



Namibia · Qualifications · Authority



Republic Of Namibia

NATIONAL POLICY ON MICROCREDENTIALS

Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture (MEIYSAC)

Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA)

Government of the Republic of Namibia

DRAFT FOR STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

September 2026

Cabinet Decision Number: [to be inserted upon adoption]

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FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to present this National Policy on Microcredentials, the first policy of its kind for Namibia. It sets out how short, focused programmes of learning will be designed, assessed, quality assured, certified and recognised across our education, training and labour market system.

Namibia has made real progress in building a credible National Qualifications Framework. Our universities, our TVET centres and our colleges are anchored to a system that Namibians and the region can trust. But the world of learning is changing quickly. Employers now need workers who can add a specific skill in a matter of hours, days, or weeks, not years. Young people are teaching themselves through online courses. Workers already in jobs need to reskill as technology changes what their jobs demand of them. Around the world, and increasingly at home, short courses, badges and certificates are multiplying. Some of them are excellent. Many make claims nobody has checked.

This Policy gives Namibia a way to tell the difference: a microcredential is only nationally recognised once the Namibia Qualifications Authority has registered it on the National Qualifications Framework. Part 5 of this Policy sets out exactly what that means and why.

I want to thank the Namibia Qualifications Authority for leading the technical work behind this Policy, the National Council for Higher Education and the Namibia Training Authority for their close cooperation, and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) for the technical support that made this process possible. I also thank every training provider, employer, professional body and learner who gave their time during consultations.

This Policy protects what we have already built while opening the door to something Namibia badly needs: fast, trustworthy ways for our people to learn new skills across a lifetime, not only at the start of a career.

Hon. [Minister of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) coordinated the development of this Policy on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture, with technical and financial support from the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ).

This work began with a simple observation: Namibia already has good short courses, workplace training programmes and professional development offerings, but no shared national language for describing them, no common way to check their quality, and no way for a learner to prove, beyond doubt, what they had actually learned. Fixing that required bringing many institutions to the same table.

We thank the National Council for Higher Education and the Namibia Training Authority for working through the difficult questions of where their existing mandates begin and end, and where a new, shared system was needed instead of a new institution. We thank universities, colleges, TVET centres, professional councils, employer organisations, trade unions and online training providers for testing early drafts of this Policy against their own reality and telling us, plainly, where it would not work.

We are grateful to GIZ, and in particular the technical advisors made available through its support to Namibia's education and training sector, for bringing international and regional experience on microcredentials into a form that could be adapted honestly to Namibian conditions, rather than copied wholesale from systems built for different economies.

This Policy is not the end of the conversation. It is a foundation that the Steering Committee described in Part 6 of this document will build on as the system is piloted, tested and improved.

[Chief Executive Officer]

Namibia Qualifications Authority

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Meaning
ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AU	African Union
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
GIZ	<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i>
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MEIYSAC	Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NDP6	Sixth National Development Plan
NQA	Namibia Qualifications Authority
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSFAF	Namibia Students Financial Assistance Fund
NTA	Namibia Training Authority

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCQF	SADC Qualifications Framework
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution

GLOSSARY OF CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Term	Meaning
Accredited or registered provider	An institution, organisation or body that a competent authority has approved to design, deliver, assess or certify learning.
Assessment	A fair and reliable process of gathering and judging evidence to decide whether a learner has achieved stated learning outcomes.
Badge	An electronic form of recognition of an accomplishment. A badge is not, on its own, an NQF-registered microcredential unless it has been assigned an NQF level and credit value through the process set out in this Policy.
Competent authority	The regulator or quality assurance body with legal power to register or withdraw registration of a microcredential on the NQF.
Credit	A unit used to measure the volume of learning achieved, expressed on the NQF as whole numbers based on notional learning hours. 1 credit = 10 notional hours.
Digital credential	An electronic certificate that can be verified online through a unique number, QR code or digital signature.
Formal learning	Structured learning that leads to, or forms part of, a qualification, unit standard or other formally registered award.
Foreign microcredential	A microcredential issued outside Namibia. The NQA may evaluate a foreign microcredential for comparability under Objective 3 of this Policy, provided the issuing provider or system is itself quality assured or accredited in its own jurisdiction and the credential is independently and digitally verifiable. Following a successful evaluation, the NQA shall register the foreign microcredential on the NQF and include it in the national registry, with its assigned NQF level and credit value.

Industry-led microcredential	A microcredential designed, delivered or assessed with direct employer or sector involvement, following one of the recognised models set out under Objective 2 of this Policy: employer-owned, co-designed and co-delivered, or provider-led with structured industry input. It falls within the scope of this Policy only once it has been registered on the NQF.
Informal learning	Learning gained through work, life experience, self-study or community activity, which can be recognised once it is properly assessed and verified.
Learning outcomes	Clear statements of what a learner must know, understand or be able to do by the end of a course, expressed so that they can be tested.
Macro-credential	A full qualification, such as a diploma or degree, that a microcredential may stand alone from, contribute to or complement, including through recognition of prior learning.
Microcredential	Micro-credential means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. Learning experiences leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be stand-alone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity. For the purposes of this Policy, a verified record of focused learning that the NQA has registered on the National Qualifications Framework, with an assigned level and credit value, based on clearly assessed learning outcomes and quality assurance by an accredited provider. A microcredential may be anything less than 40 credits, in line with the established size of short courses.
National Microcredential Quality Mark	A protected mark or digital status confirming that a microcredential has been registered on the NQF and meets Namibia's national requirements for recognition. It may not be used on any credential that has not been NQF-registered.
Nodal agency	The single national body a country designates to coordinate the adoption and implementation of microcredentials, as recommended by the Commonwealth of Learning's 2025 Commonwealth Microcredential Framework for Lifelong Learning. In Namibia, this is the NQA.
NQF-registered (credit-bearing) microcredential	A microcredential the NQA has registered on the NQF, with an assigned level and an assigned credit value. This is the only category of microcredential recognised under this Policy.

Non-formal learning	Structured learning outside the formal qualifications system, such as short courses, workplace training and continuing professional development.
Notional hours / workload	The estimated number of hours an average learner needs to achieve the stated outcomes, including study, practice and assessment time.
Part-qualification	A registered component of a qualification that carries its own NQF level and credit value but does not, on its own, amount to a full qualification. Several African qualifications authorities, including those of Kenya, Seychelles, South Africa and Angola, already register short learning in this way; Namibia's NQF-registered microcredential serves a comparable function.
Portability	The ability of a learner to present a microcredential, in a form that can be checked and understood, to any institution, employer or professional body.
Provider	Any institution, employer, professional body or partnership responsible for designing, delivering, assessing or certifying a microcredential.
Quality assurance	The systems a provider and a competent authority use to check that learning, assessment and certification meet an agreed standard.
Quality assured	Describes a provider, institution or issuing system whose internal and external quality assurance arrangements; covering the design, delivery, assessment, moderation, learner feedback and periodic review of its offerings; have been confirmed by a recognised competent authority (in Namibia, the NQA, the NCHE, the NTA, a professional body, or an equivalent foreign authority). A provider or system is not "quality assured" merely because it describes itself that way; the term requires an actual, checkable quality assurance decision by a named competent authority.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	A process of assessing learning a person already has, from any source – including an NQF-registered microcredential or a self-regulated one – against stated outcomes so that it can count towards a qualification or a job requirement.
Registry	The national database of NQF-registered microcredentials, including foreign microcredentials approved and registered by the NQA, their providers and their level and credit information, used to verify certificates.
Self-regulated microcredential	A short learning credential that has not been assigned an NQF level and credit value. It falls outside the scope of this Policy, and its design, quality, assessment and certification remain the responsibility of the provider, employer or industry body offering it, not of the NQA, NCHE or NTA.

