



Samoa Qualifications Framework

Third Edition

2026



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INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Samoa Qualifications Framework and the SQA

The Samoa Qualifications Framework (SQF) is a classification structure indicating the levels and types of quality assured educational qualifications in Samoa.

Responsibility for managing and implementing the SQF lies with the Samoa Qualifications Authority (SQA) alongside SQA's responsibility for coordinating and quality assuring Post School Education and Training (PSET) providers and the programmes that they offer.

The Education Sector Plan 2019-2024 and PSET Strategic Plan 2020-2024 have the administration and implementation of the Samoa Qualifications Framework as one of the core ongoing activities of the SQA.

Under the SQA Act 2010, the SQA must:

- 'regulate qualifications and quality standards for all Post School Education and Training', and
- 'determine a national qualifications structure for Samoa, including the definition of terms to ensure and maintain the national and international credibility of qualifications and the good standing of the Post School Education and Training Organisations'.

The Vision for PSET is 'An inventive sub-sector that sustains the quality, relevance, accessibility and inclusiveness of PSET for all learners in Samoa'.

The ***SQF is a technical tool that sets out a general framework for regulated PSET qualifications***. Qualifications with specific names, such as a Certificate II in Hospitality, can be registered 'on' the SQF if they meet specific requirements. The Samoa Qualifications Authority (SQA) maintains the list of PSET qualifications registered on the SQF.

The SQF also includes several policy statements on how regulated educational qualifications for PSET are to be offered and awarded. Providers of PSET education must meet the SQF Policies in addition to policies stated in the SQA Quality Assurance Policies.

This is the Third Edition of the SQF, the previous version having been approved in 2012.

1.2. Purposes of the SQF

The Samoa Qualifications Framework:

- a) Provides a structure for establishing national equivalence and comparability of regulated PSET qualifications and other learning
- b) Supports the regional and international comparability of qualifications awarded in Samoa
- c) Facilitates the understanding of the knowledge, skills, and competencies graduates have achieved through clear level descriptors
- d) Facilitates the matching of skills demanded by industry and the supply of skilled workers
- e) Enables the development of a register of quality assured PSET qualifications, to enhance opportunities for labour and educational mobility

- f) Supports the development of lifelong learning through flexible learning pathways, including learning pathways from non-formal to formal learning
- g) Facilitates the recognition of prior learning, previously acquired skills and current competencies
- h) Supports PSET providers to develop new qualifications in response to changed needs.

1.3. Underlying principles for the SQF

The principles below have been used in the revision of the SQF.

The SQF aims to be:

Responsive: The SQF is responsive to the needs of communities, industry, government and employers for particular types of qualifications.

Collaborative: The SQF is designed and implemented through consultation, dialogue, understanding and acceptance of qualifications by PSET providers, industry, government and other stakeholders.

Flexible: The SQF emphasises lifelong learning, to enable learners to pursue their individual learning pathways by moving between different levels and qualifications, allowing for flexibility and personalised learning experiences.

Supportive of mobility: The SQF balances Samoa's needs with regional considerations, including the harmonisation of approaches to enable mutual recognition of qualifications, so individuals can use their qualifications in different contexts or countries. The SQF 2025 has been benchmarked against a wide range of regional and national qualifications frameworks.

Useful: The SQF 2025 provides standard definitions and policy advice, to aid consistency in the understanding, development, quality assurance and use of PSET qualifications.

1.4. Changes in the Third Edition

The Third Edition of the SQF retains much of the content of the Second Edition. However, it gives more emphasis to the Framework and to policy advice for providers, with less emphasis on the processes for registering qualifications.

The following are some significant changes:

- Framework elements, such as level descriptors, qualification types and volume of learning, have been brought together in Part 2, so the nature of the Framework is clearer.
- There is more discussion of the volume of learning and credit values and more detailed advice on minimum and maximum credit values.
- There is acknowledgement of the learning pathways from senior secondary school qualifications.
- There is acknowledgement of the need for policy development on the potential registration of credentials, such as skill sets and micro-credentials.

- There is guidance for providers on learning pathways and the recognition of prior learning or current competencies and on credit transfer.
- There is guidance for providers on the naming conventions for qualifications and on issuing certificates and records of results.
- There is the re-naming of ‘Non-Formal Learning’ as ‘Professional and Community Learning’.

The Third Edition lists Acronyms and Glossary of Terms in **Appendix A**.

1.5. Commencement date

The SQF Third Edition will come into effect on April 2026 following its official launch. SQA will commence awareness to PSET providers and other stakeholders of the changes.

2. THE FRAMEWORK

2.1. Summary of the SQF

The Samoa Qualifications Framework has four key components:

- Levels (10 levels)
- Level descriptors (generic learning outcomes at each level)
- Volume of learning and credit values
- Qualification types and definitions.

Part 5 of the Samoa Qualifications Authority Act 2010 establishes the Samoa Qualifications Framework as “a classification structure indicating the levels and types of quality assured qualifications which may fall into categories as may be prescribed by regulations”.

The text of the Act makes it clear that the Framework itself is a classification structure and providers can apply to have their qualifications registered on the Framework through a register maintained by SQA.

Only formal PSET qualifications can be registered on the SQF.

Figure 1 provides a diagram showing the SQF levels and the types of qualifications.

The SQF is an **integrated** framework for all post school education and training leading to the granting of formal qualifications. While the terms ‘technical and vocational education and training’ (TVET) and ‘higher education’(HE) are often used to distinguish learning and qualifications at specific levels, these terms should not be used to impose structural barriers in moving between levels of the SQF.

The SQF assumes that learning at any level can include both practical and theoretical components that are assessed using competency-based or graded assessment respectively. Qualifications are achieved for a purpose and it is not always necessary to achieve a high level on the SQF for the qualification to fulfil its intended purpose for a learner or for an employer.

The SQF is structured to allow **flexibility** in achieving the learning outcomes for a qualification. For example, a qualification at Level III may include components of qualifications from higher or lower levels, according to guidelines set out in the qualification definition.

The SQF allows people to take different pathways through and between work and further study throughout their life.

Figure 1 Summary of the Samoa Qualifications Framework

| LEVEL | POST SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (PSET) QUALIFICATIONS |
|-------|--|
| X | DOCTORAL DEGREE |
| IX | MASTER'S DEGREE |
| VIII | BACHELOR DEGREE WITH HONOURS; POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE; POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA |
| VII | BACHELOR DEGREE; GRADUATE CERTIFICATE; GRADUATE DIPLOMA |
| VI | ADVANCED DIPLOMA |
| V | DIPLOMA |
| IV | CERTIFICATE |
| III | CERTIFICATE |
| II | CERTIFICATE |
| I | CERTIFICATE |

2.2. Levels and level descriptors

Qualifications are described in terms of levels and level descriptors (learning outcomes). There are 10 levels on the SQF with Level I having the lowest complexity of learning outcomes and Level X having the highest complexity of learning outcomes (**Figure 1**).

The generic learning outcomes of the SQF state what graduates are expected to know and be able to do following successful completion of a qualification at a specific SQF level. The learning outcomes on the SQF are described in terms of *knowledge*, *skills* and the *application of the knowledge and skills* (see **Table 1**).

Knowledge refers to what a graduate knows and understands. Knowledge is described in terms of depth (generalised or specialised), breadth (single topic to multi-discipline), kinds of

knowledge (concrete to abstract, segmented to cumulative) and (complexity) combination of the depth, breadth, and types of knowledge.

Skills refer to what a graduate can do. Skills are described in terms of the kinds of skills (cognitive and creative skills, technical skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, and generic skills) and complexity of skills (combination of depth and kind of skills).

Application of knowledge and skills refers to the context in which a graduate applies knowledge and skills, including the cultural context, which in the first place will be a Samoan context but may also refer to an application in other societies and cultures. The application of knowledge and skills is described in terms of autonomy, responsibility and accountability and the context may range from the predictable to the unpredictable, and the known to the unknown, while tasks may range from routine to non-routine.

