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1.0.   Introduction to the Seychelles Qualifications Authority

This is the eleventh annual report of the Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA). The SQA was established at the start of 2006 through the enactment, in November 2005, of the Qualifications Authority Act. The Authority is mandated to develop and implement a National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The NQF formalises the requirement for both public and private education and training providers throughout the country to deliver quality-assured, nationally recognised, consistent standards and qualifications.

The NQF aims to give recognition to learning programmes while ensuring that occupational qualifications at any given level are of comparable standard. Through the NQF, Seychelles Qualifications Authority promotes and regulates the development of qualifications based on unit standards which are linked to workplace and society requirements.

The SQA is also committed to promoting a more coherent, integrated approach to education and training: Increased articulation of qualifications and mobility of learners within the system is central to the achievement of this goal – which also requires that recognition and credit are given for knowledge and skills previously acquired.

2.0. The Legal Basis of the Work of the SQA

As per the Act (2005) which established the SQA, the main functions of the Authority are as follows:

(a) to formulate and implement a national qualifications framework;

(b) to keep and maintain a register of recognized qualifications;

(c) to promote the quality and standards of education and training through a system of accreditation, validation and quality assurance;

(d) to review the policies and criteria on which the framework of qualifications is based;

(e) to establish criteria for, and monitor the process of recognition of competencies outside formal education and training;

(f) to evaluate and establish equivalence of foreign qualifications;

(g) to facilitate learners' access to and progression within the national education and training system;

(h) to maintain a database on all providers of education and training;

(i) to promote international recognition of local qualifications;

(j) to ensure the protection of the interests of learners; and

(k) to advise the Minister on matters relating to the functions of the Authority at the Minister's request or otherwise.

Overall, the Authority is mandated to develop and implement a National Qualifications Framework. The framework aims to achieve the following:

- To ensure comprehensiveness in the recognition of learning and qualifications attained in the country, while ensuring parity for occupational qualifications

- To promote and regulate the development of qualifications based on unit standards which are linked to the workplace and society requirements.

- To promote a more integrated approach to education and training, increased articulation of qualifications, and mobility of learners within a coherent and integrated learning system considering the need for both national and international portability.

The legal basis of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is the Regulations of the National Qualifications Framework which was signed into law by the Minister for Education in December 2008, becoming operative in January 2009. The regulations legally define the scope of action for the SQA. It has been on the basis of the regulations that the SQA has been able, since 2009, to implement important elements of the NQF such as standards setting, evaluation of existing qualifications, recognition of prior learning (RPL), programme validation, institutional audits, as well as evaluation/recognition of foreign qualifications.

3.0.   The SQA's Overall Strategic Direction

3.1.   The SQA's Vision
A credible, valued and efficient organization which, as custodian of a high quality national qualifications framework puts the needs of learners at the centre of an open, responsive and integrated qualifications system which recognizes their competencies and enables them to develop to their fullest potential.

3.2.   The SQA's Mission
To develop and enhance a national qualifications framework that elevates and recognizes competencies whilst promoting quality education and training.

3.3.   The SQA's Strategic Priorities
The Authority's Strategic Plan of 2014 to 2016 focuses on the following priority areas.

1.   Continuing development of the National Qualifications Framework;
2.   Enhancing the institutional capacity of the SQA;
3.   Supporting education and training providers for the purpose of meeting standards of the National Qualifications Framework;
4.   Building partnerships for the effective implementation of the National Qualifications Framework.

4.0.   The SQA and its Administration

The SQA is headed by a Board and the appointment of the first Board took effect on the 1st February 2006. Appointment is for a period of three years and the second Board was appointed on the 1st of February 2009 followed by the third on the 1st February 2012. It is the role of the Board heading the SQA to oversee the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework. The SQA Secretariat headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) gives effect to the decisions taken at Board level.

The appointment of the fourth SQA Board took effect on the 1st February 2015, the following being the members:

    Mr. Selby Dora – Chairperson
    Mr. Jean-Michel Domingue – Vice Chairperson
    Ms Françoise Mein
    Mrs Ivonia Richardson
    Mrs Elva Gedeon
    Mr. Steve Monnaie

Board membership showed continuity in that more than half of its members were given a second, third or fourth mandate. Selby Dora remained as Chairperson with Jean-Michel Domingue replacing Christian Cafrine as Vice Chairperson. Benjamin Choppy was appointed for a fourth mandate while Ivonia Richardson was serving a third one. Elva Gedeon, Françoise Mein and Jean-Michel Domingue were serving a second mandate.

The fourth Board included Steve Monnaie from Ministry of Labour, Employment & Human Resource Development. The SQA Act provides for an ex-officio Executive Director (Fiona Ernesta) who was also Secretary to the Board.

5.0.   Administrative Developments over 2015

5.1.   Staffing
At the start of the year the SQA continued to function without two Principal Quality Assurance Officers. The validation and accreditation related duties of the two posts continued to be undertaken by the CEO, duties which the latter had assumed since July 2013. It was in March that the SQA finally managed to recruit for the post of Principal Quality Assurance Officer (Accreditation). However, the CEO continued to undertake the duties and responsibilities of the Principal Quality Assurance Officer (Validation) as the post remained unfunded. This has been an enormous challenge as the CEO has also had own duties and responsibilities to attend to.

Following the resignation of the Housekeeper on 25th July 2015 a new Housekeeper was recruited from the Cleaners Cooperative and she started employment on the 1st of August 2015. Ms Edwina

Payet was appointed as Private Secretary to the CEO on 9th February 2015 following the resignation of the previous Private Secretary in September 2014.

With the transfer of the Administrative Officer to the Seychelles Maritime Academy on 4th February 2015, the SQA functioned with the post remaining vacant throughout the year. The post was advertised on three separate occasions but a suitable person could not be identified. As a result, the Authority had to enlist the assistance of the outgoing Administrative Officer part-time outside working hours. The Private Secretary worked alongside the part-time Administrative Officer. She has been earmarked for internal transfer to the post early in 2016, the logic being that it would be easier to recruit for the Private Secretary post than that for Administrative Officer post.

By the end of 2015, the SQA therefore had six (6) full time staff members on its payroll, and a full time Housekeeper employed by the Cleaners Cooperative. The Authority was short of two (2) full-time staff members.

5.2. Social Activities

On the occasion of Labour Day the SQA organized a small lunch for staff with a contribution from the Ministry of Finance and Trade Investment (MoFTI).