Stackability	An approved arrangement allowing two or more NQF-registered microcredentials to combine towards a bigger award, such as a qualification or a unit standard.
Unit standard	A registered statement of learning outcomes, assessment criteria and credit value that can form part of a qualification, or stand alone, on the NQF.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) is the custodian of this National Policy on Microcredentials, developed in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture (MEIYSAC), the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and the Namibia Training Authority (NTA), and with technical support from GIZ.

This responsibility flows from the NQA's mandate under the Namibia Qualifications Authority Act, 1996 (Act No. 29 of 1996) to set up and administer a national qualifications framework, set occupational and curriculum standards, accredit providers and protect the credibility of Namibian qualifications.

Short, focused learning is not new in Namibia. What has been missing is a shared national system for describing it, checking its quality and telling learners and employers, honestly, what a given certificate actually stands for. This Policy fills that gap by drawing a single, clear line: a microcredential is nationally recognised only once the NQA has registered it on the NQF. Objective 1 and Part 5.6 explain this scope, and why it is deliberately narrow, in full.

The purpose of this Policy is to support the expansion of short, quality-assured learning opportunities for Namibian youth and adults, in a way that protects the integrity of the National Qualifications Framework rather than diluting it.

The Policy draws its direction from Namibia's Vision 2030, the Sixth National Development Plan (NDP6), the Namibian Constitution, and existing national legislation governing qualifications, higher education, and vocational education and training. It is aligned to continental and international instruments, including the African Union's Agenda 2063, the African Continental Qualifications Framework, the SADC Qualifications Framework, the Commonwealth of Learning's 2025 Commonwealth Microcredential Framework for Lifelong Learning and UNESCO's 2022 Recommendation on the recognition of microcredentials.

The Policy's overarching goal is for Namibia to have a trusted, coherent national system through which focused, short-cycle learning can be recognised, quality assured, digitally certified and, where appropriate, counted towards bigger qualifications; supporting lifelong learning, reskilling and Namibia's competitiveness in a fast-changing economy.

Seven policy objectives are pursued through this Policy, covering the protection of the NQF, quality assurance of microcredentials and providers, a national registration and review system, credit transfer and stacking, a national digital registry, equitable access aligned to national skills priorities, and governance and coordination among institutions.

Implementation will be led by the NQA, working with MEIYSAC, NCHE, NTA, professional bodies, providers, employers, trade unions and learners, through a National Microcredential Steering Committee. A phased, five-year implementation plan accompanies this Policy, and the Policy itself will be reviewed after five years or earlier as may be required.

1. INTRODUCTION

A microcredential is a certificate that proves a person has learned something specific; a skill, a piece of knowledge, or a competence; and has been properly assessed against clear outcomes to prove it. Microcredentials are usually shorter than a qualification, focused on one thing rather than a whole field of study, and often delivered flexibly, including online.

Around the world, and increasingly in Namibia, microcredentials are being used to upskill or reskill workers, to open doors for people who cannot commit to years of full-time study, and to let employers and training providers respond quickly when a new skill is suddenly in demand; as has happened with digital skills, artificial intelligence, renewable energy and cybersecurity. Universities, colleges, TVET centres, professional bodies, employers and online platforms are all producing them. The problem is that, until now, Namibia has had no shared national rules for what a microcredential must contain, how it should be assessed, who may issue one, or how a learner can prove that a certificate is genuine and means what it says.

This creates real risks. A learner may pay for a course that promises “national recognition” it does not have. An employer may not be able to tell a rigorous, properly assessed microcredential from a two-hour webinar with a certificate at the end. A university may have no consistent basis on which to give credit for prior short courses. Left unaddressed, this confusion could also spill over and weaken confidence in Namibia’s National Qualifications Framework itself, since some providers already market unassessed short courses using NQF-sounding language.

This Policy responds to that gap. It gives Namibia a common national system built around a single, clear boundary; NQF registration, explained fully under Objective 1 and Part 5.6; together with minimum standards for design and assessment, provider obligations, a national registry for verification, and rules for how NQF-registered microcredentials can support credit transfer, recognition of prior learning and stacking into bigger qualifications.

1.1. Background

Namibia has invested heavily, since Independence, in building a coherent National Qualifications Framework, anchored in the Namibia Qualifications Authority Act, 1996, and supported by the National Council for Higher Education and the Namibia Training Authority for higher education and TVET respectively. This system has given Namibian qualifications a level of trust that many countries in the region still lack.

At the same time, the nature of learning and work is changing quickly. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), the growth of remote and digital work, and Namibia’s own ambitions under NDP6 for a more diversified, knowledge-based and digitally capable economy all demand a workforce that can add new skills continuously, not only once, at the start of a career. Employers report needing workers who can be reskilled in hours, days, or months, not years. Young people, including many who cannot access or afford full qualifications, are already learning through short courses, online platforms and workplace training; often without any way to have that learning formally recognised.

Namibia is not alone in facing this. Countries and regions that have already built national microcredential systems; including Australia, the European Union, New Zealand, Ireland, Malaysia, South Africa, Mauritius, and, closer to home, the work done through the African Continental Qualifications Framework; have shown that a well-designed system can expand access to skills without weakening formal qualifications, provided quality assurance, assessment and honest certification are non-negotiable from the start. This Policy adapts those lessons to Namibian law, Namibian institutions and Namibian conditions.

1.2. The Current Situation in Namibia

At present, short courses, workplace training, continuing professional development and online learning are offered across Namibia by universities, colleges, TVET centres, professional bodies, employers, non-governmental organisations and international online platforms. Some of this provision is excellent, assessed rigorously and genuinely valued by employers. Much of it, however, sits entirely outside any quality assurance system.

A review of the current landscape, undertaken in preparing this Policy, points to a number of specific gaps:

- There is no shared national definition of what counts as a microcredential, so the term is used loosely, including for courses with no assessment at all.
- There is no consistent way to show how a short course relates to the National Qualifications Framework, leaving learners unable to tell whether a certificate carries any formal credit.
- Providers are not required to state clearly what learners will be able to do at the end of a course, making it hard for employers to judge the value of a certificate.
- There is no national digital registry through which an employer or another institution can verify that a certificate is genuine and that the provider is accredited.
- Universities, colleges, TVET providers and professional bodies apply different, uncoordinated rules for whether short courses count towards credit transfer, recognition of prior learning or continuing professional development, creating confusion for learners who move between institutions.
- Some providers already use words such as “Namibia”, “national” or references to the NQF in ways that could mislead learners about the status of what they are offering.

These gaps mean that Namibia is not yet capturing the full value of the short-course provision already happening in the country, and that learners and employers are exposed to real risk of confusion and, in some cases, false claims. This Policy is Namibia’s response.

2. RATIONALE

Globally, microcredentials have moved from a marginal experiment to a mainstream feature of national skills systems. UNESCO adopted a common international definition of microcredentials in 2022. The European Union issued a Council Recommendation on a common approach to microcredentials the same year. The Commonwealth of Learning published a Commonwealth Microcredential Framework for Lifelong Learning in 2025, intended to help all Commonwealth Member States, Namibia included, adopt systematic practices for offering and recognising quality-assured microcredentials. Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Malaysia and, on our own continent, Mauritius and the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF), have all published guidance or rules for how microcredentials should be designed, quality assured and recognised. Namibia has, until now, had no equivalent instrument.