Table 1 SQF 3rd Edition Level Descriptors (generic learning outcomes)

| SQF Level | Knowledge | Skills | Application of Knowledge and Skills |
|------------------|--|--|---|
| X | Graduates will have knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of study or professional practice which demonstrates a critical understanding of a substantial and complex body of knowledge. | Graduates will have expert thinking, technical and research skills in a discipline to critically reflect, synthesize and evaluate ideas and theories, develop, adapt and implement research methods to extend or re-defined existing knowledge or professional practice and to disseminate and promote new ideas to peers and others. Graduates will have the skills to be an independent researcher, scholar or advanced practitioner. Graduates will have generated original knowledge and understanding to make a substantial contribution to a discipline or practice area | Graduates will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, authoritative judgement, adaptability and responsibility as an expert and leading practitioner or academic, showing a sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or practices at the forefront of their discipline or practice area. |
| IX | Graduates will have advanced understanding of a complex body of knowledge in one or more disciplines or practice areas which is at the forefront of their discipline/practice area. | Graduates will have expert specialised skills to think and work in a body of knowledge or practice area in order to analyse, critically reflect and synthesize complex information, problems and theories and to research and apply established theories and interpret and communicate knowledge, skills and ideas to both specialist and non-specialist audiences. | Graduates will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, authoritative judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner. |
| VIII | Graduates will have advanced theoretical and technical knowledge in one or more disciplines demonstrating critical understanding of key principles. | Graduates will have expert specialised skills to think, work and communicate in order to critically analyse, evaluate and transform information to complete a range of activities and to analyse and generate solutions to complex problems and communicate solutions, knowledge, skills and ideas to others | Graduates will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy and well-developed judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a learner or practitioner. |

| SQF Level | Knowledge | Skills | Application of Knowledge and Skills |
|------------------|--|--|--|
| VII | Graduates will have deep specialised technical and/or theoretical knowledge in one or more fields of study or work. | Graduates will have well developed skills to think and work and to communicate, analyse, evaluate and adapt information to complete a range of activities, generate solutions to complex problems and communicate solutions, knowledge and ideas to others. | Graduates will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and responsibility in self-directed contexts. Graduates are expected to provide specialist advice and undertake specialist functions. |
| VI | Graduates will have broad theoretical knowledge and deep technical knowledge in a specialised or broad area of work and/or learning. | Graduates will have a broad range of skills to think, work and communicate in order to analyse information to complete a range of activities and to find solutions to unpredictable and complex problems and to communicate knowledge, skills and ideas to others to help them solve problems. | Graduates will apply knowledge and skills in order to demonstrate autonomy and judgement and take defined responsibility in contexts subject to change and to provide specialist advice and carry out specialist functions. At this level the graduates provide leadership in changing contexts and are able to fully manage their own work performance and/or learning. |
| V | Graduates will have specialised technical and theoretical knowledge in a specialised area or a broad work field and/or learning. | Graduates will have a broad range of skills to think, work and communicate in order to analyse and find solutions to predictable and unpredictable problems and situations and to communicate this information to others. | Graduates will apply knowledge and skills in order to demonstrate autonomy, judgement in a defined responsibility in known and changing contexts and to manage the work performance and/or learning of others. |
| IV | Graduates will have knowledge of broad facts and practical and theoretical knowledge related to a specialised or broad area of work and/or learning. | Graduates will have a broad range of skills to think, work and communicate to select solutions for known and unknown problems and to apply a range of methods, tools, materials and information to complete a range of routine and non-routine tasks. | Graduates will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy and to make judgements in both predictable and unpredictable contexts. Graduates will manage their own learning and take some responsibility for the work and learning of others. |
| III | Graduates will have knowledge of facts and procedures and technical knowledge for a defined area of work and/or learning. | Graduates will have the skills to think, work and communicate to select and apply solutions to familiar problems using a specialised range of methods, tools, materials in work and/or learning. | Graduates will apply knowledge and skills to make judgements about problems under limited supervision with some autonomy. They will be mainly routine and predictable and require collaboration with others. Graduates will take major responsibility for their own learning and performance. |
| II | Graduates will have knowledge of basic facts or of operations | Graduates will have the skills to think, work and communicate in order to apply known processes | Graduates will apply knowledge and skills in structured contexts under |

| SQF Level | Knowledge | Skills | Application of Knowledge and Skills |
|-----------|--|--|---|
| | relevant to work in a defined context and/or for learning. | and known solutions to problems that are familiar. Graduates will have the skills to apply known methods, tools and materials in work or further learning. | general supervision in collaboration with others. |
| I | Graduates will have functional knowledge of literacy and numeracy and how to live, work and study with other people to live productively in their community and enter work or further study. | Graduates will have the skills to think, work and communicate on routine tasks under direction and supervision and to identify and report on any routine problems. | Graduates will apply knowledge and skills in highly structured and directed work, social or learning contexts where interaction with others follows routine patterns. |

2.3. Volume of learning

Volume of learning refers to the expected or ‘notional’ amount of learning that learners need to achieve a qualification. It helps to define the complexity of a qualification, as some SQF qualifications take longer to complete than others.

The total amount of learning required to complete a qualification at a particular SQF level can be estimated, using a learner’s expected time spent on learning activities as the basis (a ‘workload’ model).

Under this model, a learner can be thought of as having a ‘job’, namely to study or practise so that they learn. If learners are expected to study full-time for, say, 30 weeks a year, the expected average weekly workload would be about 40 hours. Thus, the notional expected amount of learning in a full-time year of study would be 1200 hours.

For the SQF:

- The minimum number of hours for a full year of learning by a learner in Samoa is not less than **1200**.
- The guideline maximum number of hours for a full year of learning by a learner in Samoa is **1600**, although higher volumes may apply in particular disciplines.

These hours include all types of learning activities, including private study by learners. Learning activities may include: reading; participation in lectures, seminars, or tutorials; participation in laboratory sessions or demonstrations; online learning activities; conduct of private research; work on individual and group assignments; writing essays; problem-solving and project work; individual consultation with teachers or trainers; practicums, workplace learning; preparation for tests and examinations; and taking tests and examinations.

The minimum figure of 1200 hours is the same minimum volume of learning in other qualifications frameworks in the Pacific region and some other countries, although higher minimum annual volumes of learning also are found.

The figure of 1200 hours suggests that if a learner were taking, say, 8 units per year of study (say 4 per semester), each unit should involve about 150 hours of learning time for an individual learner. In this context, the term ‘unit’ refers to a component of a qualification, which may also be called a ‘course’ within a programme, a module, a subject or a unit of competency.

The use of other means of calculating a volume of learning, such as ‘contact hours’ spent in lectures or tutorials, is strongly discouraged. A measure such as contact hours does not fit well with flexible or online learning or with a learner-centric approach. It does not help learners to understand that they must contribute to the achievement of their own learning.

The balance between private study or practice and taught/tutored/facilitated/supervised learning activities will vary by discipline and unit and by the mode of study (face to face, intensive, online, blended). However, there must always be some learning activities in an SQF qualification in which feedback and guidance are provided by qualified teaching staff or – if a practicum or placement – supervised by trained people.

Some institutions may offer ‘double degrees’ at Level VII, such as a dual bachelor degree in Arts and Law. The volume of learning for a double degree should of course be greater than for a standard bachelor degree but it is often less than the sum of the two degrees taken singly.

2.4. Credit values

Providers of SQF qualifications must use a system of credit values, setting out how many credits are required to achieve each specific qualification. Credit values are also called credit points.

A credit values system is a way of aligning volume of learning and units within a programme of study leading to a qualification. In Samoa, the total annual learning activity hours above should be used as the basis for establishing a credit values system for each programme of study.

A credit values system helps:

- Institutions to allocate learners’ workloads appropriately, by understanding the amount of time to be spent by learners on different units.
- Learners to understand the workloads expected of them, regardless of whether they are studying full-time or part-time.
- Transferability of qualifications or units, within and across institutions.
- To instil a more systematic approach to planning programmes and units in relation to learners’ workloads and the relative importance of different units in a programme.
- To avoid curriculum overload, where more and more units are added into a programme.
- To ensure that curricula are not ‘light on’ in terms of expected learning, by being too brief or at lower levels of learning than expected.

In the SQF, one credit equals 10 notional hours of learning activity by a learner.

That is, the expected minimum credit value of a year of full-time study would be 120 and a three-year bachelor degree would require a minimum total of 360 credits.

For qualifications with higher credit values, the required credits for a learner to complete the qualification can vary depending on the entry point. For example, a learner with a two-year advanced diploma in a specific field may only need to complete 120 more credits to achieve a bachelor level qualification.

The sum of the credit values for all the components (units) that make up the qualification must be at least equal to the total credit value of the qualification.

Institutions delivering approved Samoa Qualifications will follow the credit values allocated to each national competency standard in the Samoa Qualification.

For Provider Qualifications, providers can determine the length of their teaching periods, the number of units in a programme, and the credit values of each unit.

A typical model might use 10 or 15 credits per unit or another number that is easily understood by learners. There can be double or even triple credits for an extended unit, such as a substantial project activity.

Institutions must state the credit values for units and qualifications in whole numbers.

A credit values system does not simplify the actual work involved in setting up credit transfer arrangements (see Section 3.6.3), as the content of programmes and units need to be examined on a case-by-case basis, at least in the first instance.