For the end of year activity the SQA organized a small lunch with a small contribution from the MoFTI together with a contribution from staff members.

6.0. Budget and Accounts

6.1. Expenditures over 2015

The Seychelles Qualifications Authority's approved budget for the year 2015 was SR2,462,320.00. The budget is divided into two (2) main components namely:

Recurrent Budget: **SR2, 355,600.00**

Non Financial Assets **SR 106,720.00**

Total: SR2, 462,320.00

6.1.1. Programme Performance-Based Budgeting

A significant proportion of time over 2015 was spent in workshops preparing the SQA pilot budget for 2016 on the PPBB format. As a result of the PPBB exercise which started its first pilot year in 2015 the SQA has ended with two programmes under which it has started managing its budget and measuring its achievements against set targets which have been aligned to budgetary allocations as of 2015. The two programmes are as follows:

Programme 1: Policy, Governance and Management

The Policy, Governance and Management programme provides for the overall governance, leadership and management of the Authority, and centralised human resource and financial management support services.

Programme 2: Quality and Compliance

The Quality and Compliance programme develops and implements the National Qualifications Framework. It sets quality assurance standards and monitors compliance by training providers.

The *recurrent budget* is divided into the two (2) programmes mentioned above and budget for the year has been spent as per the tables that follow.

PROGRAMME 1: Policy and Governance

ACCOUNT CODES (SR)	DESCRIPTION (SR)	REVISED BUDGET (SR)	EXPENSES (SR)
080A000-E210100-21111000-000	Basic salary	572,016.00	470,647.93
080A000-E210100-21112100-000	Allowances (Excluding PSC)	82,560.00	76,108.52
080A000-E210100-21112200-000	PSC Allowances	24,204.00	24,204.00
080A000-E210100-21112900-000	Other Allowances	14,400.00	11,092.86
080A000-E210100-21115000-000	Overtime	33,320.00	66,582.46
080A000-E210100-22100002-000	Hospitality	2,000.00	1,825.00
080A000-E210100-22100004-000	Adverts & Donations	12,400.00	13,947.00
080A000-E210100-22100005-000	Newspapers & Magazines	2,000.00	4,350.00
080A000-E210100-22100006-000	Printing and Stationery	40,258.00	40,350.05
080A000-E210100-22100007-000	Postages	1,700.00	1,240.00
080A000-E210100-22100009-000	Cleaning Expenses	7,600.00	8,970.03
080A000-E210100-22100010-000	Consumables	7,000.00	18,994.58

080A000-E210100-22100011-000	Electricity	30,000.00	30,000.00
080A000-E210100-22100012-000	Water	3000.00	3,000.00
080A000 E210100-22100013-000	Internet	42,400.00	36,855.05
080A000-E210100-22100014-000	Telephone International	1,500.00	14,974.24
080A000-E210100-22100015-000	Telephone Local & Rental	53,200.00	26,076.95
080A000-E210100-22100017-000	Fax	0.00	0.00
080A000-E210100-22200101-000	Fuel for Vehicle	28,400.00	22,110.00
080A000-E210100-22200202-000	Overseas Airfares	0.00	0.00
080A000-E210100-22200203-000	Bus/Taxi/Ferry Fares	113.00	0.00
080A000-E210100-22200204-000	Hire Charges for Vehicles	1,200.00	0.00
080A000 E210100-22200301-000	Overseas Sub Allowance	4,200.00	14,750.00
080A000 E210100-22200302-000	Domestic Sub Allowance	35,000.00	0.00
080A000-E210100-22200900-000	Other Transportation	1,147	0.00
080A000-E210100-22312001-000	Office Building	8,500.00	0.00
080A000-E210100-22321001-000	Motor Vehicles	6,000.00	7,070.00
080A000-E210100-22322013-000	Air Conditioning Equipment	13,700	20,950.00
080A000-E210100-22322015-000	Office Equipment	13,000.00	3,717.52
080A000-E210100-22322017-000	Other Repairs & Mtce	78,235.00	84,695.50
080A000-E210100-22323000-000	Furniture	0.00	0.00
080A000-E210100-22520101-000	Local Consultancy Fees	48,848.00	101,950.00
080A000-E210100-22520103-000	Training Expenses	0.00	0.00
080A000-E210100-22520204-000	License Fees	3,000.00	3,432.50
080A000-E210100-22520301-000	Board Members Allowance	142,145.00	88,500.00
080A000-E210100-22550001-000	Vehicle Insurance	16,000.00	15,769.00
080A000-E210100-22560202-000	Facilities for Events	0.00	0.00
080A000-E210100-22560404-000	Equipment	300.00	598.00
080A000-E210601-31122219-000	ACQ of Telephone	0.00	0.00
080A000-E210602-31122203-000	ACQ of IT Equipment	19,320.00	7,990.00
080A000-E210602-31122212-000	ACQ of Printing Equip	0.00	0.00
080A000-E210603-31122214-000	ACQ of Furniture	0.00	0.00
TOTAL		**1,348,666.00**	**1,220,751.19**

PROGRAMME 2: Quality and Compliance

ACCOUNT CODES (SR)	DESCRIPTION (SR)	REVISED BUDGET (SR)	EXPENSES (SR)
080A000-E220100-21111000-000	Basic salary	576,240.00	513,108.00
080A000-E220100-21112100-000	Allowances (Excluding PSC)	0.00	0.00
080A000-E220100-21112200-000	PSC Allowance	27,310.00	54,969.00
080A000- E220100-21112900-000	Other Allowances	43,200.00	61,200.00
080A000- E220100-22100002-000	Hospitality	19,000.00	8,710.00
080A000- E220100-22100004-000	Adverts & Donations	16,000.00	11,965.00
080A000- E20100-22100006-000	Printing & Stationery	68,017.00	25,435.00
080A000- E220100-22100007-000	Postages	1,200.00	740.00
080A000-E220100-22100010-000	Consumables	43,490.00	8,715.50

080A000-E220100-22200202-000	Overseas Airfares	11,600.00	10,984.00
080A000-E220100-22200202-000	Bus/Taxi/Ferry Fares	0.00	0.00
080A000-E220100-22200301-000	Overseas Sub Allowance	28,000.00	15,623.51
080A000-E220100-22200302-000	Domestic Sub Allowance	35,000.00	22,818.80
080A000-E220100-22520101-000	Local Consultancy	212,000.00	210,765.89
080A000-E220100-225020302-000	Allowance to Part-time Inst	0.00	0.00
080A000-E220100-22560202-000	Facilities for Events	0.00	0.00
080A000-E220100-22560404-000	Equipment	330.00	0.00
080A000-E220601-31122203-000	ACQ of IT Equipment	19,320.00	7,990.00
080A000-E220601-31122212-000	ACQ of Printing Equipment	10,200.00	3,075.00
080A000-E220602-31122214-000	ACQ of Furniture	13,000.00	12,300.04
TOTAL		**1,123907.00**	**968,399.74**

The budget was revised during the course of the year to a total budget of SR2,472,573.00. The revised budget is after all virements had been made and approved by the Ministry of Finance during the year 2015.