The case for developing this Policy now rests on several converging pressures:

- Namibia's NDP6 and Vision 2030 both call for a more diversified, industrialised, knowledge-based economy, and for a workforce able to reskill quickly in priority areas such as digital skills, artificial intelligence, renewable energy and green hydrogen, agriculture value chains, mining, tourism and logistics.
- Youth unemployment remains high, and many young Namibians cannot access or complete full qualifications, but could be reached through shorter, well-designed and properly assessed learning pathways.
- Namibian employers, professional bodies and training providers are already producing short courses and workplace training at scale, but without a shared national system, this activity happens without quality assurance, comparability or public trust.
- The absence of national rules exposes learners to the risk of paying for courses that promise recognition, credit or employment outcomes they do not actually carry.
- Without a clear national system, there is a real risk that loosely used NQF-sounding language on unassessed short courses could, over time, weaken public confidence in Namibia's National Qualifications Framework itself.
- Namibia's regional and continental partners are moving in this direction, and alignment with the African Continental Qualifications Framework and the SADC Qualifications Framework will support the portability of Namibian microcredentials across the region.
- Namibians increasingly study, work and train abroad, and Namibia is home to migrants, returnees and online learners holding microcredentials issued elsewhere in the world; Namibia needs a clear, trustworthy way to recognise those that are genuinely quality assured, accredited and digitally verifiable, rather than leaving learners and employers to guess.

Namibia does not have to work this out alone. Mauritius offers a close, recent African example of how a national microcredential system can actually be built. Between 2023 and 2025, the Higher Education Commission of Mauritius ran national and institutional surveys, held consultations with

UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning, amended its Higher Education Act to give its regulator express power to approve and recognise microcredentials, and secured Cabinet approval for a national Blueprint on Microcredentials in Higher Education. Mauritius has gone further still by piloting industry-led microcredentials; short courses co-designed with employers so that training responds directly to skills gaps and youth unemployment. This Policy adapts the lessons of that experience, including recognising more than one model for how industry can be involved in designing and delivering a microcredential, as set out under Objective 2 in Part 5.

This Policy takes a deliberately narrow starting point on recognition, choosing to recognise only NQF-registered microcredentials for now rather than the broader, multi-tier approach some international instruments recommend. Objective 1 and Part 5.6 set out that choice, and the reasoning behind it, in full; the five-year review provided for in Part 6 will consider whether the scope should be widened once the core system is working well.

This Policy therefore does two things at once. It opens a legitimate, quality-assured space for short-cycle learning to be recognised, funded and used for reskilling or upskilling, credit transfer and recognition of prior learning. And it protects the credibility of the National Qualifications Framework, by making clear, in practice, that no claim of NQF registration, credit or national recognition may be made unless the NQA has actually registered the microcredential.

As with any policy, this document is not the final word. It will be reviewed, tested through pilots, and revised as Namibia gains experience in running a national microcredential system, in line with the review provisions set out in Part 6 of this Policy.

3. POLICY ALIGNMENT

This Policy is aligned to international, continental, regional and national instruments concerned with qualifications, skills development and lifelong learning.

3.1. International Frameworks

UNESCO Recommendation and Common Definition on Microcredentials (2022)

UNESCO has developed a common international definition of microcredentials, describing them as records of focused learning achievement, verified by a trusted issuer, based on assessed learning outcomes. This Policy adopts a Namibian version of that definition and applies UNESCO's emphasis on quality assurance, transparency and portability. UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning followed this with a further policy paper in 2023 setting out a blueprint for national policy development and action on microcredentials, which underlines the need for countries to build a functioning recognition ecosystem; spanning quality assurance, credit, and mobility across systems and borders; rather than treating recognition as a purely domestic question. This Policy's provision for recognising verifiable foreign microcredentials under Objective 3 responds directly to that recommendation.

OECD Public Policies for Effective Microcredential Learning (2023)

The OECD's Directorate for Education and Skills has published research on microcredentials aimed at OECD and partner countries, including an assessment of their uses and limitations and, separately, guidance on the public policy instruments needed for an effective national microcredential ecosystem: regulations and guidelines for providers, public funding mechanisms, quality assurance protocols, and information systems for transparency and accessibility. These four instruments map closely onto the structure of this Policy; provider eligibility and quality assurance under Objective 2, funding under Objective 6, and the national registry under Objective 5; and the OECD's self-assessment tool has informed the design of Namibia's own approach.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Namibia is a signatory to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Policy contributes directly to:

- Sustainable Development Goal 4: ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Sustainable Development Goal 5: promoting gender equality, by widening access to flexible, short-cycle learning for women and girls who face barriers to full-time study.
- Sustainable Development Goal 8: promoting sustained, inclusive economic growth and full and productive employment, by equipping workers with skills demanded by a changing labour market.

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Namibia's participation in the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme recognises skills development as central to productive employment and decent work. Microcredentials, properly quality assured, are a practical tool for closing skills gaps quickly, particularly for workers at risk of displacement by automation and technological change.

European Union Council Recommendation on Microcredentials (2022)

The Council of the European Union adopted a Recommendation on 16 June 2022 setting out a common European approach to microcredentials, built around a shared definition, a set of standard elements for describing a microcredential, and ten guiding principles for their design and issuance. This Policy draws directly on that instrument, adapted to Namibian institutions and law. The ten European principles: quality, transparency, relevance, valid assessment, support for flexible learning pathways, recognition, portability, a learner-centred approach, authenticity and access to information and guidance; are reflected throughout the guiding principles in Part 4 and the design standards in Part 5 of this Policy. Namibia has also adapted the European standard descriptor elements, which require every microcredential to record the identity of the learner, its title, the issuing country and awarding body, the date of issue, the learning outcomes, the notional workload, the level of the learning experience, the type of assessment used, the form of participation, and the type of quality assurance applied; into the national descriptor template required under Objective 2 of this Policy. European university alliances implementing this Recommendation, such as CHARM-EU, have since shown in practice how an accredited institution can act as an evaluating partner for training designed elsewhere and issue a verified, quality-assured, portable digital credential; an approach reflected in the industry-involvement models set out under Objective 2 of this Policy.

Commonwealth Microcredential Framework for Lifelong Learning (2025)

The Commonwealth of Learning adopted a Commonwealth Microcredential Framework for Lifelong Learning in August 2025, developed through consultation across Commonwealth Member States, of which Namibia is one. The Commonwealth Framework recommends that each Member State designate a single nodal agency to coordinate the adoption of microcredentials, that microcredentials be mapped to a national qualifications framework, that a national registry of microcredentials be developed, and that microcredential records carry standard metadata; including a unique identifier, the issuing country, the awarding body, the notional workload, the NQF level and, where relevant, the equivalent level under the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). This Policy designates the NQA as Namibia's nodal agency for microcredentials, and the descriptor and registry requirements under Objectives 2 and 5 draw on the Commonwealth Framework's metadata standard. Where the Commonwealth Framework recommends that Member States also quality assure microcredentials from non-accredited providers, this Policy takes a narrower approach for now, as explained in Part 2, limiting national recognition to microcredentials that the NQA has registered on the NQF.

3.2. Continental and Regional Frameworks

African Union Agenda 2063

Agenda 2063 calls for scaled-up investment in technical and vocational training, stronger links between training and industry, and the closing of skills gaps across the continent, particularly for youth and women. This Policy supports these aims by enabling faster, quality-assured skills recognition.

African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF)

The ACQF Handbook on Micro-Credentials, finalised in December 2024, sets out shared continental concepts for learning outcomes, quality assurance, workload and stackability, and documents how African qualifications authorities are already handling short learning. Several, including those of Kenya, Seychelles, South Africa and Angola; register short, less-than-full “part-qualifications” directly on their national qualifications frameworks, each with its own level and credit value. This Policy’s decision to recognise only NQF-registered microcredentials, with no separate middle category, follows that same continental practice, and is designed to keep Namibian microcredentials comparable with, and portable to, other African countries as the ACQF matures.