However, a credit values system will make it easier to understand and translate programmes and units across institutions, especially if there is a system of common credit values.

The required minimum and guideline maximum credits are included in the definition of qualification types in Section 2.5 below.

Although learners in competency-based units and programmes take as long as they need to achieve competency, the minimum credit values must be considered by PSET providers and others when developing qualifications.

2.5. Qualification types and definitions

Qualification types define the purpose and nature of qualifications at each level, with more detail than the generic level descriptors, including the volume of learning.

Table 2 defines each SQF qualification type definition by reference to its purpose and credits.

Table 2 SQF Qualification type definitions and credit values

For credit values, see explanation in Section 2.4.

| SQF Level and type | Qualification type definition | Credit values 120 credits = 1 years of full-time learning |
|--|---|---|
| Level X Doctoral degree | A Doctoral Degree qualifies an individual to work as an independent scholar by demonstrating the individual’s capability to apply a substantial body of knowledge to research, investigate and develop new knowledge, in one or more fields of investigation, scholarship or professional practice. | Minimum 360 Guideline maximum 480 |
| Level IX Master’s degree | A Master’s Degree qualifies individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research, a pathway for further learning, professional practice and/or scholarship. A Master’s Degree usually builds on a Bachelor Degree, Graduate Diploma, Bachelor Honours Degree or a Postgraduate Diploma in a specific area. It may also build on extensive relevant professional experience. The outcomes are demonstrably in advance of undergraduate study, and require individuals to engage in research and/or advanced scholarship. Master’s Degrees are constituted in one discipline or coherent programme of study. They may be undertaken by taught courses or research, or by a combination of both. | Minimum 180 with at least 120 at Level IX (stand-alone or with nested postgraduate qualifications) or Minimum 120 following directly from a Bachelor degree with Honours qualification Guideline maximum 240 for many Master’s degrees Guideline maximum 600 for graduate-entry professional programmes in health sciences or law |
| Level VIII Postgraduate Diploma | A Postgraduate Diploma extends and deepens an individual’s knowledge and skills. It builds upon existing skills and knowledge from specified subjects, usually gained in a Bachelor degree, Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate. The qualification can prepare individuals for independent research and scholarship in a specific subject. | Minimum 120 with at least 80 at Level VIII or higher Guideline maximum 240 |
| Level VIII Postgraduate Certificate | A Postgraduate Certificate extends and deepens an individual’s knowledge and skills. It builds upon existing skills and knowledge from a specified subject, usually gained in a Bachelor degree in the same area. | Minimum 60 at Level VIII or higher Guideline maximum 120 |
| Level VIII Bachelor degree with Honours | A Bachelor degree with Honours qualifies individuals who apply a body of knowledge in a specific context to undertake research or professional work and as a pathway for research and further learning. Graduates at this level will have advanced knowledge and skills for professional or highly skilled work and/or further learning. A Bachelor degree with Honours qualification is normally available only to individuals who have achieved highly in a Level VII Bachelor level qualification and/or shown an aptitude for research. It | Minimum 120 at Level VIII or higher (stand-alone), with a minimum of 30 credits for research Minimum 480 if embedded within a Bachelor degree, with a minimum of 30 credits for research Guideline maximum 240 (stand-alone) |

| SQF Level and type | Qualification type definition | Credit values 120 credits = 1 years of full-time learning |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| | may be embedded in a Bachelor qualification or a discrete postgraduate degree following a Bachelor Degree. | |
| Level VII Graduate Diploma | <p>A Graduate Diploma enables a Bachelor degree graduate to pursue a significant body of study at an advanced undergraduate level. The Graduate Diploma can bridge people into postgraduate study and/or broaden knowledge and skills in a familiar subject or discipline, or develop knowledge in a new area.</p> <p>A person with a Graduate Diploma is able to demonstrate all the outcomes of a Bachelor degree in a new area of study or advanced theoretical and technical knowledge in their existing discipline or professional area.</p> | <p>Minimum 120 with at least 80 at Level VII or above</p> <p>Guideline maximum 240</p> |
| Level VII Graduate Certificate | <p>A Graduate Certificate enables a Bachelor degree graduate to pursue further study, usually in a new area, at an advanced undergraduate level. Its purpose is often as a bridge to postgraduate studies for people developing educational, professional or vocational knowledge in a new discipline, profession or subject and/or to broaden or deepen skills and knowledge already gained in another qualification.</p> <p>The qualification will provide graduates with advanced knowledge and skills for professional or highly skilled work. A person with a Graduate Certificate is able to demonstrate all the outcomes of a Bachelor degree and some outcomes of a Bachelor degree in a new area of study.</p> | <p>Minimum 60 with at least 40 at Level VII or above.</p> <p>Guideline maximum 120</p> |
| Level VII Bachelor | <p>A Bachelor degree provides the graduate with a systematic and coherent introduction to a body of knowledge and to problem solving techniques involved in self-directed work and study.</p> <p>A Bachelor degree involves at least one sequential study programme where content is progressively developed to form the basis of further study or professional practice.</p> <p>A Bachelor degree is a standard requirement for postgraduate studies.</p> <p>The full degree should specify a spread of credit across Levels V to VII so that the qualification demonstrates progression, reflects the requirements of the degree definition and achieves the associated learning outcomes in a way that is appropriate to the subject area.</p> | <p>Minimum 360 in total across Levels V to VII, with at least 80 at Level VII or above</p> <p>Expected minimum of 480 for a four-year Bachelor qualification that includes a Foundation Year.</p> <p>Guideline maximum 720 (e.g. six-year degree qualification when particularly varied and detailed learning outcomes are required to be met)</p> |
| Level VI Advanced Diploma | An Advanced Diploma at Level VI qualifies graduates with theoretical and/or technical knowledge and skill in a specialised area which may be in a strategic context. | Minimum 120 with at least 80 at Level VI or above |

| SQF Level and type | Qualification type definition | Credit values 120 credits = 1 years of full-time learning |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| | Graduates will have broad knowledge and skill for highly skilled work or further learning. | Guideline maximum 240 |
| Level V Diploma | A Diploma at Level V qualifies graduates with theoretical and/or technical knowledge and skill within a specific field of work or study. The graduate will be qualified for paraprofessional or skilled work. | Minimum 120 with at least 80 at Level V or above Guideline maximum 240 |
| Level IV Certificate IV | A Certificate IV qualifies graduates with knowledge and skill to work or study in a broad or specialised field. Graduates will have theoretical and practical knowledge and skill for specialised work or study. See additional note in Section 2.6. | Minimum 60 with at least 40 at Level IV or above or 120 total for a university Foundation Year. Guideline maximum 120 |
| Level III Certificate III | A Certificate III qualifies graduates with knowledge and skill to perform a specific work role or to study in a specific field of study. The graduate will acquire a broad range of knowledge and skill to undertake skilled work. | Minimum 60 with at least 40 at Level III or above Guideline maximum 120 |
| Level II Certificate II | A Certificate II qualifies graduates with introductory knowledge and skills to enter a field of work to undertake mainly routine tasks or further study. | Minimum 60 with at least 40 at Level II or above Guideline maximum 80 |
| Level I Certificate I | A Certificate I qualifies graduates with basic functional knowledge and skill that provide a stepping stone to entry to the workforce, further study or community engagement. | Minimum 40 at Level I or above Guideline maximum 80 |

2.6. Additional notes on qualification types

2.6.1 [Certificate IV](#)

A Certificate IV (at Level IV) may be awarded as an exit qualification for the completion of a University Foundation Year, such as the National University of Samoa Foundation Year. This award is for learners who, for various reasons, are unable to proceed in their studies but who have satisfied the requirements for completion of the Foundation Year by meeting the learning outcomes and required credit values for a Level IV qualification.

2.6.2 [‘Nested’ qualifications](#)

Nested qualifications are qualifications that are offered sequentially and that include articulated arrangements from a lower-level qualification into a higher-level qualification, to enable multiple entry and exit points. Programmes at the lower qualification levels are described as ‘nested’ within the programmes leading to qualifications at the higher levels. One example is an Advanced Diploma within a Bachelor degree. Another is a Postgraduate Diploma within a Master’s degree.

Learners do not graduate with all the qualifications: they return a completed ‘nested’ qualification when they continue on to the higher-level qualification.

Nested qualifications are typically offered by a single provider but could be completed at different registered providers with the ‘nesting’ being achieved by credit transfer arrangements between the providers.

Nested qualifications must be accredited as well as the higher-level qualification and must meet the learning outcomes and required credit values for the qualification at each level.