6.2. Virement Applications

The SQA requested four (4) virements for the year 2015, compared to eleven (11) virements for the year 2014. The reasons for the virements were as follows:

- ❖ Costs for overseas consultants' accommodation for the accreditation visit to the University of Seychelles
- ❖ Payment for overtime for part-time Administrative support
- ❖ Purchase of cleaning expenses, telephone and Internet payment
- ❖ Refurbishment of some offices with new carpet tiles as existing were in a dilapidated state
- ❖ Purchase of new desk as preparation for recruitment of Principal Quality Assurance Officer early 2016
- ❖ Purchase of fuel coupons and toners for printers.

6.3. Procurement

As the SQA had intended to recruit a Principal Quality Assurance Officer, provision was made in the 2015 budget to purchase new desk and computer set as SQA had made savings on the said votes.

A new AC Unit was needed for the Conference room as the existing one was beyond repair and there was an urgent need for a replacement. SQA also invested in a new boiler for the conference room as the room is occupied virtually every day for meetings for the SQA or Ministry of Education officials.

6.4. Refurbishment

Again towards the end of the year 2015, SQA had been able to accumulate savings from different votes to continue with the second phase of carpeting its offices and this has been done

successfully. The carpets in the offices were peeling off and it was a health hazard. The contractor was SRP Richard Building and Furniture Contractor. The SQA also managed to meet costs for the painting of its toilets, conference room, walls of corridors and one office. The Maintenance Contractor was Mr. Leslie Ally.

6.5.   Revenue

The following was collected as revenue for the year 2015:

PERIOD	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT (SR)
1 to 4	Evaluation of Qualification	42,350.00
1 to 4	Authentication of Qualifications	172,150.00
TOTAL		**214,500.0**

There was an increase of SR8,300.00 in the total revenue for 2015 when compared to that for 2014. Total revenue for 2014 was SR206,200.00.

7.0.   Implementing the SQA'S Mandate

7.1.   Board Meetings

The SQA Board met for four (4) ordinary meetings over 2015. In addition, there was one (1) extraordinary meeting.

The extraordinary meeting was convened on 29th March for the Board to deliberate on and finalise the drafted 'Response to Internal Audit Report of March 2015' that addressed the break in and 'Loss of revenue of 23rd July 2014'.

Much of Board business during ordinary meetings focused on the implementation of elements of the National Qualifications Framework, namely programme validation, unit standards development and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) pilot implementation. Quarterly reports on the status of programme validation were produced to facilitate Board deliberations on the issue. Progress reports on the SQA Strategic Plan (2014-2016) were also produced and presented to the Board.

The SQA Information System (SQAIS) remained a standing item on the agenda of the Board meetings as well as staffing developments.

7.2.   Implementing SQA's Strategic Plan (2014 – 2016)

Much of the work of the SQA as dictated by its mandate is encapsulated in its strategic plan. In this subsection, the achievements for the year as per the Strategic and Specific Objectives of the Strategic Plan are summarised. The challenges are also highlighted.

Strategic Objective: Initiate, complete and consolidate projects linked to the continuing development of the National Qualifications Framework.

- *Review the Qualifications Map to take into account developments in education and training locally and internationally.*
  The specific objective could not be implemented due to unavailability of budget for consultancy.

- *Complete the process of transforming existing qualifications into unit standards*
  The SQA has the overall responsibility for setting of standards for local programmes (Level 3 to 6 of the NQF). Standards are developed by National Standards Setting Committees (NSSC), following which they are evaluated by a Core Standards Committee (CSC), and are then approved by an Executive Committee (EXCO) if they meet all NQF requirements. Approved standards are registered on the NQF for a period of five years after which they are reviewed for re-registration.

Unit standards development for qualifications progressed at a steady pace in 2015. At the time of writing, unit standards for a total of forty-four *(44)* qualifications are at different stages of development/review or have been approved for registration on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as follows:

- Unit Standards for *seventeen (17)* qualifications have been approved for registration on the NQF;
- Unit Standards for eleven (11) qualifications are being reviewed in line with the new format and undergoing initial screening;
- Unit Standards for eight (8) qualifications are being developed for the first time;
- Unit Standards for eight (8) qualifications are undergoing final corrections.

The Principal Standards Setting Officer held weekly working meetings with the various committees for standards development to ensure progress.

- *Initiate the generation of unit standards for new qualifications and lead their development.*
Over the course of the year the SQA continued to assist the National Conservatoire of Performing Arts (NCPA) with the development of unit standards for an Advanced Certificate in Traditional Music Theory. A committee had been set up as of the fourth quarter 2013 comprising the SQA Principal Standards Setting Officer and two NCPA staff. Unit standards for the Advanced Certificate qualification in Traditional Music Theory had been fully developed by the end of the fourth quarter 2015 and were ready for approval for registration on the NQF by the EXCO Committee.

The exercise has enabled the SQA to build capacity within the NCPA for development of qualifications using unit standards.

- *Review the Policy Guidelines on Recognition and Evaluation of Foreign Qualifications.*
The review that had been scheduled for the second quarter 2015 could not be done due to unavailability of funds in the SQA budget for the consultancy work required.

- *Review the QA Manual and related guidelines documents for providers.*
The review could not be done since the SQA did not have sufficient funds in its annual budget to cater for the consultancy work required. Work had been scheduled to start in the fourth quarter 2015, with a review of the Accreditation component of the QA Manual.

- *Complete the review of the Manual and Policy Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning*.
The first stage of the project on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) that was funded in part by UNESCO was completed in April 2014. The following documents, 'Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)', 'Revised Guidelines for the Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning', and the consultancy report were submitted to SQA in April 2014 by the consultant (from South Africa Qualifications Authority) for the project. The results of the piloting of the two documents were presented and discussed in a meeting organized in October 2015. Coordinators, Assessors, Moderators and Heads of Professional Centres had the opportunity to comment on the RPL Pilot exercise, point out areas in the process for improvement and share ideas on RPL. Information gathered during the Pilot has been used in the finalization of the policy and guidelines documents. The reviewed documents will be presented to the SQA Board at its first meeting for 2016.