SADC Protocol on Education and Training and the SADC Qualifications Framework

The SADC Protocol on Education and Training encourages member states to strengthen coordination between industry and training providers and to harmonise qualifications towards regional comparability. This Policy’s national taxonomy and registry are designed with an eye to future alignment with the SADC Qualifications Framework.

3.3. National Frameworks

The Namibian Constitution is the supreme law of the country. Article 20 recognises the right to education, and Article 95 directs the State to promote the welfare of the people, including through access to education and skills development. This Policy is implemented consistently with these provisions, and with Article 10 on equality and Article 18 on administrative justice, particularly in relation to fair and transparent recognition decisions, as follows:

Instrument	Relevance to this Policy
Namibia Qualifications Authority Act, 1996 (Act No. 29 of 1996)	Establishes the NQA and the National Qualifications Framework; provides the legal basis for registering, classifying, accrediting and quality assuring qualifications and, under this Policy, NQF-related microcredentials.
Regulations Setting-up the National Qualifications Framework for Namibia	Sets out the ten NQF levels and the credit logic that this Policy applies when registering a microcredential on the NQF.
Regulations for the Accreditation of Persons, Institutions or Organisations (GN 124 of 2006)	Provides the accreditation basis that this Policy relies on for determining which providers may offer NQF-related microcredentials.
Basic Education Act, 2020 (Act No. 3 of 2020)	Provides the basic education policy foundation; microcredentials are designed to support, not replace, formal schooling, including through remediation and re-entry pathways.
Vocational Education and Training Act, 2008 (Act No. 1 of 2008)	Establishes the Namibia Training Authority and the National Training Fund; TVET, occupational and workplace microcredentials are quality assured in coordination with the NTA under this Act.
Higher Education Act, 2003 (Act No. 26 of 2003)	Governs the registration and quality assurance of higher education institutions; higher education microcredentials are quality assured in coordination with the NCHE under this Act.
Research, Science and Technology Act, 2004 (Act No. 23 of 2004)	Supports the promotion of research and innovation that this Policy draws on in developing microcredentials for priority technology and innovation fields.
Namibia's Vision 2030	Provides the long-term national goal of a knowledge-based, industrialised, globally competitive Namibia, which this Policy supports through faster, quality-assured skills recognition.
Sixth National Development Plan (NDP6, 2025/26–2029/30)	Sets out national priorities for human development, digital infrastructure, innovation and skills development that this Policy is designed to support directly.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Government sees microcredentials as a genuine opportunity to widen access to skills and to make Namibia's workforce more adaptable. That opportunity will only be realised if the public can trust what a microcredential certificate actually says. The following principles guide every part of this Policy:

- (a) **Integrity of the NQF:** nothing in this Policy may weaken the credibility of the National Qualifications Framework. NQF credit and NQF registration are protected and granted only through the NQA's established processes.
- (b) **Honesty:** a microcredential must be described, advertised and certified truthfully. No provider may claim national recognition, NQF credit, professional licensing or guaranteed employment unless that status has actually been approved.
- (c) **Quality:** no microcredential may be awarded unless the learner has been properly assessed against clearly stated learning outcomes.
- (d) **Proportionality:** the level of scrutiny applied to a microcredential should match its purpose and its risk. A workplace safety refresher does not need the same process as a credit-bearing award.
- (e) **Transparency:** every learner and employer must be able to see, in plain language, what a microcredential covers, how it was assessed, and what it does and does not entitle the holder to.
- (f) **Portability:** a genuine microcredential should be able to travel with the learner – between employers, between institutions, and, over time, across the region. Namibia should, in turn, be able to recognise genuine, verifiable microcredentials from quality-assured systems elsewhere in the world.
- (g) **Equity:** the system must be genuinely reachable by rural learners, women, youth, persons with disabilities and workers with limited data access, not only by those already well connected.
- (h) **Flexibility without compromise:** innovation in delivery: online, blended, workplace-based; is welcomed, provided assessment integrity and learner protection are never sacrificed for convenience.
- (i) **Coordination over duplication:** this Policy uses the existing mandates of the NQA, NCHE and NTA rather than creating new institutions, to avoid the overlap and confusion that has affected other parts of Namibia's education and training system.
- (j) **Accountability:** providers, competent authorities and the Steering Committee established under this Policy are each answerable for the parts of the system they are responsible for.

5. POLICY DIRECTION

5.1. Vision

A Namibia in which every person can build skills throughout their life, through short, trusted, properly assessed learning that is recognised for what it truly is; whether that is a stepping stone towards a full qualification, a workplace skill, or a professional requirement.

5.2. Mission

To give Namibia a single, coherent national system for designing, quality assuring, certifying and recognising microcredentials, so that learners, employers and institutions can always tell what a microcredential means and can trust it.

5.3. Policy Goal

This Policy shall ensure that Namibia has a trusted, coordinated national system for the recognition and quality assurance of microcredentials, that protects the integrity of the National Qualifications Framework while expanding access to lifelong learning, reskilling and upskilling in support of a knowledge-based, industrialised and globally competitive Namibia.

5.4. Policy Objectives

The following objectives are to be pursued through this Policy's implementation:

- (a) To recognise only NQF-registered microcredentials, protecting the integrity of the National Qualifications Framework, while leaving other short learning to provider and industry self-regulation;
- (b) To assure the quality of NQF-registered microcredentials and the providers who offer them;
- (c) To establish a single national system for registering, reviewing and withdrawing NQF-registered microcredentials, including those from quality-assured foreign systems;
- (d) To enable credit transfer, recognition of prior learning and the stacking of NQF-registered microcredentials into bigger qualifications;
- (e) To build a trusted national digital registry and certification system;
- (f) To widen equitable access to NQF-registered microcredentials and direct them towards Namibia's national skills priorities; and
- (g) To strengthen governance and coordination among the institutions responsible for microcredentials.

5.5. Policy Strategic Areas

In addressing the gaps described in Part 1 and meeting the objectives above, the following strategies and activities shall be pursued:

Policy Objective 1: To Recognise Only NQF-Registered Microcredentials, Protecting the Integrity of the NQF

Namibia's biggest risk is not that microcredentials will fail to catch on; it is that, without a clear and narrow definition of what counts as "recognised", the term will be used so loosely that it comes to mean nothing, and drags public confidence in the NQF down with it. This Policy answers that risk with a single, clear boundary: a microcredential is nationally recognised under this Policy if, and only if, the NQA has registered it on the NQF with an assigned level and an assigned credit value. Everything else is outside this Policy's scope.

Strategy 1: Recognise Only NQF-Registered Microcredentials

NQA shall:

- (a) Register a microcredential on the NQF, with an assigned level and credit value, only where the NQA has confirmed that its title, learning outcomes, assessment approach and quality assurance arrangements meet the requirements set out under Objective 2 of this Policy;
- (b) Treat an NQF-registered microcredential as a formally recognised, less-than-full component of the NQF; comparable to the "part-qualifications" already registered by qualifications authorities such as those of Kenya, Seychelles, South Africa and Angola, and to the way Ireland and Malta register microcredentials directly as minor or supplemental awards; rather than as a separate category alongside the NQF;
- (c) Confirm that a microcredential without both an assigned NQF level and an assigned NQF credit value is not an NQF-registered microcredential, is not recognised under this Policy, and may not be described as such;
- (d) Develop and publish a national taxonomy that classifies every NQF-registered microcredential by field, level, credit, delivery mode and intended use, and apply it consistently in the national registry, in provider catalogues and in funding decisions.