[2.6.3 Bachelor degree](#)

PSET providers are encouraged to offer a Diploma (Level V) and an Advanced Diploma (Level VI) as nested ‘exit’ qualifications in 360-credit Bachelor level qualifications, to help learners who, for various reasons, are unable to complete the full bachelor qualification but who have satisfied the requirements for a qualification at Level V or VI.

[2.6.4 Master’s degree](#)

There are three broad types of Master’s degree, all of which are Level IX qualifications:

The Master’s degree (research) qualifies individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research and scholarship and as a pathway for further learning. This qualification can include coursework units as well as research.

Normally, at least 70% of the credits required for the qualification would be through a research policy for the qualification to be called a Master’s Degree (Research). The remainder of the credits, if any, would come from coursework units.

The Master’s degree (coursework) qualifies individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for professional practice or scholarship and as a pathway for further learning.

A Master’s qualification may include prior or ‘nested’ qualifications as entry or exit points, to give learners flexibility, such as a Postgraduate Certificate or a Postgraduate Diploma.

The Master’s degree (extended) is a longer form of Master’s degree, solely or primarily by coursework, for preparation for professional practice in fields such as law, medicine, physiotherapy, speech pathology, social work or other professional fields. These degrees are typically three to five years in duration when studied full-time.

[2.6.5 Doctoral degree](#)

Research is the defining characteristic of all Doctoral degree qualifications or doctorates. While the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is generic title for a research qualification at Level X, there are also Doctoral degrees (typically titled Doctor of [field of study]) that make a significant and original contribution to knowledge in the context of professional or creative practice. See also Section 3.7.

The body of work that leads to the award of a doctorate in Samoa can be one or more of the following:

- a thesis
- a thesis focused on professional practice
- a creative work in the visual or performing arts with a thesis
- a thesis or equivalent creative work in combination with coursework

- creative work in the visual or performing arts
- published work (doctorate by publication).

If the doctoral programme includes coursework, at least 70% of the total credit value must be achieved through research or original creative work.

Higher Doctorates (known as a Doctor of Science or Doctor of Letters) are awarded for independent work of special excellence, as judged by leading international experts, which is completed before a person makes an application to enrol for the degree. Individuals will normally be expected to have completed at least ten years of independent work and to have published extensively. Publication will normally be in scholarly books and/or in reputable international journals. Individuals in the visual or performing arts will have made equally outstanding contributions in their creative work.

The SQF does not apply to Honorary Doctorates, which are not SQF qualifications. Honorary doctorates are awarded by an issuing organisation, typically a university, to recognise a person's extensive achievements in academic endeavour, public service, business enterprise or government. The title 'Doctor' may not be used by those who hold an honorary award.

2.7. Samoa Secondary School Qualifications

Senior Secondary School Qualifications are major pathways to PSET qualifications at various levels of the SQF, including entry to Bachelor level qualifications (SQF Levels V to VII). School qualifications are governed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, not by the SQA. They are not PSET qualifications.

Under the SQA Act 2010, one of the functions of SQA is “to promote links and learning pathways between the school sector and the PSET sector.” Strengthening these links is a strategy in the Education Sector Plan 2019-2024.

Additionally, the recognition in the SQF of learning pathways from Secondary School to PSET qualifications aids University Entrance and international comparability of qualifications, to assist Samoan learners who aim to study overseas.

However, it may not be possible or desirable for the learning outcomes of school level qualifications to be linked to a specific level of the SQF, given that the learning outcomes of Certificate-level PSET qualifications are derived from occupational outcomes.

Therefore, the presentation of school qualifications on the SQF is subject to further discussions between SQA and the Ministry of Education and Culture.

3. SQF POLICIES

3.1. Qualifications that can be registered on the SQF

Two broad types of qualifications can be registered on the SQF: Samoa Qualifications and Provider Qualifications.

3.1.1 Samoa Qualifications

- a) These are qualifications that meet all the criteria for the use of the term ‘Samoa’ and that are available for use nationally.
- b) They are developed in accordance with SQA’s Guidelines on Development and Registration of Samoa Qualifications.
- c) Samoa Qualifications are made up of National Competency Standards (NCSs), which are units of competency.
- d) Once registered, each Samoa Qualification and NCS is assigned a unique coding that reflects the particular field of the qualification.

Education and training providers wishing to offer programmes of learning leading to Samoa Qualifications must first register as a PSET provider and gain programme accreditation from SQA.

3.1.2 Provider Qualifications

- a) These are qualifications developed by an individual PSET provider.
- b) These qualifications may consist of National Competency Standards already recorded in Samoa Qualifications and the provider’s own units, provided that not more than 50% of the qualification is made up of recorded NCSs.
- c) Provider Qualifications that include NCSs must include a statement acknowledging the use of recorded NCSs and the Samoa Qualification they are drawn from.
- d) Provider Qualifications are registered on the SQF as part of SQA’s programme accreditation process.
- e) Providers seeking to register their own qualifications are encouraged by SQA to assess their capacity to align their programme to an existing Samoa Qualification wherever possible or to use NCSs from existing Samoa Qualifications where they are relevant.
- f) Provider Qualifications are not permitted to use the word “national” or “Samoa/n” in their qualification name. A list of **protected terms** is at **Appendix B**.

3.2. Characteristics of a qualification

Under the SQF, a qualification must include some basic characteristics in order to be registered. These characteristics are:

- i. a purpose statement

- ii. a title, including the qualification developer
- iii. an outcome statement
- iv. an appropriate level
- v. a statement summarising industry and community support; for the qualification
- vi. a credit value
- vii. specifications for the components of the qualification
- viii. entry requirements.

Every qualification to be registered on the SQF must meet all the criteria for qualification registration.

These criteria are stated in **Appendix C**. SQA also provides Guidelines for Registration of Qualifications on the SQF (a separate document).

Prior to the registration onto the SQF of qualifications at Levels VIII and above, SQA may consult relevant overseas institutions to establish the international academic and professional credibility of the proposed qualification.

It is an offence under the Samoa Qualifications Authority Act 2010 to misrepresent the purpose, title, outcomes or level of a qualification registered by the SQA, or falsely or fraudulently claim that a qualification has been registered by the SQA.

3.3. Overseas providers and qualifications

If an overseas-based provider establishes a presence in Samoa and becomes a registered PSET provider offering a qualification developed in Samoa, the provider can offer a Samoa Qualification.

Under SQA's Quality Assurance Policies, all overseas programmes, or parts of programmes, offered from Samoa and by providers operating in Samoa must have SQA approval for delivery in Samoa. That is, the programme must be accredited by SQA. Once the programme is accredited by SQA, the qualification can be registered on the SQF.

3.4. Registration of Credentials on the SQF

There is interest in Samoa in the possibility of registering on the SQF certain credentials that have smaller volumes of learning than 40 credits, known as 'short forms of learning'. Internationally, these credentials are often referred to as 'micro-credentials' and the term 'skills sets' is used as well in Australia for credentials up to Level VI.

While industry certifications are common, as are short courses for professional development or training, the regulated education sectors in most countries, and their national qualifications frameworks (NQFs), have focused until now on acknowledging 'formal' educational qualifications.

Under its legislation, the SQA can recognise providers and programmes of Non-Formal Learning (NFL), now renamed 'Professional and Community Learning' (see Section 3.5). Not all Professional and Community Learning can be considered a 'micro-credential'. In particular,

a micro-credential or skill set requires a valid assessment that the learning has actually taken place.

SQF **registers** only complete qualifications at present. While individual National Competency Standards are **recorded** as part of a Samoa Qualification, they do not stand alone on the SQF (see Glossary at **Appendix A** for an explanation of the term ‘recorded’). Individual units (modules, courses, subjects, papers) of Provider Qualifications cannot be registered on the SQF.

Internationally, there are efforts underway to create common understandings of shorter forms of learning. A recent definition states: ‘A micro-credential:

- is a record of focused learning achievement, verifying what the learner knows, understands, or can do;
- includes assessment based on clearly defined standards and awarded by a trusted provider;
- has stand-alone value and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials, including through recognition of prior learning;
- meets the standards required by relevant quality assurance’

(2022 UNESCO Report ‘Towards a Common Definition of Micro-Credentials’)

Some educational institutions in Samoa are now offering ‘micro-credentials’ alongside their formal SQF qualifications, as unregulated credentials. Such micro-credentials may potentially be ‘stacked’ to give credit towards a formal qualification.

The potential benefits of recognition or registration of micro-credentials provided by PSET providers on the SQF include:

- Encouraging more learners to undertake PSET, through the offering of smaller, more affordable ways of gaining and achieving acknowledgement of learning
- Flexibility in rapidly exposing learners to new concepts and skills, in response to industry or societal changes
- Providing a middle ground between a regulated educational SQF qualification and recognised Non-Formal Learning
- Listing NCSs as micro-credentials, improving their take-up by PSET providers.