- *Develop guidelines on fees for RPL implementation*

The SQA has been sourcing models from Qualifications Authorities of other countries, namely Mauritius, South Africa, Namibia and Botswana but without much success. At the time of writing the SQA's local consultant for RPL has produced a first draft of the document.

- *Undertake a pilot of the implementation of the RPL policy with a view to launching RPL nationally by 2015.*

The SQA Board approved the RPL Pilot Action Plan at its meeting of 2nd July 2014 although implementation of the activities of the plan started in April 2014.

The activities of the RPL Pilot moved to the Post Secondary institutions involved in the project in October 2014.   The activities included providing feedback on the outcome of the portfolio evaluation to the RPL candidates, setting dates and conditions to conduct assessments of the competencies identified, ensuring that assessments were appropriately conducted and cases of appeal entertained accordingly, compiling results of all assessments and also submitting a report to the SQA. The deadline of January 2015 for submission of the reports could not be met by the Providers due to time constraints. The Providers requested for additional time to complete the process. Reports of the RPL Pilot were received in the first and second quarter 2015. The results from the reports are summarized as follows:

Institutions	No. of Participants	Qualifications Targeted	Outcome	Remark
Seychelles Institute of Technology (SIT)	Three candidates identified. One completed the RPL process.	Advanced Certificate in Masonry	Qualified for the Advanced Certificate in Masonry	The candidate has 23 years working experience in the field and is a lecturer at the SIT
Maritime Training Centre now Seychelles Maritime Academy (SMA)	Three candidates identified. Two completed the RPL process.	Advanced Certificate in Fisheries Science and Fishing Technology (Option 1 - semi industrial)	The institution has to set additional assessments for both candidates	The two candidates are both former students of the MTA and are working in the field
Seychelles Agricultural Horticultural Training Centre (SAHTC) now Seychelles Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture (SIAH)	Three candidates enrolled and completed the RPL process	Advanced Certificate in General Agriculture. Advanced Certificate in Ornamental Horticulture and Landscaping	Two candidates need to complete two units to qualify for the Advanced Certificate in General Agriculture. One candidate has to complete four units to qualify for the Advanced Certificate in Ornamental Horticulture and Landscaping	Candidates have between 12 to 36 years work experience in the field and are all employees of the SAHTC
National	Five candidates	Diploma in Bio-	One candidate qualified	Four candidates

Institute of Health and Social Studies (NIHSS)	enrolled and completed the RPL process	Medical Sciences	for the Diploma in Bio-Medical Sciences. The other candidates have to complete between one to two units to qualify for the Diploma in Bio Medical Sciences	are laboratory technicians of the Ministry of Health having from 12 to 19 years working experience in the field. The qualified candidate is a lecturer at the NIHSS
School of Business Studies and Accounting (now Seychelles Business Studies Academy) (SBSA)	Six candidates enrolled for RPL	Diploma in Office Management and Administration	No assessments were conducted. The candidates were deemed more suitable for RPL for a qualification at Certificate level	The candidates will be RPL'd once the Certificate in Office Management programme receives full validation status by SQA.

A main report was compiled from individual reports of Providers. The constraints encountered in the implementation of the RPL Pilot were as follows:

RPL candidates

- Had difficulties to locate past supervisors for reference documents.
- Needed better guidance to properly set up their RPL portfolios.
- Could not always respect set schedules for assessment /submission of projects. The candidates were full-time employees.
- -Needed more advice/guidance in particular with assessment procedures.

Providers

- There is a need for a specialist person to better assist with the RPL process at institutional level.
- RPL team members could not dedicate sufficient time to the RPL activities as other pressing duties often came up.
- RPL team members did not always attend to their respective responsibilities in the process.
- Lack of networking with stakeholders to assess practical skills of RPL candidates.

A half-day workshop took place on the 22nd October 2015 to discuss recommendations of the report for purpose of input into the finalisation of the Policy and Guidelines documents.

Further training is planned to be provided to RPL personnel in 2016 especially in the area of Portfolio development. The Authority is aiming at setting up a pool of trained RPL personnel who will be well versed with the RPL processes and therefore effectively implement RPL. Given trained

RPL personnel and sufficient funding, RPL will be developed further and more Seychellois will be able to participate in the process.

Strategic Objective: Enhance the institutional capacity of the SQA to deliver on its mission.

- *Complete, operationalise and maintain the SQAIS to ensure relevant information about qualifications, candidates and institutions is accurate, accessible and easily managed by SQA staff.*

The SQAIS (SQA Information System) is an integral part of the SQA functions in that it stands as a data bank with information on learners and education and training providers in the country. The electronic management information system is intended to facilitate management and reporting on the following aspects of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), i.e. all the processes involving:

- Qualifications, unit standards and its supporting units such as providers and NQF levels
- Evaluation and Authentication of qualifications (Foreign and National)
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- Training Provider Accreditation
- Programmes and Short Courses Validation
- Learners' records and their achievements.

At the time of writing the SQAIS is partly operational. There has been uploading trials at various intervals in the year. Technical constraint with the system has remained a standing issue and this has delayed the uploading of information.

A contract was entered into between the IT consultants and the SQA for the creation of the SQA Information system (SQIAS) on the 13th January 2009 and it was to be completed within twelve months. This did not occur on the 12th January 2010. The present situation is that the consultants are yet to deliver on a completed and functional Information system. At the time of writing the SQA is seeking legal advice on this issue and the SQA Board will at its first meeting for 2016 give a ruling on the fate of the SQAIS.

- *Expand and enhance the physical infrastructure of the Authority while taking measures to eliminate longstanding environmental hazards.*

After release of Government budget for 2015, the Authority was verbally informed by MoE that no provision has been made for the removal of asbestos roofing on the block that is being occupied by the SQA and that the project has been postponed to 2016.

Meanwhile, the SQA managed to give a new coat of paint to part of its physical infrastructure and two offices were refurbished with new carpets.

- *Implement the SQA Communication Strategy (2013-2015) and monitor to ensure SQA is visible and its functions and services known and valued by all stakeholders.*

The two main goals of the SQA's Communication Strategy (2013-2015) are to:

- strengthen access to information on NQF to learners and the wider public;
- consolidate engagement of training providers, professional bodies and employers.