Strategy 2: Leave Non-NQF Short Learning to Provider and Industry Self-Regulation

Namibia will continue to have a large amount of valuable short learning that never seeks, or never achieves, NQF registration; in-house employer training, professional development webinars, community courses and the like. This Policy leaves that space alone rather than trying to regulate all of it at once. In this case, NQA shall:

- (a) Confirm that self-regulated, non-NQF short learning; including badges, certificates of attendance and in-house employer training that has not been mapped to an NQF level and credit; remains outside the scope of this Policy;
- (b) Leave the design, quality, assessment and certification of such offerings to the provider, the employer or the relevant industry or professional body, who remain fully responsible for their own quality and credibility;

- (c) Allow providers and industry bodies to develop their own codes of practice, badges or quality marks for this self-regulated space, provided these never claim NQF registration, an NQF level or NQF credit that has not actually been granted;
- (d) Encourage, without requiring, self-regulated providers to align their descriptors with the national taxonomy in Strategy 1, so that a future application for NQF registration – or a future recognition of prior learning assessment; is easier to support with evidence.

Strategy 3: Protect the Public from False Claims of NQF Recognition

NQA shall:

- (a) Prohibit any provider from using words such as “Namibia”, “National”, “NQF”, “NQA”, “NCHE” or “NTA” in a certificate, badge, name or advertisement in a way that implies NQF registration that has not actually been granted;
- (b) Establish and enforce a National Microcredential Quality Mark that only NQF-registered microcredentials may carry, and that the public can be taught to look for;
- (c) Take enforcement action, including public notices, correction orders and referral to the relevant regulator, against any provider found to be misrepresenting a self-regulated, non-NQF offering as an NQF-registered microcredential.

Policy Objective 2: To Assure the Quality of Microcredentials and the Providers Who Offer Them

A microcredential is only as good as the assessment behind it and the provider standing behind that assessment. This Policy sets minimum standards for both, scaled to the risk and purpose of each microcredential.

Strategy 1: Set Minimum Design and Descriptor Standards

NQA shall:

- (a) Require every microcredential applying for NQF registration to state, at minimum: a unique identifier once registered, its title and description, the country of the issuer, the awarding body, the notional workload in hours, the intended NQF level, the equivalent ISCED level where relevant, the learning outcomes and associated skills, the mode of learning, the type of assessment, the credit value sought, and the arrangements for quality assurance and moderation;
- (b) Publish a standard descriptor template, based on this national element list, that all providers must complete when applying for NQF registration, so that every microcredential can be compared on the same basis and the same data can populate the national registry described under Objective 5;
- (c) Require learning outcomes to be written in specific, measurable terms that are appropriate to the level being claimed.

Strategy 2: Set Provider Eligibility Requirements

NQA shall:

- (a) Require any provider seeking NQF registration for a microcredential to be accredited or registered with the NQA, or with the NCHE or NTA as applicable within their respective mandates;
- (b) Allow an employer, industry body or other non-accredited organisation to bring a microcredential towards NQF registration only in partnership with an accredited provider, who evaluates the training and takes responsibility for quality assurance, assessment integrity and certification, as set out further under Strategy 4 below;
- (c) Set additional conditions for online and foreign providers seeking NQF registration, covering learner identity verification, data protection, assessment integrity and relevance to the Namibian context.

Strategy 3: Set Assessment and Moderation Requirements

NQA shall:

- (a) Require that no microcredential is issued unless the learner has actually been assessed, with valid evidence, against the stated learning outcomes;
- (b) Require moderation; internal or external, depending on risk; for all credit-bearing, NQF-registered and professionally linked microcredentials;
- (c) Set a minimum moderation sample as indicative guidance; at least 10% of assessment decisions for a microcredential, or at least one decision where a cohort has ten learners or fewer; which providers may exceed where risk warrants it;
- (d) Require providers to verify learner identity and the authenticity of submitted evidence, with particular attention to online assessment and workplace-based assessment.

Strategy 4: Recognise Different Models for Industry Involvement in Designing and Delivering Microcredentials

Employers know which skills they need before any training provider does. This Policy recognises three models through which industry can be involved in a microcredential, each with a different balance of ownership between the employer and the accredited provider. All three remain subject to the quality assurance, assessment and provider eligibility requirements set out above, and none of them is recognised under this Policy unless it results in NQF registration.

- (a) Employer-owned model: the employer designs the curriculum, delivers the training and carries out the assessment, drawing on training it already runs in-house; an accredited higher education institution, TVET provider or professional body then evaluates that completed training and maps it to the appropriate NQF level and credit value, and the NQA registers it as a recognised microcredential. Because the accredited partner is only involved after delivery in this model, it must be independent of the employer; it may not be owned or controlled by

the employer, nor share a financial interest in the training being approved; and the NQA shall publish the methodology and criteria this post-delivery evaluation must follow;

- (b) Co-designed and co-delivered model: the curriculum is designed jointly by the accredited provider and the employer or sector body, with delivery shared between them; typically the provider covering underpinning theory and the employer contributing live projects, tools, platforms or mentoring; and the resulting NQF-registered microcredential is co-branded to reflect both partners. A co-branded microcredential remains the accredited provider's credential, carrying the employer's branding alongside it; it is distinct from a joint award made jointly by two or more accredited bodies, which this Policy does not yet provide for;
- (c) Provider-led model with structured industry input: the accredited provider leads the design, delivery and certification of the microcredential, seeking NQF registration in its own right, while industry contributes through advisory boards, project briefs, case studies or work placements, without co-branding or shared ownership of the credential itself.

If an employer or accredited provider chooses not to pursue NQF registration for training built under any of these three models, the resulting credential remains a legitimate, self-regulated microcredential under Objective 1, Strategy 2; it is simply not recognised under this Policy. A provider proposing an employer-owned or co-designed microcredential that is intended for NQF registration must show how each of the following has been addressed before the NQA will register it:

- (a) Funding: who is paying for the design, delivery and assessment, and whether sector training fund support, an employer co-funding arrangement or a learner-facing subsidy is involved;
- (b) Quality assurance: how the accredited partner's internal quality assurance extends to cover workplace-based delivery and assessment carried out by the employer;
- (c) Regulatory fit: the intended NQF level and credit value, and which authority; the NQA, the NCHE or the NTA; is expected to register the microcredential;
- (d) Recognition and portability: whether other employers or institutions are likely to accept the microcredential, so that it is genuinely useful to the learner beyond the employer who provided it;
- (e) Capacity: whether both the employer and the accredited partner actually have the capacity to design, deliver, assess, moderate and keep the microcredential up to date; and
- (f) Learner needs: whether the arrangement is flexible, affordable and genuinely valuable to the learner's career, and not simply a convenience for the employer.

Policy Objective 3: To Establish a Single National System for Registering, Reviewing and Withdrawing NQF-Registered Microcredentials, Including Those from Quality-Assured Foreign Systems

Providers need one clear door to knock on, not several conflicting processes. This Policy builds a single, coordinated national system for approving and maintaining NQF registration.

A single application can, in practice, need sign-off from up to four institutions; the NQA, and depending on the microcredential, the NCHE, the NTA or a professional body; since the NQA registers in concurrence with the NCHE for higher education content and in coordination with the NTA for TVET content. This mirrors overlapping-mandate challenges Namibia has already faced elsewhere in its education and training system, and the National Microcredential Steering Committee established under Objective 7 is specifically tasked with managing this coordination so that a provider still experiences the single application process in Strategy 1 below as genuinely single, rather than as four separate approvals in sequence.