However, there are also risks to be addressed, including the risk of confusion among employers and learners between a micro-credential and a full qualification, and a potential decline in the proportion of learners completing a full SQF qualification.

The SQA acknowledges the need for a Policy on Credentials and Shorter Forms of Post School Education and Training, to provide a way forward for Samoa and its PSET providers. Once an SQA Policy has been developed, consulted on and approved, the SQF will be amended accordingly.

3.5. Professional and Community Learning

SQA Guidelines (see **Appendix E**) contain requirements in respect of the recognition of Professional and Community Learning (PCL) activities by SQA, which help to add to a learner's Record of Achievement. The term refers to learning that occurs through an individual's conscious decision to learn something, that is, it is 'intentional'. Such learning can take place outside regulated for formal learning environments but is often arranged within some kind of organisational framework. This is in contrast to 'informal learning', which can happen anywhere at any time (OECD, Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning – Home, n.d.).

An alternative term now used by SQA in place of 'non-formal learning' is 'professional and community learning', indicating that this form of deliberate learning usually occurs in workplace, professional or community contexts and is recognised and valued as learning.

There are many opportunities for professional and community learning. For example, if an employee receives a 'certificate of completion' because they have attended a series of workshops, they have undertaken non-formal learning. Another example would be a person who attended a short course to acquire a specific skill or to learn about developments such as the use of Artificial Intelligence in their field of specialisation.

Attending workshops and seminars conducted by industry experts or professional organisations can enhance skills and knowledge in highly specific domains, for example, in meeting requirements for continuing professional development. Participating in online courses and webinars offered by various platforms, such as Coursera, Udemy, or LinkedIn Learning, can also provide specialised knowledge and skills.

Community learning can include classes taken to learn about a subject, such as history, or a language, or activities undertaken for the purpose of learning and developing a physical skill.

Training provided by many public service bodies in Samoa, including police or fire services training, which is assessed, can be recognised as 'professional or community learning'. Micro-credentials are an example of professional and community learning but not all types of non-formal learning would constitute a micro-credential.

Professional and community learning is recognised and recorded by SQA but is not registered on the SQF (see Glossary at **Appendix A**).

3.6. Learning pathways and Recognition of Prior Learning

3.6.1 Learning pathways

The SQF is an important tool to provide people with flexible learning pathways (FLPs) through and between further study and work.

The United Nations Education 2030 Agenda encourages all countries to develop well-articulated education systems that offer FLPs for their learners. Providing multiple entry points to and progression routes between institutions, courses, or educational levels brings many benefits for individuals and society, particularly in terms of equity, employability, or efficiency in the management of resources.

(UNESCO IIEP Flexible learning pathways in higher education, n.d;)

As noted, senior secondary school level qualifications are a major pathway to further study or employment. The SQA is supporting the development of seamless pathways through school and PSET qualifications for key economic sectors in Samoa.

Two ways that PSET providers can support learning pathways are:

- Ensuring that entry requirements for their qualifications provide multiple pathways from other qualifications, wherever achieved.

Entry (or admission) requirements for learners, which are set by PSET providers, vary for specific qualifications at the same level, due to differences in the fields of study. The purpose of entry requirements is to ensure that learners start a qualification with enough knowledge and skills to be able to successfully complete it.

Learning pathways can show the types of generic SQF qualifications that can provide potential entry to other SQF qualifications. Providers may, however, set entry requirements that need to be met also, such as language requirements, pre-requisite qualifications in the field of study, or levels of achievement, e.g. grades. An example is as follows:

An applicant shall be eligible to be admitted to the Diploma in Arts if that applicant:

- a) Has completed the requirements for a Foundation Certificate or equivalent, or*
- b) Has at least three years full-time work experience and/or training.*

- Supporting open entry and granting the maximum possible recognition of prior learning (RPL) or credit transfer to learners, so they do not have to repeat learning they have already achieved. The mutual recognition of qualifications awarded by providers is acknowledged as an area where SQA has to continue working closely with providers.

Any registered PSET provider can offer a PSET qualification at any level of the SQF but only if SQF regulatory requirements are met and if this is consistent with the provider's mission.

Registered PSET providers must provide transparent advice on entry requirements to prospective learners, including pathways from TVET to qualifications at Level V and above where applicable. PSET providers should also state the pathways from the qualification, that is, the expected employment and further education outcomes.

[3.6.2 Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\)](#)

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a broad term to describe various ways in which a person's relevant and current skills and knowledge are formally assessed to determine if they meet the learning outcomes of a qualification, qualification component and/or standard(s) such as NCSs.

The process of RPL does not have regard to where the prior learning took place or whether it is obtained through formal, non-formal or informal learning. The learning could have been gained through the workplace, life experiences, hobbies, overseas training, short courses, or other means.

Registered PSET providers must establish a system for RPL, to be available when requested by learners. The SQA is able to provide support and advice.

RPL could lead to:

- a) Entry into a programme of study
- b) Granting of credit for studies leading to an SQF qualification
- c) Award of an SQF qualification

The maximum amount of prior learning that can be recognised in respect of an SQF qualification or NCS is 100%, which would mean that the SQF qualification or NCS would have been achieved by the learner and can be awarded by the PSET provider that has conducted the assessment.

SQA had detailed Guidelines for the process of RPL and will provide advice to PSET providers, as well as monitoring the implementation of RPL.

3.6.3 Credit transfer

Credit transfer or advanced standing is a specific form of RPL, where a learner's prior formal learning or qualifications are recognised, so the learner is exempted from having to undertake certain subjects or units of competency when enrolling in a new qualification.

In this context, the term 'credit' means a learner has already 'banked' their prior learning so can reduce the time taken to achieve a related qualification. Sometimes there are agreements between institutions that provide for automatic credit to be given when a learner transfers to another institution.

To ensure that credit given for previous studies is not excessive, there needs to be some limits on the maximum amounts of credit that may be recognised for the award of an SQF qualification by an institution.

For Samoa Qualifications, 100% automatic transferability of completed NCSs of competency or units must be applied when learners apply to complete an unfinished qualification at the same qualification or a higher-level qualification in the same field.

For Provider Qualifications at Levels I to VI, the maximum amount of credit that may be given for completed units of competency or studies towards a new qualification at a higher SQF level is 100%. However, if the new qualification is the same or at the same level, a maximum of 70% applies.

For a Level VII Bachelor qualification, the maximum amount of credit that may be given for a prior SQF or comparable qualification (or similar overseas qualification) is:

- 240 credits of a 360 credit Bachelor degree programme for credit transfer from a higher education or Level VI Advanced Diploma in the same or a related field of study
- 120 credits of a 360 credit Bachelor degree programme for credit transfer from a or Level V Diploma in the same or a related field of study.

Lower maximum amounts should be applied to a prior qualification in an unrelated field of study.

The maximum amount of credit that may be transferred, outside of nested articulation arrangements, to a postgraduate coursework programme for prior postgraduate qualifications or partially completed qualifications is:

- 50% of the total credit point value of the programme for credit transfer in a related field of study.

The maximum amount of credit that may be transferred in nested articulation arrangements for postgraduate programmes approved by the certifying institution is 100% of the total credit point value. For example, 100% of a nested Postgraduate Diploma would be recognised for credit if the learner continues to study towards the next level up, namely, the Master's degree qualification.

Full details are available in the **SQA Guidelines for RPL and credit transfer**.

3.6.4 Recognition of Current Competence (RCC)

Recognition of Current Competence is a separate process, used when Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) is where you have previously successfully completed the requirements for a unit of competency and are now required (e.g. by a licensing authority) to be reassessed to ensure that competency is being maintained.

Recognition of the currency of a learner's competence, for situations where an occupational license needs to be renewed.

3.7. Guidance for naming of PSET qualifications

3.7.1 Naming conventions

The SQF provides generic titles for qualifications such as Certificate III, Diploma, Bachelor and Master's. Qualifications issued by PSET providers also include information on the specific qualification. The generic part of the name is the SQF name, e.g., Certificate III, Bachelor. The specific part provides the area of learning, although even a specific title can be very broad, e.g. Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science.

Examples are:

- Samoa Certificate II Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management
- Certificate III in Business Administration
- Certificate II in Information Technology
- Diploma in Commerce
- Advanced Diploma in Electrical Engineering
- Bachelor of Nursing
- Bachelor of Science (with Honours)
- Bachelor of Science / Bachelor of Law
- Bachelor of Information Technology
- Graduate Diploma of Teaching
- Postgraduate Diploma in Computer Science
- Master of Business Administration
- Doctor of Philosophy.

