



# GUIDELINES

FOR RECOGNITION  
OF FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS  
IN SAMOA

**2018**



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## **1.0 Introduction**

Increased student and worker mobility across national borders has resulted in the need for processes that enable the recognition of qualifications and certification obtained outside of Samoa's national borders.

There has also been an increase of qualifications obtained by fraudulent activities associated with the rise in migration and people displacement around the world who are/will be seeking employment.

The task of qualification recognition has been given to Samoa Qualifications Authority (SQA) in accordance with its responsibilities for policy advice, quality assurance and coordination of the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) sub-sector. This task is expressed in SQA's legislated function to: *"Work with overseas government agencies and other institutions to recognise overseas qualifications in Samoa and to achieve international recognition for qualifications awarded in Samoa"* - SQA Act 2006: Section 4 (n).

The Guidelines for Recognition of Foreign Qualifications is the guiding document for SQA in carrying out its qualification recognition service. This document has been developed after gathering extensive information on how other national qualification authorities/similar agencies conduct qualification recognition. These Guidelines are informed by qualification recognition practices in New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, South Africa and Denmark as well as by the findings of an external review conducted in December 2017. While Samoa's context is unique, the process for qualification recognition must be appropriate and internationally comparable.

## **2.0 Purpose of Recognition of a Foreign Qualification**

The major purpose of this service is to establish whether a foreign qualification is authentic, recognised in the country of award and determines its comparable level on the Samoa Qualifications Framework (SQF).

The outcome of an assessment for recognition of a foreign qualification assures the public and stakeholders that a foreign qualification is authentic and recognised in the country of award. In addition, mapping the SQF level of the foreign qualification assures stakeholders of the level of the qualification compared to other officially recognised qualifications.

## **3.0 Value and Benefits of the Service**

This service is provided for people with overseas qualifications who want to work and study in Samoa, as well as their potential employers and PSET providers. While it is not currently

mandatory for employment or study in Samoa to have SQA-recognised qualifications, this service offers assistance in the following ways:

**For Employers** – SQA can verify that qualifications possessed by their potential/current employees are authentic and recognised in the country of award. SQA can also identify the SQF level of the qualification.

The official outcome of an assessment will help employers become aware of additional qualifications (otherwise unknown to employers) and skills acquired by their employees which could be beneficial to their businesses. The detailed description of the qualifications, the associated skills and competencies may enable the employer to make an evaluation on effective deployment and re-deployment of employees in areas better suited to their qualifications and experience.

Moreover, the employer can identify from the assessment report any further training requirements and encourage employees to undertake appropriate training to ensure a continuous supply of skill workers. It will also help to motivate employees for better performance and contribute to a culture of loyalty and ownership.

**For Providers** – SQA can verify that qualifications possessed by current/potential students, teachers and lecturers are authentic and recognised in the country of award. SQA can also identify the comparable SQF level of the qualification.

The outcome report of the FQRS service will assist PSET providers in identifying and making decisions regarding staff who may have falsely declared their qualifications. It also helps providers identify training needs and encourage staff to undertake further training in their areas of specialty.

The outcome statement of the FQRS assessment will also help providers recognize students who meet entry criteria for their programs and, offer advice on further training for those who have not yet met the entry requirements.

**For Learners/Job-seekers** – SQA provides information on whether their qualification is officially recognised, based on information from the awarding provider, country and qualification framework.

Recognition of their foreign qualification by SQA supports job seekers. This will help employers determine the level of knowledge and skills learners can bring to the job. Admission into a programme of education and training will also be made easier with the availability of the details of the qualification's comparable SQF Level.

**For Government Bodies** - SQA assists where necessary by verifying that qualifications possessed by individuals seeking to work or study in Samoa are authentic and recognized in the country of award. Confirmation of the comparable SQF Level of the foreign qualifications enables comparison with other qualifications registered and/or recognized in Samoa.

Government bodies can enhance their selection and recruitment processes when details of foreign qualifications and descriptions of the skills and competencies of employees are available to them. These ensure that the right people are being employed in Government services. Training needs and opportunities can also be determined from the outcome report.

The service will help Government bodies responsible for issuing visas and work permits for employment in Samoa to make informed decisions about the qualification and competency of the applicants to work or to set up business in Samoa.

**For Professional Organisations and Associations** - SQA can verify that qualifications possessed by members or potential members are authentic and recognised in the country of award. SQA can also identify the SQF level of the qualification.

Regulated professional associations will benefit from this service. SQA can provide proof of authenticity and recognition of the qualification. The detailed assessment of the qualification, the skills and competency components will assist Professional Associations in determining whether the qualification meets the requirements for registration and licensing to practice or work in Samoa.

