



GUIDELINES
for Foreign Qualifications
Recognition Service (FQRS)
in Samoa

2024



Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Purpose of Recognition of a Foreign Qualification	3
3.0 Value and Benefits of the Service	4
4.0 Scope of the Service	5
5.0 Guiding Principles	6
6.0 Application of the Service	6
8.0. Process of Recognition of a Foreign Qualification	7
8.1 Overview of process	7
8.2 Essential documentation	7
8.3 Assessment for Recognition of a Foreign Qualification	8
8.4 Outcome of assessment	9
8.5 Appeal for Review	10
9.0 Schedule of Fees	10
Annex 1: Application Form for Recognition of a Foreign Qualification	11
Annex 2: Example of Outcome of Application for Recognition of a Foreign Qualification (<i>Authenticity and Quality Assured Status</i>)	13
Annex 3: Example of Outcome of Application for Recognition of a Foreign Qualification (<i>Comparable Level on Samoa Qualifications Framework</i>)	14

1.0 Introduction

Increased student and worker mobility across national borders has resulted in the need for processes that enable the recognition and certification of qualifications 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. There is also a need to ensure that incoming students or workers are trained to the same standards as Samoan students and workers.

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 2010: 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 revised after gathering extensive information on how other national qualification authorities/similar agencies conduct qualification recognition and subsequent to a series of stakeholder engagements sessions in July 2024. These Guidelines were originally drafted in December 2017 and were 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. Following a new review in August 2024, the guidelines have been redeveloped in line with evolving international best practice. 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, secondary schools and PSET providers. As per the SQA Amendment Bill 2024, it is mandatory to have SQA-recognised qualifications for employment or study in Samoa, and this service offers assistance in the following ways:

For Government Ministries/Corporations - 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 and Non-Formal Learning (NFL) Activities registered and/or recognized in Samoa.

Government Ministries/Corporations can enhance their recruitment and selection (R&S) processes when details of foreign qualifications and descriptions of the skills and competencies of employees are provided to them within the FQR Letter. These ensure that the right people are being employed in Government services. Training needs and opportunities can also be determined from the outcome letter.

The service will help Government Ministries responsible for issuing visas, business licenses 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 the Private Sector – 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 a FQR 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 FQR assessment letter any further training requirements and encourage employees to undertake appropriate professional development to ensure a continuous supply of skilled workers. It will also help to motivate employees for better performance and contribute to a culture of loyalty and ownership.

For Education and Training 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 letter of the FQR service will assist education and training providers in making decisions regarding staff or students 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 FQR 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(s) and awards are officially recognised, based on information from the awarding provider, recognition agency and/or qualification framework.

Recognition of their foreign qualification(s) 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 Professional Bodies and Associations - SQA can verify that qualifications and professional awards 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.

Registered professional bodies and associations with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labor (MCIL) will benefit from this service. SQA will provide proof of authenticity and recognition of the qualifications and professional awards. The assessment of the qualifications, the skills and competency components will assist professional bodies and 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 short-term trainings from any country in the world. However, in the unlikely 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.

5.0 Guiding Principles

The key principles underpinning the Foreign Qualifications Recognition Service are:

- Quality;
- Transparency;
- Sustainability;
- Continuous Improvement

SQA delivers the FQRS within an environment of accountability and transparency with the ability to conduct the assessment and 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:

