



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
STATE DEPARTMENT  
FOR VOCATIONAL AND  
TECHNICAL TRAINING

# NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING





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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of this document was a result of a broad consultative process among sector-wide stakeholders and experts. We wish to thank all individuals and institutions who participated in the process including the Ministry of Education through the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE), Technical Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA), TVET-Curriculum Development Assessment and Certification (TVET-CDACC), National Industrial Training Authority (NITA), Kenya National Federation of Jua Kali Associations (KNFJA), Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) and Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA).

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## FOREWORD

A harmonized and accountable RPL process in Kenya is imperative to the realization of quality and relevant qualifications that are locally and globally competitive. This is in line with the African Union Continental Free Trade Area Agenda 2063, East African Common Market Protocol, Kenya Vision 2030 – the Big 4 agenda and Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2009. RPL's overall goal is to produce quality, flexible and optional qualifications that have the confidence of the labour market, enhance employability, labor mobility, lifelong learning and social inclusion. All these aspirations have culminated into the desire to develop standards and guidelines for prior learning in Kenya.

The Kenya National Qualifications Framework Act No. 22 of 2014 mandates KNQA to establish a national quality assurance system for national qualifications by setting standards and benchmarks to facilitate national and international recognition of knowledge, skills and competencies. Thus, the role of KNQA is to coordinate and harmonize education and training in Kenya to ensure the quality and reputation of all qualifications awarded is maintained. This ensures that the students, employers, community and Government have confidence in the integrity and credibility of National Qualifications awarded by the Qualification Awarding Institutions.

It is with this background that the RPL standards and guidelines have been developed to provide an overarching framework for implementation and quality assurance of the RPL process. They provide for an equivalent and unified basic framework for purposes of assuring quality, validity, consistency, fairness and transparency.

These standards and guidelines have been subjected to various expert stakeholder consultations and validation. These standards and guidelines therefore reflect the national, regional and global perspectives while embracing best practices.

Special thanks to the International Labour Organization (ILO) for the technical and financial support.

I call on all stakeholders to ensure that the RPL Standards and Guidelines stipulated in this document are duly adhered to, so as to promote a unified and accountable RPL process in Kenya.

**Dr. Juma Mukhwana, PhD, HSC**  
*Director General / Chief Executive Officer*  
*Kenya National Qualifications Authority.*

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

Capacity Building	Equipping RPL Practitioners with requisite knowledge and skills to effectively support implementation of RPL
Client	An individual or institution seeking assistance concerning the RPL process.
Framework	A set of clear procedures and structures which shall be used to guide the attainment of a specific goal.
Institution	An organization with a specific role to discharge in the RPL process.
Recognisable body	Institution registered by the relevant authority.
RPL Player	
Qualifications Awarding Institution	An institution accredited in accordance with section 5 of the KNQF Act to award national qualifications.
RPL Practitioner	A person involved in the RPL assessment process.
Recognition of Prior Learning	Encompasses acknowledgment, assessment and certification of previously unrecognized skills and knowledge a candidate has achieved outside the formal education and training system.
Risk-based Approach	
Standard	The level of quality set by the organization to measure the attainment of a qualification.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ILO	International Labour Organization
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KNQA	Kenya National Qualifications Authority
KNQF	Kenya National Qualifications Framework
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
QAI	Qualification Awarding Institution
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
QA	Quality Assurance
CICan	Colleges and Institutes Canada
STD	Standard
ICT	Information and Communication Technology

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

The Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on Policy framework on Education, Training and Research (MoE, 2005); highlighted the need to coordinate and clarify Kenya's education and training system. It pointed to the need to establish a common regulatory system for the recognition of attainment of knowledge, skills, competences, values and attitude. As a result, KNQA was established under the KNQF Act of 2014, Sessional Paper No 1 of 2019 and the KNQF Regulations 2018.

To launch RPL in Kenya, the Authority has developed Tools, Guides and Manuals for use in the execution of RPL in accordance with the RPL Policy Framework and Implementation Guidelines. The instruments were developed based on National Standards as per the KNQF, international best practices; consultations and collaboration with Organizations like International Labour Organization (ILO), Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) and International Rescue Committee (IRC).