#### **4.0 Scope of the Service**

SQA conducts assessment of all qualifications and certification from any country in the world. However, in the event that required information of a foreign qualification cannot be found or obtained, the assessment will not be conducted and the requesting agency/individual will be duly notified.

Please note that the Qualification Recognition Service does not:

- Grant entry to a programme of study - the applicant must apply directly to the provider for admission.
- Grant permission to practice in a professional occupation - the applicant must apply directly to the relevant licensing body.
- Grant salary increases – the applicant must contact the employer or agency responsible for salary matters.
- Conduct assessment of a partial or incomplete qualification.

## **5.0 Guiding Principles**

The key principles underpinning the Foreign Qualifications Recognition Service are:

- Quality;
- Decisions Transparency;
- Sustainability;
- Continuous Improvement.

SQA delivers the FQRS within an environment of accountability and transparency with the ability to communicate decisions, explain actions and reporting in a clear, consistent, accurate and timely manner. The SQA works with stakeholders to ensure that the service is affordable and sustainable, as well as undertaking a self-review for continuous improvement.

## **6.0 Application of the Service**

The Recognition of Foreign Qualifications in Samoa applies to:

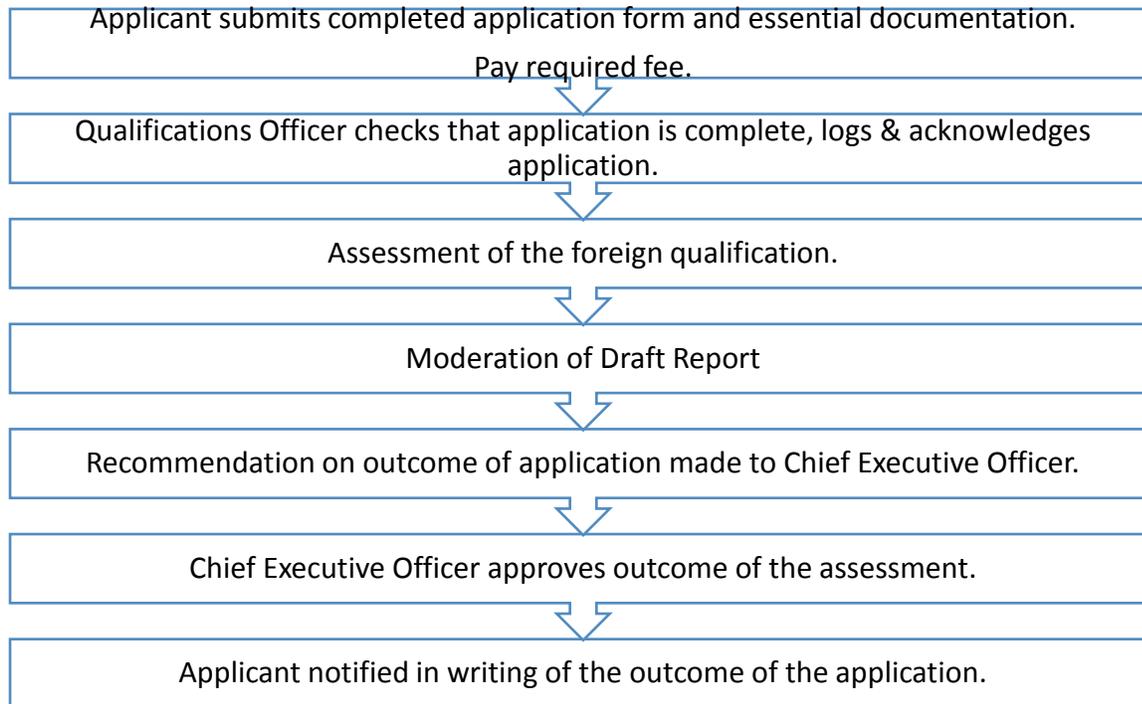
- All Government Ministries and State Owned Enterprises/Corporations.
- All Foreign workers on bilateral or multilateral aid projects.
- All contract foreign workers/Consultants who intend to work in Samoa for a period of over three (3) months.
- All foreign workers who intend to obtain a work permit to live and work in Samoa.

## **7.0 Flexibility of the Service**

While the Foreign Qualifications Recognition Service (FQRS) affords priority in assessment of authenticity and quality assured status of the qualification, Organisations and individuals may also request an assessment of the comparable SQF level of the qualification utilizing the same application. It must be noted however that assessment of authenticity and quality assured status of any qualification is the first step before a comparable SQF level assessment can take place.

## 8.0. Process of Recognition of a Foreign Qualification

### 8.1 Overview of process



The entire process may take from one month to six months. The process varies in duration with individual cases as it involves liaising with overseas Agencies and Organisations. The time it takes for an overseas Agency to reply to our communication is beyond our control and therefore requires patience on the part of the applicant. However, we will keep the applicant regularly updated.