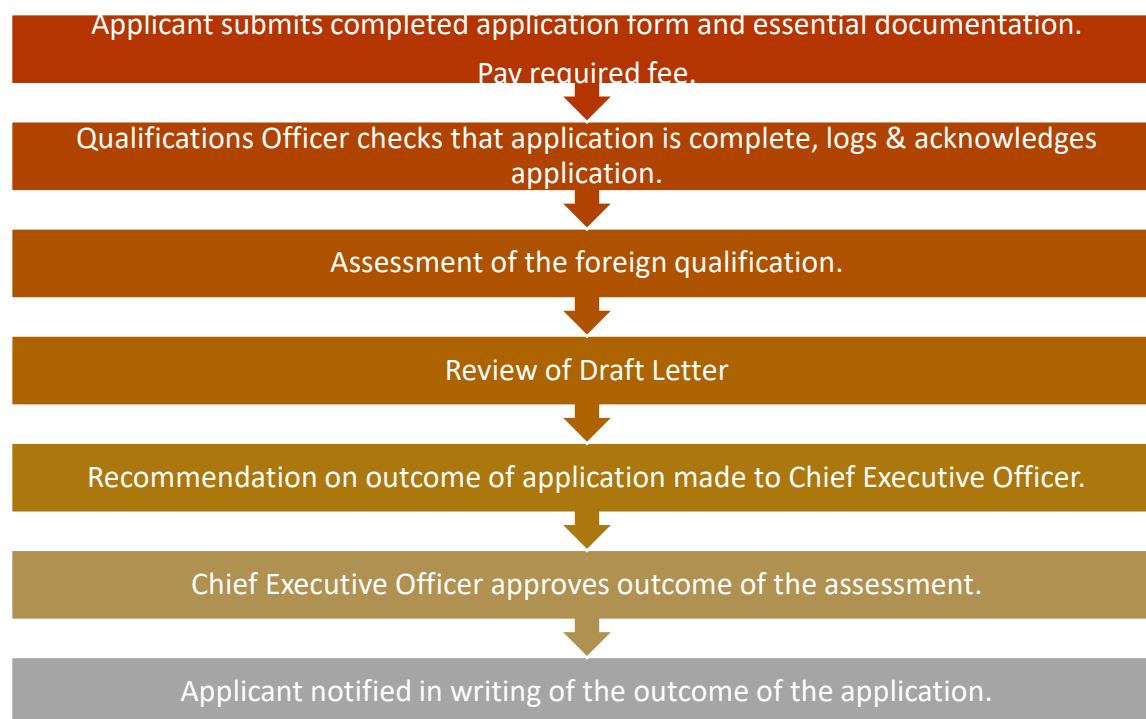
- All Government Ministries and State-Owned Enterprises/Corporations.
- All Foreign workers on bilateral or multilateral aid projects.
- All contract foreign workers/Consultants who intend to work in Samoa for a period of over three (3) months.
- Samoan nationals returning to Samoa with international qualifications, with the intention to use these qualifications for work or study
- 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 level and quality assured status of the qualification, Organisations and individuals may also request an authenticity check of the qualification utilizing the same application. Both processes can be undertaken concurrently. Being in the position to confirm authenticity is dependent on responses from in-country sources, so may increase the turnaround time.

8.0. Process of Recognition of a Foreign Qualification

8.1 Overview of process



The entire process of verifying and evaluating the international qualification may take up to one month for standard cases. 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. The applicant is advised if the process may take longer because of issues obtaining this official confirmation.

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 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 or award exist/existed, and that the qualification was awarded to the applicant.

When checking the Recognition Status of the qualification, SQA will check whether the institution concerned was quality assured by a recognised quality assurance agency to deliver the programme. In the absence of a National Information Centre responsible for providing information about the country's education system, the SQA will liaise with quality assurance agencies, or the relevant Ministry to obtain information on their recognized status.

This step establishes that a qualification was accredited to offer formal qualifications in the country in question.

b) The comparable Samoa Qualification Framework level of the qualification

SQA verifies that the qualification is part of the formal education system in the awarding country by contacting the relevant agency.

Determining the comparable level of the international qualification can be achieved through a couple of different ways. It should be borne in mind that no two qualifications are identical, so the recognition process seeks to establish its closest domestic counterpart.

Option 1:

Where there is a qualifications framework in the foreign country, this framework can be aligned to the Samoan Qualifications Framework through analysis of the learning outcomes descriptors associated with each level. In this respect, pan-regional or 'meta' frameworks will be important reference points, as much international work has been conducted to align these nationally-specific qualification frameworks. Once the

qualifications framework level of the international award has been identified, then the comparable Samoan level can be established through this process.

Where the international award sits outside of the national qualifications framework, it will be determined whether the qualification is possible to recognize in a different manner. This will depend on whether it is a formal qualification from a provider subject to quality assurance.

Option 2

Where there is no qualifications framework in the country, a range of criteria will be considered in order to compare the qualification to its closest Samoan counterpart. The following factors will be analysed:

- Status in the formal education system
- Its quality assurance status
- Learning outcomes associated with the qualification
- Duration and entry requirements
- Nomenclature (Title of qualification)

And potentially:

- Content and volume of study
- Structure of qualification and progression routes
- Year of study
- Mode of assessment
- Any (professional) rights associated with the award
- Purpose of qualification (e.g. vocational, careers-focused, or university admissions test)

Where partial or incomplete studies are submitted for evaluation, then the volume of study will be evaluated. It is important to understand the proportion of study that has been completed, before then comparing this incomplete study to Samoan credit-based awards where possible.