Some programmes of study include major or minor sequences that will be listed on the record of results but the name of the major or minor may not appear on the certificate awarded to the graduate, known as a testamur or statement of achievement.

It is common for some qualifications to use abbreviations as well as the full qualification name. Abbreviations for qualifications should follow international conventions for degrees taught in English, noting that there are differences in the titles and descriptions of some qualifications across countries.

The professional title ‘Doctor’ can be used as a non-SQF title in several health-related fields, where this is common practice such as medicine and dentistry, although the holder may have completed only a Bachelor (Level VII) or a Master’s (Level IX) qualification.

A Master’s qualification may not be referred to as a doctoral degree in any written, oral or electronic information, with the following exceptions:

- The use of the qualification title ‘Juris Doctor’ is permitted for a Master’s degree for legal practice
- The use of the qualification title ‘Doctor of ...’ is permitted for a Master’s degree (extended) for the following professions: medical practice; physiotherapy; dentistry; optometry and veterinary practice. Alternatively, the qualification may be named ‘Doctor of ...’ or ‘Master of ...’, such as Doctor/Master of Dentistry, Doctor/Master of Optometry or Doctor of Medicine
- Universities are not permitted to refer to these degrees as doctorates and must note on documentation such as transcripts that the qualification is a Master's degree (extended).

3.7.2 Post-nominals

Graduates who have obtained an SQF qualification are entitled to use the approved abbreviation for the qualification as a post nominal (after their name) if this is an accepted convention. Post nominal abbreviations are not common for Certificates I to IV.

The following are examples of typical abbreviations for qualifications:

- Diploma in Commerce (DipCom)
- Advanced Diploma in Computer Science (DipCompSci)
- Bachelor of Arts (BA)
- Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA(Hons))
- Bachelor of Science (BSc)
- Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS)
- Bachelor of Engineering (BEng).
- Graduate Certificate in Agribusiness (GCertAgrbus)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Development (PGDip SustDev)
- Master of Arts (MA)
- Master of Science (MSc)
- Master of Business Administration (MBA).

The name of the institution, or an abbreviation, may also be included after the qualification, e.g., *DipCom USP* for a Diploma of Commerce from the University of the South Pacific.

For a doctoral qualification, the most common abbreviation is ‘PhD’ which stands for Doctor of Philosophy. However, there are also doctoral qualifications that have more specific names. Examples are Doctor of Education (EdD) and Doctor of Business Administration (DBA).

Persons with ‘earned’ (not Honorary) doctorates may use the title ‘Dr’ instead of a post-nominal.

3.8. Guidance for issuing certificates and records of results

PSET providers issue documentation to individual graduates to confirm their PSET qualification and performance. These certificates and records serve as tangible evidence of an individual's educational attainment. They are often issued in hard copy but electronic records must also be maintained. Sufficient information must be provided on a testamur and record of results to ensure that the documentation is able to be authenticated and to reduce fraudulent use.

All graduates who have completed a programme of learning that leads to the award of an SQF qualification must receive a testamur or certificate of achievement.

These are formal certificates confirming that a person has successfully completed a programme of study leading to the award of the qualification, signed by the certifying institution. Each must contain sufficient information to identify the graduate correctly.

3.8.1 Testamurs or certificates

Typically, a testamur includes the following information:

- Name of the educational institution: The name of the institution issuing the testamur or certificate is mentioned prominently
- Recipient's name: The full name of the individual who has successfully completed the programme is included, that is, the person who will graduate with the award of the SQF qualification
- Title of the qualification: The name of the qualification completed by the recipient is stated, sometimes with any relevant specialization or major for the programme of study
- Date of completion: The date when the programme was successfully finished is indicated. (The date of issue/award/conferral)
- Signatures: The testamur or certificate is usually signed by representatives of the registered PSET provider who are authorised to sign, such as the chair of the governing body, the president, director, principal and/or registrar.
- Official seal: If required by the provider's own rules, an official seal or emblem of the registered PSET provider must be included.
- Additional logos if required: The logo of a government agency may be required to be included on testamurs.
- Additional unique identifiers: Registered PSET providers may include other documents to reduce credential fraud, such as watermarks or holograms.

The testamur or certificate of achievement serves as a formal acknowledgment of an individual's achievement and can be used as evidence of qualification when applying for employment, further education, or professional licensing. It is an important document that

holds value and recognition within the community. Often, a graduate will have their testamur framed and display it.

3.8.2 Record of results or academic transcript

A record of results or ‘academic transcript’ refers to a document that provides a comprehensive summary of an individual's performance, grades, or scores in a particular set of assessments while an enrolled learner at a particular institution. It typically includes information about each subject, course, units or module undertaken, along with the corresponding outcomes achieved by the individual.

Learners who complete any part of the requirements of an SQF qualification in which they are enrolled are entitled to receive a full record of results.

A record of results should contain the following information:

- Individual's identification: The record will include the individual's full name, learner or student identification number, and any other relevant identifying details.
- Details of the programme of study: The record will outline the specific units of competency, units, subjects, or modules taken by the individual, including the corresponding codes or names. The transcript may indicate if the qualification and the award has been achieved through research or coursework.
- Grades or scores: The record will indicate the grades, marks, or scores obtained by the individual for each unit. This could be in the form of a statement of competency, letter grades, numerical scores, or other grading systems specific to the registered PSET provider.
- Credits and credit values: If applicable, the record may include information about the credits and credit values associated with each unit and the qualification as a whole.
- Cumulative information: The record may provide a cumulative summary of the individual's overall performance, especially where graded assessment is used. Examples are the grade point average (GPA) or weighted average, which reflects their performance across multiple units or modules. If GPAs are provided, the transcript must also include a statement explaining the GPA scale used by the institutions.
- Dates and learning periods: The record may include information about the dates of enrolment, semesters or other information on the timing of studies.
- Institutional information: The record should include the name of the registered PSET provider, the department or faculty responsible for the programme leading to the qualification, and any other relevant institutional details.
- Signatures or official stamp: The record of results must be signed or certified by representatives of the registered PSET provider who are authorised to sign on behalf of the provider, such as the registrar. Other evidence of the authenticity of the document can be provided.

A record of results serves as an official document that reflects an individual's academic achievements and performance. It is used for various purposes, such as applying for further education, seeking employment, or demonstrating eligibility for scholarships, awards, or

honours. Educational institutions, employers, and other relevant parties may request a record of results to assess an individual's qualifications, skills, and competencies.

Graduates are entitled to retain testamurs and records of results once they have been issued, unless:

- the SQF qualification builds on a lower-level qualification in the same discipline at the same certifying institution and the institution has a policy regarding the surrender of certification documentation; or
- the qualification is revoked under the terms of the certifying institution's policy or for other reasons.

If any part of the qualification has been delivered and/or assessed in a language other than English, a statement that this has occurred should be included on the testamur and the record of results.

SQA may require certifying organisations to include additional information on the certification documentation.

The registered PSET provider must have a policy that permits the replacement of certification documentation and be responsible for authentication of any replacement certification documentation. Registered PSET providers must maintain a register of all SQF qualifications they are authorised to issue, and maintain a register of all SQF qualifications they issue to graduates.

3.9. Changes of status for a registered qualification

3.9.1 Status of a registered qualification

Each qualification registered on the SQF must display and maintain clear information on its status using the following definitions:

- **Current:** Qualifications that are current are those which are listed on the SQF and can be offered by registered PSET providers.
- **Expiring:** Qualifications which are expiring are those which are either being replaced with a new qualification or the decision has been made for them to be closed. This will normally be as a result of a review. The qualification may continue to be available to existing individuals while they complete their programme, but no new learners would be able to enroll. Current learners will need to complete the qualification before the expiry date.
- **Discontinued:** Qualifications designated as discontinued will no longer be available or awarded.

3.9.2 Changing the status of a registered qualification

If a developer or provider wishes to change the purpose, title, outcome statement, level or credit value of a qualification registered on the SQF, approval must be sought from SQA as soon as practicable. The changes should not be implemented until they have been approved by SQA.

Providers will be notified of any changes to any qualification components approved by SQA and informed of what actions they need to take and any transition period to new or revised qualifications.

Where a new or revised qualification is to replace an existing quality assured qualification no current learner should be disadvantaged. Transition arrangements should be documented that provide:

- a) Specified time limits for the completion of existing qualifications or NCS
- b) Credit transfer or exemptions for specified components
- c) Treatment of qualifications under development
- d) An appeals mechanism
- e) Details of how the arrangements will be managed.

3.9.3 Renewal or discontinuation of a registered qualification

All qualifications registered on the SQF are subject to periodic reviews to ensure that they maintain relevance and that, for Samoa Qualifications, the outcomes and NCSs are still appropriate and consistent with other similar qualifications.