### 8.2 Essential documentation

- Completed application form for Recognition of a Foreign Qualification. Refer to Annex 1.
- A certified photocopy of the qualification.
- A certified translation of the qualification into English (if the qualification is in a language other than Samoan or English).
- A certified photocopy of transcript/list of subjects passed.
- A certified translation of the transcript/list of subjects passed into English (if in a language other than English).
- Documentation in support of name change (if applicable) e.g. marriage certificate, etc...
- ID (driver's license or passport).

- Payment of fee.

*(Note: Processing cannot continue without required documentation and full payment for the assessment)*

### **8.3 Assessment for Recognition of a Foreign Qualification**

When SQA conducts assessment for recognition of a foreign qualification, there are two things that must be established:

#### **a) Authenticity of the qualification and Recognition Status in awarding country**

This Authenticity evaluation is done by contacting the awarding provider to verify that the certificate is authentic. This establishes that such a provider and qualification exist/existed, and that the qualification was awarded to the applicant.

When checking the Recognition Status of the qualification, the relevant agency in the awarding country is requested to verify whether the organization concerned was quality assured by a recognised quality assurance agency to deliver the programme. In the absence of a National Quality Assurance Agency responsible for education and training, the SQA will liaise with outside of national borders agencies responsible for the quality assurance of the provider organization.

This step establishes that a qualification was recognised by a quality assurance agency as meeting internationally comparable standards for all aspects of development and delivery.

#### **b) The comparable Samoa Qualification Framework level of the qualification**

SQA verifies that the qualification is registered on the qualifications framework in the awarding country by contacting the relevant agency in the awarding country. The level outcome descriptors of the overseas qualification framework can then be compared with those for the SQF to find out the comparable level of the overseas qualification on the Samoa Qualifications Framework.

This step establishes the comparable level of the foreign qualification on the SQF which is set out according to internationally comparable benchmarks for qualifications.

If necessary, SQA will establish the comparable SQF level of the qualification by comparing the component outcomes of the qualification with the SQF level descriptors. Usually, wording of the component titles on the qualification transcript is a clear indication of the component outcome/s (especially for standards-based qualifications). If there is insufficient information on component outcomes, it is necessary to contact the awarding Organisation for information on the outcomes of qualification components.

As further confirmation of the level and therefore the title of the qualification (e.g. Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor's degree etc.) we consider the level, length, structure and nature of the qualification programme to verify that this qualification is comparable to a such qualification on the SQF. This ensures that the decision for recognition of the qualification is consistent with SQF qualification definitions.

### **8.4 Outcome of assessment**

The applicant will be notified in writing of the outcome of the application. A statement on SQA letterhead will clearly state SQA's findings with regards to a) and b) in the previous section (8.3).

Stakeholders can view this statement as official advice on the authenticity of the foreign qualification, its recognition status in the awarding country, and its comparable level on the Samoa Qualifications Framework. Clear reasons will be provided in the case of foreign qualifications that are not recognised by SQA.

Refer to Annex 2 and Annex 3 for examples of official letters detailing the outcome of applications for recognition of a foreign qualification.

### **8.5 Appeal for Review**

Any person who feels that his/her application has been unfairly assessed may appeal for a review. The appeal in writing must be lodged within seven days of receipt of the assessment application result and outlining clearly the grounds for the review. A fee of \$150 must be paid before any review can proceed. The fee will be refunded in the event of a successful outcome.

All appeals for review should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer of the Samoa Qualifications Authority.

## **9.0 Schedule of Fees**

Fees charged for the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications Services are given in the Table below.

Fees are based on the type of qualification to be assessed, lead time<sup>1</sup>, and the service options requested

- Standard/Normal Application = 35 working days lead time.
- Fast Track 1 Option for high urgency application= 20 working days lead time.

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<sup>1</sup> Lead time is defined as the total time (in working days) taken for an application to be processed

## Guidelines for Recognition of Foreign Qualifications in Samoa

- Fast Track 2 Option for very high urgency application= Up to 15 working days lead time.

### ***SQA Fee Schedule for Foreign Qualification Recognition Services***

<i>Qualification Type</i>	Number of Qualification requesting for assessment	Authenticity Check/Qualification Verification and Quality Assured status in awarding country			Mapping for comparable level on Samoa Qualification Framework (SQF)		
		<u>Normal</u>	<u>Fast Track 1</u>	<u>Fast track 2</u>	<u>Normal</u>	<u>Fast track 1</u>	<u>Fast track 2</u>
		35 wd	20 wd	Up to 15wd	35 wd	20 wd	Up to 15wd
<i>Doctorate</i>	1	\$50	\$100	\$150	\$50	\$100	\$150
<i>Masters</i>	1	\$45	\$90	\$135	\$45	\$90	\$135
<i>Post Graduate Diploma, Certificate</i>	1	\$40	\$80	\$120	\$40	\$80	\$120
<i>Bachelor</i>	1	\$35	\$70	\$105	\$35	\$70	\$105
<i>Diploma</i>	1	\$30	\$60	\$90	\$30	\$60	\$90
<i>Certificates</i>	1	\$25	\$50	\$75	\$25	\$50	\$75
<i>L1- L4</i>							