Sensitisation Activities

<u>*Sensitisation through Media*</u>

- TV spots to sensitise and alert learners and the populace on overseas fraudulent training providers and their training programmes and the importance of consulting the SQA on the credibility of overseas training providers prior to enrolment on training programmes were aired in January 2015. By all accounts, this initiative has had significant impact as there have been requests for advice and guidance almost daily throughout the year from organisations and individuals.

- In the last quarter of 2015 the SQA prepared adverts in the English and Creole languages which were aired on the national television in December, sensitizing the general public on the procedures to follow for evaluation and certification of true copy of qualifications.

- An advert that addressed fraudulent providers was also placed in the Nation Newspaper in November 2015

<u>*Sensitisation Meetings/Talks/Presentations*</u>

- A talk was delivered to students of the School of Advanced Level Studies (SALS). The talk was jointly organized with the Agency for National Human Resources Development (ANHRD). It aimed at providing the students with information on the procedures and requirements to certify and evaluate qualifications as well as procedures to follow before enrolling for further studies in overseas institutions.

- A presentation on the NQF, with particular focus on status of programme validation and institutional accreditation was delivered to the Chairs and Vice-chairs of Boards of Professional Centres on 15th September 2015.

Newsletter

In 2015 SQA continued with the publishing of its newsletter as a means of informing and engaging with its stakeholders on the activities of the Authority. The Authority has ensured that its newsletter that is produced and published thrice annually remains informative, reader friendly and engages the participation of its stakeholders as much as possible.

Website

Over 2015, the SQA has ensured that its website is continually updated with SQA official documents produced/reviewed (e.g. newsletters and circulars), and with information on events and activities.

Database for Recognition/Evaluation of Qualifications

The internal data table of information on qualifications evaluated and certified true copy, the source of the qualifications and revenue has been maintained throughout the year to ensure that data is readily available for reporting purposes.

Strategic Objective: Empower education and training providers to undertake vital functions to meet the standards of the National Qualifications Framework.

- *Assist providers in building their capacity to undertake tasks to achieve full accreditation.*

The implementation of this objective that had been planned to start in the last quarter 2014 and ongoing thereafter has been pushed forward, the reason being that the SQA Board gave the directive that the focus for 2014 and 2015 was to be on ensuring that the programmes of tertiary education institutions obtain full validation status.

- *Assist providers in building their capacity to undertake tasks to achieve full validation of their programmes.*

The SQA has held working meetings with representatives of individual institutions on a regular basis to address weaknesses in Applications for Validation submitted and ensure that these meet full validation requirements.

- *Initiate measures to integrate the NQF into the Teacher Education programmes of the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education (SITE) and provide support as necessary.*

The proposal to integrate the NQF into the Teacher Education programmes of the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education (SITE) was presented to the Director of the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education (SITE) in October 2014 and it was agreed that NQF will be integrated in the course of SITE programmes devoted to 'policies and regulations'.

A local consultant was contracted for the project and the SQA submitted the final product to SITE in March 2015 which includes:
- Power point presentations on NQF and Teacher Education - encompasses the whole content of this component of the course within the SITE programmes
- A Handbook on the NQF and Teacher Education - encompasses the whole content of this component of the course within the SITE programmes
- Unit standards and Unit Framework Plan for this component of the course within the SITE programmes.

7.3.   Other Engagements of the SQA in 2015

7.3.1. Certification of Qualifications

Certification of qualifications is a process which establishes the authenticity of qualifications. This service is mostly requested by Secondary and Post Secondary school leavers who are enrolling in establishments of higher learning locally and internationally to further their education.

For the year 2015, a total of **1314** qualifications have been certified true copy. The most popular qualifications that have been certified true copy are the IGCSEs (345), the Advanced Level Certificates (239) both awarded by the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom as well as other qualifications at Certificate Level (276).

Table 1 below shows the qualifications that were certified true copy by type from January to December 2015.

Table 1: *Qualifications certified true copy by type - 2015*

Month / Qualification Type	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Primary			1										**1**
Secondary		7	2	2	1	2							**14**
IGCSE	14	82	62	34	87	26	9	15	6	2	6	2	**345**
O Level		2	4	9	19	10	6	4	2		2	1	**59**
A Level	8	43	39	34	61	16	10	11	5		7	5	**239**
Certificate	8	4	46	32	112	21	19	14			5	15	**276**
Advanced Certificate			1	4	5	1	1						**12**
Diploma	1	2	13	4	20	23	5	18	2		5	5	**98**
Advanced Diploma		1	1	1	3			1				2	**9**
Delf A1					1								**1**
Delf A2		2	2		4	1			1				**10**
Delf B1	5	14	20	11	32	7	2	2	1		1	1	**96**
Delf B2		8	13	13	12	2	1	2				1	**52**
PGCE					2				2	4			**8**
BSc/BA	3	5	2	2	6		14	9	3	7	10	13	**74**
MSc/MA		2			4			3		1	3	2	**15**
ILTS			1				1				3		**5**
Total	39	172	207	146	369	109	68	79	22	14	42	47	**1314**

Grand Total 1314

7.3.2. Evaluation of Qualifications

The process of Evaluation of qualifications establishes the level of qualifications in relation to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). It is required that applicants submit their original certificates, transcripts of study and proof of identity to the Authority for this service. In cases where the applicants are waiting for their original certificates and submit their transcripts of study, the Authority issues a Provisional Certificate of Evaluation valid for one year within which timeframe the applicant can submit the original qualification for a complete evaluation. We may also liaise with Awarding Bodies (local or overseas) for additional information as required for evaluation.

In 2015, a total of **162** qualifications were evaluated. The most popular countries of origin were the United Kingdom (59), India (26) and the Seychelles (23).

Table 2 below shows the distribution of qualifications recognised and evaluated by country of origin in 2015.

Table 2: *Distribution of qualifications recognised and evaluated in 2014 (by country of origin)*

Countries	No. of Qualifications Evaluated	Countries	No. of qualifications evaluated
Australia	1	Madagascar	1
Belgium	1	Malaysia	1
Botswana	4	Malta	2
Canada	2	Mauritius	2
China	12	Morocco	1
Cuba	5	Seychelles	23
France	12	South Africa	1
India	26	Spain	2
Ireland	1	Sri Lanka	1
Japan	1	United Kingdom	59
Kenya	1	Uganda	1
La Reunion	1	USA	1
Grand Total: 162			

7.3.3. SQA's Liaison with its Stakeholders

In line with its legal mandate, the SQA engages with training providers and organizations both internationally and locally to provide information pertaining to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Extensive research is also conducted on the internet to pronounce on the credibility of providers and authenticity of programmes. In cases where research information is not sufficient enough, overseas providers are contacted directly. There is close collaboration and exchanges with overseas bodies such as the National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) of the UK, the South African qualifications Authority (SAQA), the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA).