For both Samoa and Provider Qualifications, the normal period of SQF qualification registration is five years but SQA may initiate an earlier review if circumstances demand it. A renewed Samoa Qualification may retain the same name and title although the NCSs may have changed significantly – the status of the qualification (see 3.9.1) will show its currency.

Provider Qualifications will be reviewed by SQA as part of the programme accreditation process and/or the quality audit process

Where SQA considers that there may be grounds for deregistering a Provider's Qualification from the SQF, it will give written notice to the governing body of the Provider:

- a) setting out the grounds for its decision/action.
- b) stating a reasonable and defined period (normally two to four weeks) within which to make submissions on the matter.

The SQA will consider any written submissions and may give a further defined period of time to address the specified issues. It will then make a decision and send a final written notice, specifying the details and the effective date of its decision.

SQA may take the above action as a result of a special purpose audit or an external quality audit.

3.9.4 Regaining a Qualification's Current Registered Status

A provider whose qualification was deregistered from the SQF as a result of an investigation, special purpose audit or an external audit will need to re-apply to the SQA for reinstatement of that status.

Compliance Notices

SQA may issue a compliance notice to a provider requiring the provider to take, or refrain from taking, a particular action in relation to registration of any of its qualifications on the SQF.

Every compliance notice will be in writing (a formal letter from SQA) and must:

- a) give the date on which it issued; and
- b) specify a time on or before which, or a period within which, the Provider must comply with the notice; and
- c) state the possible consequences of non-compliance with the notice.

A provider that receives a compliance notice must comply with it within the time period specified, which will normally be between a minimum of ten and a maximum of twenty working days from the date of issue of the notice.

SQA may publish any compliance notice, or a summary of a compliance notice, in a manner designed to inform the public of the compliance notice.

SQA may extend the period of time for a provider to rectify compliance.

If the provider does not comply with the compliance notice, SQA may immediately impose new, or amend or revoke any existing condition(s) on registration of any of its qualifications on the SQF.

Appendix A Acronyms and Glossary

List of acronyms used in this document

| Acronym | Term |
|---------|--|
| DBA | Doctor of Business Administration |
| EdD | Doctor of Education |
| FLPs | Flexible Learning Pathways |
| GPA | Grade Point Average |
| HE | Higher Education |
| NCSs | National Competency Standards |
| NQFs | National Qualifications Frameworks |
| NFL | Non-Formal Learning |
| PhD | Doctor of Philosophy |
| PSET | Post School Education and Training |
| RCC | Recognition of Current Competency |
| RPL | Recognition of prior learning |
| SAG | Sector Advisory Group (for National Competency Standards) |
| SQA | Samoa Qualifications Authority |
| SQF | Samoa Qualifications Framework |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |

Glossary of terms

Adaptability

In the context of the SQF, the ability to use information or ideas for purposes other than they were intended for (transfer of skill and knowledge)

Autonomy

In the context of the SQF, the ability to apply knowledge and skills to reach decisions across all aspects of a job or field of study

Bachelor Degree

A Bachelor degree is a systematic and coherent introduction to the knowledge, ideas, principles, concepts, chief research methods and problem-solving techniques of a recognised major subject or subjects.

Certificate

1. A formal educational qualification at Levels I to IV of the SQF and at Levels VII and VIII (see Graduate Certificate or Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma). Certificates at Levels I to IV are often used to prepare learners for both employment and further education and training.
2. A generic term for the record of a qualification or completion of formal or non-formal learning. See also testamur.

Competency

The ability to apply learning outcomes in a particular context. Competency is an important concept in workplace and vocational training as it describes the learner's ability to apply appropriate skills and knowledge effectively on-the-job.

Course

A course is a component of a programme of study comprising an integrated education delivery or training package that includes appropriate content, teaching and learning approaches, resources, assessment activity, delivery modes and duration designed to achieve a set of learning outcomes. Also referred to as a 'unit', 'module', 'paper' or 'subject'.

Credential

In an educational context, means a certification, formal or informal, of learning or experience or attendance, indicating that a person has the capability to do something or has acquired certain knowledge or skills. A formal educational qualification is one type of credential.

Credit

In the context of the SQF, credit is a means to measure and formally acknowledge learning achieved in a formal educational context. UNESCO defines a credit as follows: "A credit is a generally agreed-upon value used to measure a student workload in terms of learning time required to complete Course units, resulting in learning outcomes" (Vlăsceanu et al., 2004. p.31). See also 'credit transfer' and 'credit value'.

Credit transfer

A specific form of the Recognition of Prior Learning, where learning achieved in a prior qualification is granted credit towards a new qualification. This is called ‘credit transfer’ or ‘advanced standing’.

Credit value

The numerical value assigned to a full qualification, as well as to its components, that represents the notional time needed for a typical learner to demonstrate that all the specified outcomes have been achieved. In the SQF, the credit value reflects the expected ‘volume of learning’, where 1 credit = 10 notional hours of learning activity. Also referred to as ‘credit points’

Diploma

A formal educational qualification at Levels V and VI of the SQF, and at Levels VII and VIII (see Graduate Certificate or Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma). Diplomas at Levels V and VI recognise the acquisition of higher-level skill and knowledge and often build on prior qualifications and experience.

Doctorate

A research qualification that is at a significantly higher level than a Master’s degree, reflecting scholarly independence, and is awarded in recognition of research or creative work that has made a substantial and original contribution to knowledge.

Entry requirement

In the context of the SQF, the criteria established by a provider that permit a learner to enrol and commence study for a formal educational qualification. Also referred to as an admission requirement.

Grade Point Average (GPA)

For assessment tasks with graded outcomes, the grades can be translated into numeric values, often from 0 to 4 or 0 to 7, where 0 would be a failure and 4 or 7 would be the highest grade. A GPA is often calculated by adding up all accumulated final grades and dividing that figure by the number of grades awarded but it can also be weighted, for example, by the credit values of all the units completed.

Graduate Certificate or Diploma

A Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma is designed as a vehicle for graduates to pursue further study at an undergraduate level. The qualification can be designed to broaden knowledge and skills in a familiar subject or discipline or develop knowledge in a new area.

Lifelong learning

Refers to learning as a continuous activity and thinking of ‘learning’ as a process that continues throughout a person’s life, as in this definition:

Lifelong learning is rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and the elderly, girls and boys, women and men), in all life-wide contexts (family, school, the community, the

workplace, and so on) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal and informal), which, together, meet a wide range of learning needs and demands.

(UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning: <https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/unesco-institute/mandate/lifelong-learning>).

Master's Degree

A Master's degree is normally designed to extend the principal subject or subjects of a former qualifying Bachelor degree or may build on relevant knowledge and skills derived from occupational experience.

National Competency Standard (NCS)

The specifications of the competencies required for effective performance in the workplace, expressed in a consistent format and nationally endorsed by the relevant stakeholders for application within a specific industry or sector. Used for Samoa Qualifications. See also 'unit of competency'.

Nested qualification

Nested qualifications are qualifications that include articulated arrangements from a lower-level qualification into a higher-level qualification, to enable multiple entry and exit points. An example is a Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma nested within a Master's qualification.

Notional Learning Hours

An estimation of the expected hours of learning activities of all types that an 'average' learner would need to undertake to achieve a qualification. It is not a precise measure but is based on long-established norms.

Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma

Postgraduate qualifications are designed to extend and deepen knowledge and skills through formal instruction and enquiry, often in the same area as the original degree.

Post School Education and Training (PSET)

The Post School Education and Training sector in Samoa comprises all forms of education and training activities that occur after the school system, utilising any structured mode of delivery. These include:

- University education
- Technical vocational education and training
- Pre-service and in-service professional education and training
- Theological colleges and providers of religious instruction
- Non-formal learning, and
- On-the-job training.

Programme (of learning)

A coherent set of courses, modules, papers, competency packages or units designed to meet the requirements of a qualification.

Programme accreditation

The process used to evaluate a provider's capability of delivering a formal PSET programme to the required standards, so an SQF qualification is achieved.

Provider

In the context of Samoa, an institution or legal entity that intends to offer or is offering post school education and training, whether formal or non-formal.

Provider Qualification

A qualification developed and awarded by a registered PSET provider or the formal certification that a person has successfully achieved learning outcomes for such a qualification.

Qualification

A qualification is formal certification that a person has successfully achieved all learning outcomes of an accredited programme at a specified level of a qualification's framework.

Qualification component

An identifiable part of a qualification. Each component is a set of learning outcomes that a person must achieve to receive credit towards a qualification. See also 'course' and 'unit of competency'. For Samoa Qualifications, each component is an NCS.