Strategy 1: Build a Single Application and Approval Process

NQA shall:

- (a) Develop a standard national application form and evidence checklist for microcredential registration on the NQF;
- (b) Be the lead authority for registering microcredentials on the NQF, working with the NCHE on higher education provision and the NTA on TVET, occupational and workplace provision;
- (c) Set clear service standards for how long a decision on an application should take, and publish these standards.

Strategy 2: Review Microcredentials Regularly

Microcredential providers shall:

- (a) Review every NQF-registered microcredential at least once every three years, or sooner where there is cause for concern; shorter than the five-year cycle used for full qualifications, reflecting how quickly skills needs can change and consistent with the three-year periodic review cycle used for microcredentials in Mauritius;
- (b) Base every review on continued relevance, learner demand, employer feedback, completion data, assessment validity and currency of content;
- (c) Protect learners already enrolled when a microcredential is revised, withdrawn or replaced, through teach-out, transfer or refund arrangements.

Strategy 3: Provide a Fair Appeal Process

This Policy makes provision for NQA to:

- (a) Give a provider affected by a refusal, withdrawal or condition on NQF registration the right to appeal;
- (b) Set clear time limits; no more than 14 days from the date of the decision notice; and clear procedures for lodging an appeal, with appeals against NQA decisions considered by an independent panel of the NQA Council, rather than by the Minister. This departs from the NQA's current practice for full qualifications and institutions, where the Minister decides such appeals, and shall be tested with stakeholders during consultation on this Policy before it is finalised;
- (c) Publish appeal outcomes so that decisions are seen to be consistent and fair.

Strategy 4: Recognise Microcredentials from Quality-Assured Foreign Systems

Namibians study, work and train abroad, and Namibia is home to migrants, returnees and online learners who hold microcredentials issued outside the country. This Policy gives the NQA a clear way to assess a genuine foreign microcredential, using the same evaluation function the NQA already exercises for foreign qualifications generally. Therefore, this Policy shall:

- (a) Allow a learner or provider to apply to the NQA for evaluation of a microcredential issued by a foreign education or training system, following the same process the NQA already uses to evaluate foreign qualifications;
- (b) Require that a foreign microcredential considered for evaluation was issued by a provider, institution or platform that is itself quality assured, registered or accredited by a recognised national, regional or international quality assurance body in its own jurisdiction, and require the applicant to provide evidence of that accreditation and of the awarding body's legal status in its home jurisdiction; the NQA shall publish separate technical guidelines on how it assesses the rigour of a foreign quality assurance system where this is not already established through an existing NQA recognition arrangement;
- (c) Require that the foreign microcredential is independently and digitally verifiable – for example through a digital signature, a blockchain hash, or a verifiable URL maintained by the issuing body or a recognised digital credentialing platform; so that the NQA can confirm it is genuine before assessing it further;
- (d) Where the NQA is satisfied that a foreign microcredential meets these requirements and is comparable in outcomes, level and workload to a Namibian NQF-registered microcredential, issue the holder with a statement of comparability confirming the equivalent NQF level and credit value, valid for three years and renewable on reapplication, for the holder's own use in applications for credit transfer, recognition of prior learning or employment. Following successful evaluation, the NQA shall register the foreign microcredential on the NQF and include it in the national registry established under Objective 5, recording the issuing country, awarding body, assigned NQF level and credit value, and registration status. Microcredentials offered directly by international online platforms shall be subject to the same evaluation and registration requirements;
- (e) Where a foreign microcredential does not meet these requirements, or the holder does not seek evaluation, treat it as a self-regulated, non-NQF credential in Namibia, in the same way as any other short learning outside the scope of this Policy;
- (f) Give priority in processing to foreign microcredentials in Namibia's national priority skills areas identified under Objective 6, and to those issued by providers with which the NQA, the NCHE or the NTA already has a recognition or partnership arrangement.

Policy Objective 4: To Enable Credit Transfer, Recognition of Prior Learning and the Stacking of Microcredentials into Bigger Awards

Microcredentials are most valuable when they can add up to something bigger; a qualification, a professional requirement, or a recognised occupational pathway; provided this only happens where it has genuinely been agreed and approved.

Strategy 1: Set Clear Rules for Credit Accumulation and Transfer

This Policy shall:

- (a) Allow NQF credit gained through a microcredential to count towards a qualification only where the receiving institution has approved this under its own credit transfer rules;
- (b) Require credit transfer decisions to consider learning outcomes, level, credit value, currency and relevance, not simply the existence of a certificate;
- (c) Keep final decisions on admission, exemption and credit transfer with the receiving institution, subject to this Policy and any conditions the competent authority sets.

Strategy 2: Use Microcredentials to Support Recognition of Prior Learning

This Policy shall:

- (a) Allow both NQF-registered microcredentials and evidence from self-regulated, non-NQF short learning to serve as evidence in RPL assessments;
- (b) Require RPL decisions to rest on the quality and relevance of the underlying evidence, not on whether it happens to be an NQF-registered microcredential;
- (c) Build RPL capacity within TVET centres, universities and professional bodies so that microcredential evidence, whether NQF-registered or self-regulated, can actually be used well.

Strategy 3: Enable Microcredentials to Stack into Larger Awards

This Policy shall:

- (a) Allow microcredentials to combine into unit standards, qualifications, continuing professional development points or occupational pathways, where an approved stacking arrangement exists;
- (b) Require every stackable pathway to state clearly how many microcredentials are required, which are compulsory, which are optional, and the maximum period allowed to complete the stack;
- (c) Prohibit any provider from implying that its microcredentials stack into a qualification unless that pathway has actually been approved.

Policy Objective 5: To Build a Trusted National Digital Registry and Certification System

A certificate is only useful if someone else can check it. This Policy commits Namibia to building a national digital system that makes verification of NQF-registered microcredentials instant and reliable.

Strategy 1: Establish a National Microcredential Registry

NQA shall:

- (a) Build a public, searchable registry of every NQF-registered microcredential issued by a Namibian provider, its provider, its NQF level and credit value, and its current status; active, under review or withdrawn. Include foreign microcredentials evaluated and registered by the NQA under Objective 3, Strategy 4, with their issuing country, awarding body, assigned NQF level and credit value, and current registration status;
- (b) Record, for each entry, the standard metadata recommended by the Commonwealth Microcredential Framework for Lifelong Learning: a unique microcredential identifier, a description, the country of the issuer, the awarding body, the notional workload, the equivalent ISCED level, the learning outcomes, prerequisites, the mode of learning, the type of assessment and, where relevant, whether the microcredential is stand-alone or stackable towards another award;
- (c) Use the registry to allow employers, institutions and the public to verify a certificate immediately, without having to contact the provider directly;
- (d) Use an interim public listing as a first step, while the full digital registry is built and tested.

Strategy 2: Set Digital Credentialing Standards

This Policy shall:

- (a) Require digital certificates to carry secure verification features, such as a unique credential number, a QR code, or a digital signature;
- (b) Ensure learners own their digital credentials and can share them freely with any employer, institution or professional body;
- (c) Protect the personal data held in the registry, disclosing only the information necessary for verification and accountability.

Strategy 3: Set Certification Content Standards

This Policy shall:

- (a) Prescribe the minimum information every certificate must show, including its NQF level and credit value and a unique credential identifier that can be checked against the registry;
- (b) Prohibit misleading language on certificates, such as “degree equivalent”, “nationally accredited” or “guaranteed employment”, unless that status has actually been approved;
- (c) Prevent certificates of attendance or participation from being issued in a form that could be confused with an NQF-registered microcredential.