*Note: Applications for Assessment of Qualifications awarded in Australia and New Zealand may take 15 working days to process at the same fees.*

## Annex 1: Application Form for Recognition of a Foreign Qualification



### APPLICATION FORM FOR RECOGNITION OF A FOREIGN QUALIFICATION

Please complete this application, attaching the required documents as listed below and return to: Samoa Qualifications Authority, Qualifications Division.

<b>A. Required Documents<sup>2</sup> Checklist</b>		
1	Certified <sup>3</sup> photocopy of the qualification in its original language	
2	A certified translation of the qualification into English (if the qualification is in a language other than Samoan or English).	
3	A certified photocopy of transcript/list of subjects/courses passed.	
4	A certified translation of the transcript/list of subjects passed into English (if in a language other than English).	
5	Documentation in support of name change (if applicable) e.g. marriage certificate.	
<b>B. Personal Details</b>		
First name		Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms)
Surname		
Previous name if changed		
Email address		
Postal address		Home phone
		Mobile phone
		Work phone
Date of Birth: (DD/MM/YYYY)		
Please specify the reason why you are requesting qualification recognition		
<b>C. Information on the Awarding Body</b>		
Name of Education or Training Institution/Organisation		
Web address	Email address	Phone
Postal address (street, city, country)		

Status of educational institution	Public <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input type="checkbox"/>
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<sup>2</sup> Original copies of documents may be required

<sup>3</sup> A certified photocopy is a copy that has been signed and stamped by an authorised person such as a Justice of the Peace, a Notary Public, a lawyer or a solicitor etc. The authorised person needs to sign copies stating that they are true and correct, print their name and position and if possible affix an official stamp.



**Annex 2: Example of Outcome of Application for Recognition of a Foreign Qualification (*Authenticity and Quality Assured Status*)**



**SAMOA QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY**

P O Box L851, Apia, SAMOA \* Tel: (0685) 20976 \* Fax: (0685) 26314  
Email: [sqa@sqa.gov.ws](mailto:sqa@sqa.gov.ws) Website: [www.sqa.gov.ws](http://www.sqa.gov.ws)

*(Please address all correspondence to the Chief Executive Officer)*

Mr. Talaifatu Okesene  
P.O. Box 0000  
Apia  
SAMOA

1<sup>st</sup> July 2010

Dear Mr. Talaifatu,

Further to your application for recognition of a foreign qualification submitted to SQA on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010, the Samoa Qualifications Authority has established the following:

1. Your Certificate 3 in Basic Electronics from Manuoka Polytechnic in New Zealand is an authentic qualification.
2. Manuoka Polytechnic in NZ has been quality assured by Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality to deliver and award the Certificate 3 in Basic Electronics.

In conclusion, the Samoa Qualifications Authority officially recognises the Certificate 3 in Basic Electronics awarded to Mr. Talaifatu Okesene by Manuoka Polytechnic in 2006.

We wish you all the best in your career and further study prospects.

Sincerely

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Dr. Emma Kruse Vaai, Chief Executive Officer

**Annex 3: Example of Outcome of Application for Recognition of a Foreign Qualification (Comparable Level on Samoa Qualifications Framework)**



**SAMOA QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY**

P O Box L851, Apia, SAMOA \* Tel: (0685) 20976 \* Fax: (0685) 26314

Email: [sqa@sqa.gov.ws](mailto:sqa@sqa.gov.ws) Website: [www.sqa.gov.ws](http://www.sqa.gov.ws)

*(Please address all correspondence to the Chief Executive Officer)*

Mr. Talaifatu Okesene  
P.O. Box 0000  
Apia  
SAMOA

14<sup>th</sup> June 2011

Dear Mr. Talaifatu,

Further to your application for an assessment of the comparable level of your qualification on the Samoa Qualifications Framework submitted to SQA on 25th April 2011, the Samoa Qualifications Authority has established the following:

The Certificate 3 in Basic Electronics awarded by Manuoka Polytechnic in 2006 is comparable to a Certificate Level III on the Samoa Qualifications Framework.

In conclusion, the Samoa Qualifications Authority officially confirms the Certificate 3 in Basic Electronics awarded to Mr. Talaifatu Okesene by Manuoka Polytechnic in 2006 is comparable to Level III on the Samoa Qualifications Framework

We wish you all the best in your career and further study prospects.

Sincerely

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Dr. Emma Kruse Vaai, Chief Executive Officer