during Phase 2:

- a) Explore mutual recognition/qualification recognition agreements with other countries in the region. Possibilities are:
 - Fiji
 - Tonga
 - PNG
 - Australia
 - New Zealand
 - b) Establish mutual recognition/qualification recognition agreements with other countries in the region. (Should consider main destinations for those who leave Samoa to live, work and study, and where people come from to live, work & study in Samoa).
 - c) Conduct comparability study of the Samoa Qualifications Framework and other National Qualifications Frameworks to establish the comparability of levels of the qualifications framework. If necessary, we should be able to revise the Samoa Qualifications Framework since our aim is to achieve comparability with other national qualifications frameworks.
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