Strategy 4: Set Minimum Digital Infrastructure Requirements for Providers

A national registry and a trustworthy digital certificate are only as good as the systems providers use to feed them. This Policy requires every provider of an NQF-registered microcredential to have the following in place, proportionate to its size and delivery mode:

- (a) A secure learner-record system able to capture and store the mandatory descriptor and metadata fields required under Objective 2, and able to export that data in the format the national registry requires;
- (b) The ability to issue a digital certificate carrying the security features required under Strategy 2 above; a unique credential identifier, a QR code or equivalent, and a digital signature or comparable authentication method;
- (c) A reliable way to verify a learner's identity at enrolment and during assessment, particularly for online and blended delivery, with a record kept of how that verification was done;
- (d) Data protection and cybersecurity safeguards that meet Namibia's applicable data protection requirements, so learner data held on provider systems is not exposed, lost or altered;
- (e) An arrangement for records to remain accessible and verifiable if the provider closes or stops offering microcredentials; for example, by lodging a copy of each certified learner record with the NQA at the point of registration, so the national registry can still confirm a credential after the issuing provider no longer exists;
- (f) Low-bandwidth or offline-capable options for issuing and verifying certificates, consistent with the accessibility requirements under Objective 6, so a lack of continuous internet access does not by itself prevent a learner from receiving or proving a microcredential.

The NQA shall publish a detailed technical and interoperability standard for connecting to the national registry within the first year of implementing this Policy. Smaller and community-based providers may meet these requirements in partnership with an accredited institution that already has the necessary infrastructure, consistent with the industry-involvement models under Objective 2.

Policy Objective 6: To Widen Equitable Access to Microcredentials and Direct Them Towards Namibia's National Skills Priorities

Microcredentials will only close Namibia's skills gaps if they reach the people who need them most, and if they are steered towards the skills the country actually needs.

Strategy 1: Make Microcredentials Affordable and Accessible

Microcredential providers shall be required to:

- (a) Design funding instruments – including learner subsidies, employer co-funding, sector training fund support and voucher schemes – for NQF-registered microcredentials in priority areas, since public funds should back only microcredentials that have actually been quality assured and registered;

- (b) Require providers of NQF-registered microcredentials to offer low-bandwidth, mobile-friendly and flexible delivery options, so that learners without reliable internet access are not excluded;
- (c) Make reasonable arrangements for learners with disabilities and for learners in rural and remote areas.

Strategy 2: Direct Microcredentials Towards National Priority Skills

NQA shall:

- (a) Publish an annual list of national priority skills areas, developed with employers, sector bodies and labour market data, covering fields such as digital skills, artificial intelligence literacy, cybersecurity, renewable energy and green hydrogen, agriculture value chains, mining, tourism, logistics and public sector capability;
- (b) Encourage providers to develop microcredentials in these priority areas, without ever lowering the quality assurance requirements that apply to any other microcredential;
- (c) Monitor enrolment, completion and employment outcomes for women, youth, persons with disabilities and rural learners, so that equity gaps can be identified and addressed.

Policy Objective 7: To Strengthen Governance and Coordination Among the Institutions Responsible for Microcredentials

None of the above will work if institutions pull in different directions. This Policy sets out who is responsible for what, and creates a standing forum to keep the system coherent as it grows.

Strategy 1: Establish Clear Institutional Roles

- (a) NQA shall serve as Namibia's nodal agency for microcredentials, responsible for NQF alignment, the national taxonomy, national registration and the national registry;
- (b) NCHE's role shall be in quality assuring NQF-registered microcredentials offered by higher education institutions, and the NTA's role shall be in quality assuring NQF-registered TVET, occupational and workplace microcredentials, both operating within the national system established by this Policy;
- (c) The role of professional bodies and regulators shall be in recognising NQF-registered microcredentials linked to professional licensing or continuing professional development.

Strategy 2: Establish a National Microcredential Steering Committee

This Policy shall:

- (a) Establish a Steering Committee bringing together MEIYSAC, the NQA, the NCHE, the NTA, higher education and TVET providers, employers, professional bodies and learner representatives;
- (b) Task the Committee with advising on policy coherence, the national taxonomy, the digital registry, funding, and pilot microcredential programmes;
- (c) Provide a secretariat function for the Committee through the NQA.

Strategy 3: Report and Learn

NQA shall:

- (a) Publish an annual national microcredential report covering registrations, enrolments, completions, funding and employment outcomes;
- (b) Review this Policy in full at least once every five years or earlier as may be required;
- (c) Use monitoring findings to improve quality assurance, funding and recognition arrangements over time.

5.6. Scope of this Policy and Alignment to the NQF

This Policy recognises one category of microcredential. The table below sets out that boundary clearly, alongside the self-regulated short learning that sits outside it.

Category	What it Means
NQF-registered microcredential (within scope of this Policy)	Registered by the NQA, with an assigned NQF level and an assigned NQF credit value, based on assessed learning outcomes and quality assurance by an accredited provider. May support credit accumulation, credit transfer, RPL and stacking, subject to approved rules. May carry the National Microcredential Quality Mark and appears in the national registry.
Self-regulated, non-NQF short learning (outside the scope of this Policy)	Any short course, badge, certificate or workplace training that has not been assigned an NQF level and credit value. Remains entirely legitimate but is quality assured, assessed and certified at the discretion of the provider, employer or industry body offering it. May not use the National Microcredential Quality Mark or claim NQF, NQA, NCHE, NTA or national recognition it has not been granted.

This is a narrower design than some international instruments recommend. The Commonwealth Microcredential Framework for Lifelong Learning and the ACQF Handbook both encourage countries to quality assure microcredentials from non-accredited providers as well, so as to build trust across a wider range of short learning from the outset. Namibia has chosen, for now, to start with a single, unambiguous category, i.e. NQF-registered microcredentials, and to leave everything else to self-regulation, for the reasons explained in Part 2. This mirrors how Ireland registers microcredentials as “minor, supplemental or special purpose awards” and Malta as “awards” directly within their own qualifications frameworks, and how New Zealand’s national regulator registers and annually reviews microcredentials on its register, rather than operating a separate referencing tier.

Credit on the NQF continues to be calculated using Namibia’s existing rule of one credit for every ten notional hours of learning, unless a competent authority prescribes a different calculation for a

specific regulated context. NQF levels for microcredentials range, as with all NQF qualifications, from Level 1 (the least complex) to Level 10 (the most complex), following the same level descriptors used for the rest of the Framework. A microcredential is placed at a level based on the complexity of what it teaches, not on how long it takes to complete; so a short but demanding microcredential can sit at a higher level than a longer but simpler one. The credit value a single microcredential may carry shall be less than 40 credits (400 notional hours) as already established for short courses as per NQF requirements.

NQF-registered microcredentials are further classified in the national taxonomy by field, subfield and domain, provider type, delivery mode, target learner group and intended use, so that the registry, funding decisions and public information remain consistent across the whole system.

5.7. Microcredentials and Unit Standards

Namibia already has an established way to register small, stand-alone units of learning on the NQF: the unit standard, developed and registered by the NTA and the NQA under the Vocational Education and Training Act, 2008, and used to build TVET and occupational qualifications. An NQF-registered microcredential is not a separate system alongside the unit standard; in most cases it is the same underlying instrument, certified in a form suited to a lifelong learner rather than a student on a formal programme. A microcredential may draw directly on one or more unit standards, or may be offered as standalone modules derived from existing institutional programmes, but the two are not interchangeable: a microcredential is a certification pathway aimed at an individual lifelong learner, while the unit standard remains the underlying registrable unit of learning within the formal qualifications structure, and only the unit standard, not the microcredential built on it, can itself be assembled into a full qualification by a training provider.