Qualifications framework

A classification structure, usually national or regional, indicating the levels and types of quality assured educational qualifications that can be formally recognised or registered. See also Samoa Qualifications Framework.

Quality assurance

A generic term for all activities which provide confidence that the educational and training services of a PSET provider are being delivered effectively, to the required standard, and in line with published goals and objectives.

Recognition

In the context of the SQF, means the acknowledgment by SQA of the validity or legality of a qualification or a judgment made by others to quality assure a qualification or programme, without implying the same level of approval that would be given directly by SQA.

Recognition of Current Competency (RCC)

Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) is used to show that competency is being maintained when a learner has successfully completed the requirements for a unit of competency but there is a time limit on the currency of the unit. Often, a licencing authority may require this assessment.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

A term to describe ways in which a person's relevant and current skills and knowledge are formally assessed to determine if they meet the learning outcomes of a qualification or qualification component or other requirements.

Recording

In the context of the SQF, means to set down publicly or officially on the SQF information relating to a registered qualification, without the level of approval required for registration. For example, an individual NCS is recorded on the SQF but not registered, while a Samoa Qualification made up of NCSs is registered.

Registration of qualifications

The process used to determine that a qualification has met the criteria for inclusion in the list of quality assured qualifications on the SQF and the listing or formal registration of the qualification onto the SQF, through a register maintained by SQA, as required by the Samoa Qualifications Authority Act 2010.

Samoa Qualifications

These are national qualifications developed to meet a specific priority national need or interest, and whose development has involved, and has widespread endorsement by, the appropriate national industry, profession or community related to the qualification outcomes.

Samoa Qualifications Framework (SQF)

A classification structure indicating the levels and types of quality assured formal qualifications that may be offered in Samoa by educational institutions.

Self-directed contexts

Contexts of work or learning where a person is able to decide for themselves the nature of the work or learning.

Testamur

A certificate given to a person when they graduate with a formal qualification from an educational institution.

Transcript (of results)

In the context of the SQF, an official record of the results achieved by a learner in assessments for study leading to an educational qualification.

Unit of competency

A qualification component that specifies a set of learning outcomes for effective performance, usually in an occupational setting, for which competency-based assessment is used. For Samoa Qualifications, this component is referred to as a National Competency Standard.

University

A university is an institution with a wide diversity of teaching and research, especially at a higher level, that maintains, advances, disseminates, and assists the application of knowledge; has academic freedom and intellectual independence; promotes community learning and has a majority of staff with postgraduate qualifications.

Volume of learning

The amount of learning that learners need to undertake to achieve a qualification. For the SQF, it is expressed as the expected or notional hours of learning activities that a learner could be expected to complete. See also 'credit value'.

Appendix B Protected Terms

The following are protected terms under the Samoa Qualifications Authority Act 2010.

National and Samoa/n

The use of the terms National and Samoa/n in a qualification title is restricted to qualifications:

- Whose development has involved, and has widespread endorsement by, the appropriate national industry, profession or community related to the qualification title and outcome of the qualification
- That have components for which there is automatically portable (transferable) credit
- That recognise broad transferable and generic skills as well as specialised industry and professional skills and knowledge
- That are flexible in structure and provide people with attainable milestones, career options, and qualification pathways, and
- That are registered on the SQF.

Samoa Qualifications are available to all registered providers who can meet and maintain the specified programme accreditation requirements.

The use of the terms National and Samoa/n in the title of a provider is also restricted. Permission to use these terms in the title of a PSET provider must be obtained from the Samoa Qualifications Authority.

Degree

A qualification awarded after satisfactory completion of and achievement in a programme of advanced study taught by people engaged in research and which emphasises general principles and basic knowledge as the basis for self-directed work.

Bachelor Degree

A Bachelor degree is a systematic, coherent introduction to the knowledge, ideas, principles, concepts, research methods and problem-solving techniques of a recognised major subject or subjects.

Master's Degree

A Master's degree is normally designed to extend the principal subject or subjects of the qualifying degree or may build on relevant knowledge and skills derived from advanced occupational experience. A Master's degree contains a significant element of supervised research, the results of which are normally embodied in a thesis, dissertation or substantial research paper. Creative work may also contribute to the research output. The research should demonstrate a capacity in the candidate for independent thinking.

Doctoral or Doctorate degree

A research-based qualification that is at a significantly higher level than a Master's degree, reflecting scholarly independence, and is awarded in recognition of research or creative work that has made a substantial and original contribution to knowledge.

University (Iunivesitē)

A University (Iunivesitē) is an institution with a wide diversity of teaching and research, especially at a higher level, that maintains, advances, disseminates, and assists the application of knowledge; has academic freedom and intellectual independence; promotes community learning and has a majority of staff with post-graduate qualifications.

Appendix C Template for National Competency Standards

| | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|---|
| NCS Title and Code Version | <p>The NCS title describes a discrete function that can be achieved and measured. The NCS title is derived from the Functional Analysis.</p> <p>The coding for NCS is determined by SQA.</p> | | |
| SQF Level | <p>The developer should indicate the equivalent SQF level of each NCS.</p> | NCS credit value | <p>Each NCS has a credit value, based on the nominal hours expected for a person to become competent to demonstrate the outcome described by the NCS.</p> |
| NCS Purpose Statement | <p>A summary of what a learner should be able to know and do upon achievement of the NCS.</p> <p>While there is no requirement to restate the Learning Outcomes it is one way to summarise the content of the NCS. They may also say for whom the NCS is intended.</p> | | |
| Classification | Field and Sub-field | | |
| Pre-requisites and co-requisites | <p>Pre-requisite NCS are those that must be achieved before attempting this NCS. Co-requisite NCS are those that must be attempted at the same time as this NCS. (only appears if populated)</p> | | |
| Learning Outcome 1 | <p>These are the building blocks of the NCS. They describe the activities that must be completed in order to perform the function described in the NCS title. There are usually more than one learning outcomes in an NCS.</p> | | |
| Range Statement (only populated if applicable) | <p>Range statements may be included to provide a common frame of reference to ensure that all candidates are assessed against the same set of applications. They can also clarify assessment conditions, e.g. timeframes, open book, closed book, on-job or simulated.</p> <p>Range Statements may be included for application to the entire NCS, in which case they apply to all learning outcomes within a standard, or to a Learning Outcome, or to a Performance Standard.</p> <p>Writers and developers of NCS need to be aware of the impact on assessment when using range statements and use with caution.</p> | | |
| Performance Standard 1.1 | <p>These describe the performance expectation that is expected of a person applying the outcomes that achieve the NCS function. The performance standards describe how a person could judge whether or not the outcome has been achieved.</p> | | |
| Performance Standard 1.2 | | | |
| Learning Outcome 2 | | | |
| Performance Standard 2.1 | | | |
| Performance Standard 2.2 | | | |
| Explanatory Notes | <p>Explanatory notes can be used to add clarity to an NCS. They are used for conveying any information that will assist in the interpretation of the standard and/or increase the likelihood of consistent assessment judgement. They can also be used to indicate any special assessment requirements or conditions. Range statements can appear in this section if applicable.</p> | | |

| | |
|--|--|
| Suggested assessment methods | Describes a range of methods for collecting evidence that a person is competent. One of more of the methods should be chosen by assessors. |
| Resource requirements | Provides an outline of the resources required to train and/or assess someone in this NCS. |
| SAG responsible for developing this NCS | Name of Sector Advisory Group to SQA. |
| Registration date version 1 | Date when first registered or listed. |
| Planned review date | After 5 years of registration or listing or earlier if required. |
| Moderation information | |

Appendix D Acknowledgements and References

Acknowledgements

The Samoa Qualifications Authority wishes to acknowledge, with thanks, that portions of the text in this Third Edition of the Samoa Qualifications Framework have been borrowed or adapted from public documents of other countries or entities, including the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework, the Australian Qualifications Framework and the Pacific Qualifications Framework (a regional referencing framework).

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Appendix E Related SQA Policies and Guidelines

1. Quality Assurance Policies
2. Guidelines for PSET Provider Registration, including:
 - Provider Registration Application Form
 - Provider Registration Checklist
3. Guidelines for Programme Accreditation of PSET Providers, including:
 - Programme Accreditation Application Form
 - Programme Accreditation Self Evaluation Form
 - Qualification Registration Form
 - Qualification Registration Checklist
4. Guidelines for Recognition of Professional and Community Learning, including:
 - Recognition of Professional and Community Learning Application Form
 - Recognition of Professional and Community Learning Self Evaluation Form
5. Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning in Samoa
6. Guidelines for Recognition of Current Competency
7. Guidelines for Development and Registration of Samoa Qualifications
8. Guidelines for Registration of Qualifications on the SQF