Over the course of 2015, the SQA also liaised regularly with local agencies such as the Agency for National Human Resource Development (ANHRD), other local work organizations and the general public. Information on the status of overseas training providers and programmes have been provided in a timely manner and the responses provided have contributed towards ensuring that informed decisions are taken before clients venture in overseas training programmes. There has also been close collaboration with Human Resource and Training Managers to provide information on the status of providers who organize overseas conferences. In 2015, the SQA has responded to queries on the status of training providers listed in table 3 below:

Table 3: *List of training providers verified in 2015*

Institution	Country
Institut d'Etudes Theologiques (IET)	Belgium
University of Nicosia	Cyprus
Jayapur National University	India
Thongsook College	Thailand
University of Liverpool	UK
University of Bradford	UK
University of Roehampton	UK
University of Leicester	UK
Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham	UK
Cambridge International College	UK
Glasgow Caledonian University	UK
University of Derby	UK
European Bartender School	UK
Lloyds Maritime Academy	UK
British Standard Institute	UK
University of Hertfordshire	UK
College of Management and IT	Ireland
Hubert Kairuki Memorial University	Tanzania
Central Queensland Institute	Australia
University of South Wales (online)	UK
Trident University	USA
Walden University	USA
Ashworth College	USA
Penn Foster College	USA
Atlantic International University	Hawaii
University of Botswana Gaborone	Botswana
Rushmore Business School	Mauritius
Marion Hair Club School of Hairdressing and Beauty	Mauritius
Open University of Mauritius	Mauritius
Central Institute of Technology	Australia
Deakin University	Australia
Sense and Style Beauty Academy	Malaysia
International Academy of Health and Skin Care	South Africa
Institute of Risk Management	UK
Institute of Leadership and Management	UK

7.3.4. Programme Validation

Programme Validation approves for a certain period of time, a specific education and training programme, offered by a training provider which leads to the award of a specific qualification (or part qualification) to be registered on the National Qualifications Framework. The institution fills

in a programme validation template (Application for Validation) and the Validation Sub-committee assesses the submission and fills in a Results Sheet giving comments on each of the areas. In the event that the programme does not meet all validation requirements, the Sub-committee then meets with the institution to discuss the results and explain the areas where improvement is required. The Results Sheet is then forwarded to the institution giving it a timeframe within which to work on the recommendations and re-submit a new application for validation.

The SQA started the programme validation process in 2010 with the intention that all existing locally developed programmes would have been fully validated by the end of 2012. However, this target could not be met due to challenges faced by education and training providers, including having the necessary institutional mechanisms. Two programmes only had obtained full validation status by the close of 2012.

At its meeting of 19th December 2012 the SQA Board gave the ultimatum that all existing local programmes need to be validated by end of 2013. As a result, the SQA received a total of fifty-seven (57) Applications for programme validation as of the third quarter, of which some were resubmissions and others new submissions. A total of eight (8) programmes had obtained full validation status and two (2) had been recommended for full validation status by the end of 2013.

The SQA Board ruled at its meeting of 7th May 2014 that all existing local programmes must have obtained full validation status by the end of 2014. A total of seventy-nine (79) Applications for validation from education and training providers went through the validation process, twenty-two (22) of which were applications for validation submitted for the first time while others were resubmissions. This represented an increase of twenty-two (22) Applications for programme validation, when compared to fifty-seven (57) for 2013. Eight (8) programmes reached the standard for the Authority to award the status of full validation in that year, representing a total of seventeen (17) programmes and two (2) credit bearing short courses that had obtained full validation status since the process was initiated in 2010.

At its meeting of 25th March 2015, the SQA Board agreed to extend the timeframe in which all existing local programmes must have obtained full validation status to end of 2015.

By the close of the year 2015, fifty-seven (57) programmes (inclusive of 4 credit bearing short courses/part qualifications) had reached the standard for the Authority to award the status of full validation. The year's achievement has been remarkable.

The table that follows shows the status of programme validation as at the close of the year 2015.

Table 5: Status of programme validation

Institution	Total number of local qualifications / part qualifications submitted for validation process	Validation Status
UniSey	31	20 programmes: full validation status 4 credit bearing short courses: full validation status 5 programmes: provisionally validated 1 programme: not validated 1 credit bearing short course: not validated
SIAD	7	7 programmes: full validation status
SIAH	4	2 programmes: full validation status 2 programmes: not validated
STA	10	7 programmes: full validation status 3 programmes: not validated
NIHSS	10	7 programmes: full validation status 1 programme: provisionally validated 2 programmes: not validated
SIT	19	8 programmes: full validation status 11 programmes: provisionally validated
SMA	4	3 programmes: provisionally validated 1 programme: not validated
SBSA	3	2 programmes: full validation status 1 programme: recommended for full validation status
SPA	2	2 programmes: provisionally validated
SIDOL	2	2 credit bearing short courses: provisionally validated
TOTAL	**92**	

7.3.5. Institutional Accreditation

Institutional accreditation certifies for a specified period of time that an institution has the capacity to provide education and training programmes leading to the award of qualifications.

In 2015, the SQA conducted two accreditation exercises, one at the University of Seychelles and the other at the Seychelles Business Studies Academy.

Over the course of the year, the SQA has also received progress reports on implementation of activities of Action Plans to address the recommendations of Accreditation Reports from STA and NIHSS. The SQA has held meetings with the individual institutions to discuss their accreditation status and the way forward.

7.3.5.1. Accreditation Visit of the University of Seychelles

The Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) conducted a first review of the University of Seychelles (UniSey) in 2013. The review made several recommendations on areas that UniSey needed to address on its journey towards a fully accredited university.

UniSey took the recommendations of the SQA in its stride and in 2014 it indicated to the Authority that it believed that it was ready for full accreditation and forwarded an application for an institutional audit. Discussions took place between the two parties and an audit visit was set for mid-2015.

The Accreditation visit was conducted on the three UniSey campuses over five working days, from 20 to 24 July 2015. The Accreditation Team comprised two international and three local consultants, with Professor David Woodhouse from Australia as Lead Person for the exercise.