8.4 Outcome of assessment

The applicant will be notified in writing with the enclosed assessment letter 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. Work on the appeal will be conducted by a different Officer than the person who originally conducted the evaluation.

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 and the service option requested.

SQA Fee Schedule for Foreign Qualification Recognition Service			
Qualification Type	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)
		20 wd	20 wd
Doctorate	1	\$100.00	\$200.00
Masters	1		
Post Graduate Diploma, Certificate	1		\$150.00
Bachelor Diploma	1	\$50.00	\$100.00
Certificates L1- L4	1		
Professional Award	1		
Partial Qualifications	1		

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, attach the required documents as listed below and return to: Samoa Qualifications Authority, Qualifications Division.

A. Required Documents¹ Checklist		
1	Certified 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. Personal Details		
First name		Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms)
Surname		
Previous name if changed		
Email address		
		Home phone
		Mobile phone
		Work phone
Date of Birth: (DD/MM/YYYY)		
Please specify the reason why you are requesting qualification/award recognition		
C. Information on the Awarding Body		
Name of Education or Training Institution/Organisation		
Web address	Email address	Phone
Status of educational institution Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/>		
D. Information on the Qualification/Professional Award		
Title of qualification in original language (if other than English or Samoan)		
Title of qualification in English		

Guidelines for Recognition of Foreign Qualifications in Samoa

Specialisation/main field of study		
Dates started and completed		
Study Mode On-Campus <input type="checkbox"/> Distance/Online <input type="checkbox"/> Combined on-campus & distance/online <input type="checkbox"/>		
Length of Programme of Study		Year qualification was awarded
Contact details for the Programme of Study	Name & Address	Email address
		Phone number
E. Additional information regarding the qualification		
Did the programme of study include a research paper/thesis?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Title of the research paper/thesis		
Duration of research paper/thesis work		
Did the programme of study include a work component?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Duration of work component		
Contact details for where the work component took place	Name & Address	Email address
		Phone number
Any other relevant information		
F. Type of Assessment Required		
Please tick the appropriate box for the type of assessment requested for this application. (a) Authenticity & Quality Assurance Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> (b) Assessment for Comparable SQF Level <input type="checkbox"/>		
G. Signature of the Holder of the Qualification		
<i>I certify that the information stated in this application is correct and that the attached documents are authentic.</i>		
Date	Signature	
<p>Data Protection</p> <p>In order to process your application accurately, it may be necessary to forward your details to a third-party agency overseas.</p> <p><i>I agree to my personal information being sent to another agency if necessary.</i></p> <p>Signature</p>		

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



SQA
SAMOA QUALIFICATIONS
AUTHORITY

SAMOA QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
P O Box L851, Apia, SAMOA * Tel: (0685) 20976 * Fax: (0685) 26314
Email: sqa@sqa.gov.ws Website: www.sqa.gov.ws
(Please address all correspondence to the Chief Executive Officer)

Mr. Norman Lamositele
P.O. Box 0000
Apia
SAMOA

1st July 2024

Dear Mr. Lamositele,

Further to your application for recognition of a foreign qualification submitted to SQA on 1st June 2024, 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. Norman Lamositele by Manuoka Polytechnic in 2016.

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

Sincerely

Tupai Peter Peilua
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 Website: www.sqa.gov.ws

(Please address all correspondence to the Chief Executive Officer)

Ms. Delphine Sitanisilao
P.O. Box 0000
Apia
SAMOA

24th August 2024

Dear Ms. Sitanisilao,

Further to your application for an assessment of the comparable level of your qualification on the Samoa Qualifications Framework submitted to SQA on 25th July 2024, the Samoa Qualifications Authority has established the following:

The Certificate 4 in Automotive Engineering awarded by Manuoka Polytechnic in 2016 is most comparable to a Certificate Level III on the Samoa Qualifications Framework.

In conclusion, please be informed that recognition is the official Samoan comparison but it is not a legally-binding decision. Please visit the link provided for summary of the FQRS's methodological process.

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

Sincerely

Tupa'i Peter Peilua
Chief Executive Officer