- (a) Where an existing registered unit standard already covers the learning outcomes a provider wants to certify, the provider must apply to have the microcredential recognised against that unit standard, or a small cluster of related unit standards, rather than seeking a new, separate registration for the same content;
- (b) Where no suitable unit standard exists, a provider may apply for a new microcredential to be registered on the NQF; if approved, the NQA; in concurrence with the NCHE for higher education content, or in coordination with the NTA for TVET and occupational content – shall register it using the same learning outcome, level and credit rules that apply to a unit standard, so that it can, in future, also serve as or contribute to one;
- (c) A microcredential may bundle more than one unit standard into a single, coherently named credential, provided the combined credit value and level are calculated and confirmed by the NQA;
- (d) Credit earned through an NQF-registered microcredential, and credit earned through a unit standard, draw on the same national credit record, so that a learner accumulating microcredentials is, in NQF terms, accumulating unit standard credit that counts towards a qualification in the same way.

6. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

This Policy will only work if every institution with a stake in microcredentials understands its role and plays it consistently. Implementation is structured around clear institutional roles, existing legal mandates, dedicated resourcing, ongoing monitoring, and active communication with the public.

6.1. Institutional Arrangements

Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture (MEIYSAC)

MEIYSAC is the political and policy custodian of this Policy. It provides policy direction, mobilises resources through the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, coordinates with other ministries and links this Policy to NDP6 and Vision 2030 priorities. MEIYSAC chairs the National Microcredential Steering Committee established under this Policy.

Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA)

The NQA is Namibia's nodal agency for microcredentials and administers this Policy on a day-to-day basis. It leads on NQF alignment, maintains the national taxonomy, decides applications for NQF registration of microcredentials, evaluates foreign microcredentials for comparability under Objective 3 of this Policy and, following successful evaluation, registers them on the NQF and includes them in the national registry, operates the national registry, administers and enforces the National Microcredential Quality Mark, and provides the secretariat for the Steering Committee. Where a decision of the NQA is appealed, the appeal is decided by an independent panel of the NQA Council, a departure from current practice for full qualifications that is flagged for stakeholder consultation, as explained under Objective 3.

The NQA shall also publish, as subsidiary technical guidance rather than as part of this Policy itself, the detailed criteria and standards needed to operationalise the term "quality assured" wherever it is used in this Policy; for domestic providers, for the post-delivery evaluation required under the employer-owned model in Objective 2, and for assessing foreign issuing systems under Objective 3. The Steering Committee shall confirm whether this guidance is developed as part of the NQA's own regulations or as separate published guidelines, and either way it shall be ready before the national descriptor standard is finalised.

National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)

The NCHE provides quality assurance leadership for NQF-registered microcredentials offered by higher education institutions, working in concurrence with the NQA so that these microcredentials meet both institutional quality standards and the national NQF registration requirements set out in this Policy.

Namibia Training Authority (NTA)

The NTA provides quality assurance leadership for NQF-registered TVET, occupational and workplace-based microcredentials, working in coordination with the NQA. The NTA also considers

how the National Training Fund can support the funding of TVET-related microcredentials, and how apprenticeship and work-integrated learning arrangements can incorporate microcredentials.

Professional Bodies and Regulators

Professional bodies and regulators determine whether and how an NQF-registered microcredential may count towards continuing professional development, licensing renewal or regulated practice within their own professions. They are consulted before any microcredential claiming professional recognition is registered.

Education and Training Providers

Public and private higher education institutions, TVET centres, professional training providers, online providers and approved partnerships are responsible for the actual design, delivery, assessment, certification and record-keeping of microcredentials, and for seeking NQF registration with the competent authority where they want a microcredential to be nationally recognised. Providers remain free to offer self-regulated, non-NQF short learning outside this Policy's scope, on their own responsibility.

Employers

Employers state their current and future skills needs, participate in the design and validation of priority microcredentials, contribute to funding through co-funding and sector training arrangements, and nominate technical representatives to serve on relevant industry skills committees.

Trade Unions

Trade unions represent the interests of workers in the design and rollout of workplace-linked microcredentials, encourage members to use microcredentials to build recognised skills, and contribute to discussions on funding and access for employed learners.

Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)

The OPM considers how microcredentials can support public service training, internship programmes and continuing professional development for public servants, in line with existing human resource management policy.

Namibia Students Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF)

NSFAF considers, in consultation with MEIYSAC and the NQA, whether and how existing or new financial assistance instruments could be extended to learners undertaking priority microcredentials.

Learners

Learners are entitled to clear, honest information about any microcredential before enrolling, and are encouraged to check the national registry before paying for a course that claims national or NQF recognition.

Development Partners

Development partners, including GIZ, may continue to provide technical and financial support for the design, piloting and rollout of the national microcredential system, particularly the digital registry and provider capacity building.

6.2. Legal and Regulatory Arrangements

This Policy operates within Namibia's existing legal framework. It does not create a new qualifications framework, and it does not transfer any statutory power away from the NQA, the NCHE, the NTA, a professional body or any other regulator established by law. Where implementation shows that an amendment to the Namibia Qualifications Authority Act, 1996, its regulations, or another applicable Act is needed; for example, to give explicit legal standing to the National Microcredential Quality Mark or to digital credentialing, MEIYSAC and the NQA shall initiate the necessary process for amendment through the appropriate parliamentary and regulatory procedures.

The move of the microcredential appeal route to an independent panel of the NQA Council, rather than the Minister, is one such amendment: it departs from the Namibia Qualifications Authority Act's current appeal arrangements for full qualifications and institutions, and cannot take legal effect until the necessary amendment is made. It is treated in this Policy as a recommendation to be tested with stakeholders, not as a settled rule, for that reason. More broadly, any wider changes to national legislation or institutional rules needed to fully integrate microcredentials; including at institutional level; are expected to extend beyond this Policy's initial five-year implementation window, and are treated as a long-term, ongoing activity rather than a precondition for launching the system described here.

Until such amendments are made, the NQF registration requirements, quality assurance requirements, registry and protected terms established under this Policy shall be given effect through the NQA's existing statutory powers to accredit providers, register qualifications and administer the National Qualifications Framework.

6.3. Resource Mobilisation

The NQA, working with MEIYSAC, NCHE, and NTA shall mobilise the financial resources needed to implement this Policy, including the development of the national registry, the national taxonomy, provider capacity building and public awareness. Funds shall be sought through the corresponding Medium-Term Expenditure Framework period, the National Training Fund for TVET-related activity, employer co-funding, development partner support, and, where appropriate, learner-facing instruments such as vouchers or subsidies for priority microcredentials.

6.4. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Reporting

A five-year Implementation Action Plan accompanies this Policy, setting out the specific activities, targets, indicators, timeframes, budgets and responsible institutions needed to give effect to the strategies in Part 5. The National Microcredential Steering Committee shall report on progress at least twice a year, in line with standard Cabinet reporting practice for national policies, and the NQA

shall publish an annual national microcredential report covering registrations, enrolments, completions, funding and outcomes. This Policy itself shall be reviewed in full no later than five years after adoption.

6.5. Advocacy and Dissemination (Communication Strategy)

On adoption, this Policy shall be launched through a national awareness campaign in both electronic and print media, in Namibia's local languages, to reach providers, employers, professional bodies, learners and the general public. Hard copies shall be provided to relevant ministries, offices and agencies at central, regional and constituency level, and to academic institutions, public libraries, employer federations and trade unions. This Policy shall also be made freely available for download on the websites of MEIYSAC, the NQA, the NCHE and the NTA.

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