Based on the Accreditation Team's evaluation of the extent to which the University had carried out the recommendations of the 2013 Accreditation Report, the SQA, by virtue of the authority vested in it through the Seychelles Qualifications Authority Act of 2005, adjudged University of Seychelles, an institution registered under the Education Act of 2004, as having met the requirements to be eligible for accreditation and accorded to the University of Seychelles the status of **Accreditation**.

The University of Seychelles is the first Institution to be accorded with the full Accreditation status which is for a period of 5 years, after which the University will re-apply for institutional accreditation.

7.3.5.2. Accreditation Visit of the Seychelles Business Studies Academy

The Seychelles Business Studies Academy (SBSA) submitted their application for an accreditation exercise to the SQA in August 2015. Based on information of the Academy's Self-evaluation Report, it was decided that a three day monitoring visit will be conducted in place of a full 5 day accreditation exercise. The object of the institutional monitoring visit was to gauge the extent to which the institution had been implementing activities of its action plan that addresses the recommendations of its Accreditation Report of the first visit (June 2012).

The three day visit occurred from the 14th – 16th October 2015 and it was conducted by four local consultants. On the first day of the accreditation monitoring visit, the Accreditation Team had a tour of the Academy, held a meeting with the Management Team and interviewed students of the Academy as well as in-service learners. The second day focused on interviews with the Management Team and the lecturers. The Accreditation Team also verified all relevant

documents as per the accreditation process requirement. There were individual interviews on the third day of the visit, verification of documents and preparation of verbal report which was presented to the SBSA Management Team in the afternoon.

Following the monitoring visit, the SQA has prolonged the Provisional Accreditation status of the SBSA until the end of the fourth quarter 2016. The SBSA has to incorporate the recommendations of the Accreditation report received on 16th November 2015 into the Action Plan developed after the accreditation visit of 2012 and submit the said plan to the Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) for approval. At the time of writing the SBSA has submitted the new revised Action Plan to the SQA.

7.3.6. Locally-based Professional Development

The SQA specialist personnel attended the following throughout 2015.

- A one day workshop on ODL Policy Formulation (15th May)

- A one day workshop for validation of the National Health Policy (16th June)

- General Education Quality Analysis Framework (GEQAF) workshop Phase 2 (13-17 July). The workshop organised by the Ministry of Education and UNESCO was a continuation of the GEQAF Phase 1 workshop conducted in July 2013. The objective of the workshop was to use and adapt the UNESCO GEQAF to analyse major constraints in the national education and training system with a view to design policies, strategies and interventions to address the identified constraints through the draft Education Sector Medium Term Strategic Plan 2013-2017.

- Workshop on Capacity Building in School Inspection Process and Procedures for Staff of the Inspectorate Unit (20-24 July)

7.3.7. Overseas Missions

1. **The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) Meeting**

As a member of the TQF Working Group, the SQA's Chief Executive Officer was invited by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to participate in the TQF Meeting which was held in Malaysia from March 4-6, 2015. The very important event which was hosted by the Open University of Malaysia had as objectives to:
   1. review and endorse the TQF referencing documents
   2. develop an online referencing tool for the TQF
   3. review and approve the VUSSC course/programme registration process.

The high level meeting was attended by representatives from 21 small states of the Commonwealth.

2. **SADC Meeting on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Good Practices in Skills Development**

The SQA Officer responsible for Evaluation and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) attended the South African Developing Countries (SADC) Meeting on Recognition of Prior Learning and Good Practices in Skills Development, held from the 18th to 21st August 2015 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The Meeting was a follow-up to the decision by SADC Ministers responsible for education and skills training to develop RPL Guidelines for the region. The decision of the Ministers of Education is also consistent with decisions of SADC Ministers responsible for employment and labour and those responsible for youth, the SADC Decent Work Agenda 2013-2019, and the focus of the SADC Industrialization Strategy 2015-2063, to enhance skills development for youth that are suited to the labour market, the socio-economic realities of the SADC region, and the transition from the informal to the formal economy. Good Practices in Skills Development and Recognition of Prior Learning remain high on the SADC agenda in view of the considerable number of young people who drop out of school early and through non formal and informal learning means acquire skills that are not necessarily recognised by national education and training systems.

The Meeting, convened through financial and technical support from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) brought together Senior Experts and Officials overseeing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) from all SADC Member States, other countries in Africa and outside Africa, Agencies, representatives of workers and employers, ILO, UNESCO, African Development Bank, African Union, and ADEA.

The conference provided important information on RPL and skills development. It was also an opportunity to exchange ideas and information on RPL, skills development and other issues with participants from the other countries present at the conference.

3. **Regional Forum on Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education**

The SQA's Chief Executive Officer was invited by AMC International to attend the 3rd Annual Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education Conference 2015. The conference was held at in Johannesburg from the 28th to the 30th of September 2015.

The main focus of the conference was on practical implementation of Quality Assurance Systems. The three-day conference saw delegates presenting their papers on various dimensions of Quality Assurance structures for establishment in tertiary education institutions. The conference provided the platform for the SQA to:

1. Be updated on new developments in Quality Assurance and Accreditation on the tertiary education landscape.
2. Learn about effective quality assurance mechanisms and structures that could be set up within both the SQA and tertiary education institutions.
3. Establish contacts for the sourcing of tools/instruments for Institutional Accreditation and Programme Validation.

4. Source potential consultants for the implementation of projects of the SQA as dictated by its Strategic Plan (2014-2016), e.g. review of the SQA QA Manual, training for capacity building within the SQA and tertiary education institutions, and institutional accreditation.

7.3.8. Visit of Delegates of the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA)

One of the areas of cooperation under the Seychelles-Mauritius Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (CBC) signed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the field of education, specifically at the tertiary level. One activity under the bilateral cooperation is an Exchange Programme between the Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) and the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA). The aim of the exchange programme is to share experiences and identity common areas for future collaboration, and this with a view to strengthen the ties that exist between the two authorities.

In the light of the above, the SQA welcomed a delegation from the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) from 6th to 10th October 2015. The delegation comprised of Mr. Vijaye Ramchurn (Manager Framework Services) and Mr. Subiraj Bhunjun (Manager Learner Attainment and Information Services).

The MQA delegation met and discussed with officials of the SQA, the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The delegation also facilitated a half day meeting on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and visited three Professional Centres.

The SQA briefed the visiting delegation on the work of the Authority in the development and maintenance of the Seychelles National Qualifications Framework (NQF). They were also informed on new developments in the Tertiary education landscape in Seychelles. The MQA Officers gave an overview of ongoing work at the MQA. Their presentation touched on award and credit bearing courses, and database of learners amongst other issues. Both parties exchanged information on processes for validation of training programmes, accreditation and unit standards development.

The highlight of the visit was a half day meeting on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) on the last day (09th October), which was facilitated by the MQA delegation. Recognition of Prior Learning is a process of identifying a person's knowledge and skills against a qualification or part thereof. The process involves the identification, mediation, assessment and acknowledgement of knowledge and skills obtained through informal, non-formal and/ or formal learning. RPL is indeed very high on the agenda of the SQA. From June 2014 to July 2015, the Authority has been engaged in the RPL Pilot with the collaboration of five Professional Centres. Learning on how RPL is undertaken in Mauritius would serve to further enhance knowledge on the RPL process for both the SQA and the RPL facilitators of Professional Centres. Sixteen representatives from Professional Centres including the Directors of SIT, SMA, SBSA and SITE attended the meeting held at the SQA conference room.

In his presentation, Mr. Ramchurn from the MQA gave an overview of RPL in Mauritius, a process which started in 2007. He gave detailed explanation on the various stages for RPL including preparation of the candidates, processes to compile portfolios and assessment of candidates. To date, a total of 316 candidates have applied for RPL in Mauritius, 64 have been awarded full qualifications and 26 awarded part qualifications. Participants present at the meeting made the most of this opportunity to learn more on the RPL related issues from the visiting delegation. The MQA Officers responded to queries on fees for RPL, the mode of assessment (in Mauritius assessment is done through interviews), training for RPL facilitators, funding for RPL amongst other queries.

The areas for collaboration between the MQA and SQA were identified as follows:
- MQA will assist the SQA with training of RPL facilitators and facilitate training in Portfolio development for RPL
- Exchange of unit standards for programmes that have been developed
- Exchange of information on Evaluation of qualifications
- Sharing of Policies and Guidelines developed
- Sharing of information on movement of learners.

8.0.   Endnote

The SQA made headway throughout the year and there were many accomplishments along the way, as revealed in this report. The SQA has begun the process of putting qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework since the end of 2007. At the time of writing, fifty-three (53) programmes and four (4) credit bearing short courses (part qualifications) have obtained full validation status. Clearly, this achievement is significant when compared to the seventeen (17) programmes and two (2) credit bearing short courses that had obtained full validation status as at the end of 2014. All tertiary institutions finally came on board with the Seychelles Maritime Academy (SMA) and the Seychelles Institute of Distance and Open Learning (SIDOL) submitting Applications for Validation during the course of the year. In addition, the majority of programmes of The Guy Morel Institute (TGMI) of the UniSey had obtained full validation status by the SQA at the time of writing.

The RPL pilot project also gained momentum and all activities of the action plan for the pilot implementation were implemented as per the schedule. There was also steady progress with Unit Standards development with a major achievement being the completion of work on unit standards development for the Advanced Certificate qualification in Traditional Music.   In addition, following the institutional audit of the UniSey, the SQA adjudged the University as having met the requirements to be eligible for accreditation and accorded it the status of Accreditation for timeframe of five years. UniSey has become the first tertiary institution in Seychelles to be fully accredited.

The SQA assumes the functions of National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) in the country. In 2015, the SQA has once again ensured that the general public and organizations continue to be assisted with information on the NQF. As has been the case every year, Seychellois and foreign nationals were welcomed on a daily basis at the Authority for the services of Evaluation and Certification of qualifications. The SQA has also maintained its dynamism in closely engaging with organizations in the delivery of the services of Evaluation of qualifications and in providing information on training bodies overseas. State and non-state entities as well as the public in general have over the course of the year demonstrated increased awareness of the critical national importance of the role of the quality assurance mandate of the Authority. The accomplishments highlighted above and others as encapsulated in this report have all been major achievements for year.

The year saw many challenges as well. A significant number of Applications for Validation was still at the provisional validation stage by the end of the year. It needs to be emphasized that it is the responsibility of education and training providers to ensure that qualifications that they offer to learners are validated and recognised on the NQF.

The same picture is true of accreditation which SQA began in 2011. At the time of writing, Professional Centres were at the provisional accreditation stage, which means they barely meet the minimum standards set by SQA for an institution to function.

There are many explanations for this state of affairs. Our institutions are faced with a multitude of challenges, one of which relates to capacity to undertake necessary quality work. While institutions face a battery of problems, the signs are that, in spite of the work of the SQA, things are not improving as they should. This has obvious implications for the quality of graduates which the institutions are producing.

The SQA proposed in 2011 that each institution has a dedicated QA person and continued to advocate for this given its critical importance. The person would ensure that prior planning is carried out and the correct procedures are developed and implemented, hence ensuring that institutions adhere to all QA regulatory matters. With the exception of STA, appointment of QA persons for the Professional Centres is yet to be materialised at the time of writing.

The SQA stands ready to provide further support for this process. However, institutional management also needs to take their responsibility in educating their staff with regards to the value of QA and therefore building internal ownership in terms of QA improvement, something that is imperative if the QA exercise is to bear fruit. The parent ministry must give serious consideration to a system of monitoring and reporting on QA activities by institutions so as to ensure that institutions are not merely following up but also putting in place the QA system.

The voluntary nature of validation and accreditation also merits attention. Serious consideration of making validation and accreditation compulsory for all training institutions may help to develop commitment to the process and compliance to the procedures and set timeframes.

Presently, the public education and training institutions are not bearing the cost of QA; the SQA will not be able to sustain the cost over time.

On the SQA side, the Authority needs to build capacity to monitor the effectiveness of the QA framework, for example, the effectiveness of learning outcomes on the curriculum or the monitoring of distance learning programmes. This calls for the need for consideration to allocate funding in the SQA budget in government subvention for training for SQA officers and for overseas attachments, and by so doing, build the capacity of SQA to adequately deliver on its quality assurance mandate.

The Authority has again in 2015 not been able to implement several critical objectives of its Strategic Plan (2014-2016) because the SQA budget in government subvention could not cater for the consultancy work required, especially in terms of projects requiring international consultants.

Despite the challenges, the SQA is hopeful that with the new tertiary education landscape and institutional Charters, mechanisms to improve will be put in place and our institutions will become more accountable and better placed to overcome the quality obstacles.