The National Standards for RPL builds on the strengths of the existing policy, implementation guidelines as well as global benchmarks to promote best practice in RPL making these National Standards for RPL necessary to provide an anchor and reference to all who will be involved in the implementation of RPL.

### 1.1 CITATION

These standards shall be cited as National Standards for Recognition of Prior Learning, 2021. These standards are to be read in conjunction with RPL Policy Framework and Implementation Guidelines. These standards will be abbreviated as RPL/STD/00.

- i) These standards shall be cited as National Standards for Recognition of Prior Learning, 2021.
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- iii) These standards will be abbreviated as RPL/STD/00.

### 1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of these standards is to ensure:

- i) the integrity of the RPL process by regulating Institutions and / or Practitioners using a risk-based approach that is effective, proportional, and responsive;
- ii) consistency in implementation and interpretation of the standards applying to Institutions and Qualifications; and
- iii) accountability and transparency while undertaking the RPL process.

### 1.3 SCOPE

These standards shall apply to:

- i) accredited QAIs, Regulators, Accredited Assessment Centres, Professional Bodies, Industry and RPL Applicants seeking registration;
- ii) RPL Practitioners in one or more aspects of RPL provision, including policy development, advisory, portfolio building, skill course design and facilitation, assessment and moderation of RPL through administration, monitoring and evaluation; research and development; and competencies attained formally, non-formally and informally.

### 1.4 STRUCTURE

A standard is the level of quality set as the bear minimum to be met before attainment of a qualification. This document consists of fifteen Standards under which are guidelines. The Standards and guidelines are collectively referred to as Standards. To comply with a Standard, the Institution and / or RPL Practitioner must meet each of the specified guideline. An Institution and / or RPL Practitioner applying to offer RPL services must demonstrate the capacity to meet these standards.

For each Standard, background information is also included. The background does not form part of the Standard itself and has been included to assist readers understand the Standard.

### 1.5 LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

The RPL Standards are established under subsection 5(1) and subsection 8(1) of the Kenya National Qualifications Framework Act No. 22 of 2012 that states:

Subsection 5(1): an institution shall not award national qualifications unless such an institution is:

- i) Recognized or accredited in accordance with this Act; or
- ii) A university accredited in accordance with the University Act (N0. 42 of 2012).

Subsection 8(1): the functions of the Authority shall be to:

- i) co-ordinate and supervise the development of policies on national qualifications
- ii) set standards and benchmarks for qualifications and competencies including skills, knowledge, attitudes and values; and
- iii) establish standards for harmonization and recognition of national and foreign qualifications.

## 1.6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The National RPL Standards for RPL will be guided by the following principles:

### 1.6.1 Ethics

All institutions and / or RPL Practitioners will conduct themselves in an ethical manner, without compromise.

### 1.6.2 Integrity

All institutions and / or RPL Practitioners will conduct themselves in a manner that is morally acceptable generally and publicly.

**1.6.3 Confidentiality**  
All information regarding RPL Assessment of an individual should not be divulged to other unauthorized entities.

### 1.6.3 Respect

All participants in the RPL ecosystem shall be treated with utmost respect and dignity throughout the processes.

### 1.6.4 Inclusivity & non- discrimination

Principles and practices of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) will be mainstreamed throughout the RPL process.

### 1.6.5 Access and equity

To realize the goals of national development, access and equity in education and training need to be enhanced to meet the human development needs of a rapidly changing and a more diverse economy.

### 1.6.6 Transparency

All RPL Processes will be carried out as outlined in the RPL Policy, Implementation Guidelines and National Standards for RPL in a transparent manner that promotes openness and accountability at all levels.

## RPL/STD/01: INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

To ensure efficiency and effectiveness of RPL process, the institution shall develop an RPL implementation framework in line with the national RPL Policy.

### **Guidelines**

The Institution shall:

- establish relevant governance and structures for effective implementation of RPL;
- recruit and / or deploy a qualified, competent and experienced management to implement the RPL process;
- establish and integrate ICT in RPL;
- develop and implement the RPL communication strategy;
- establish a quality assurance framework that is aligned to the overall RPL Quality Assurance guidelines;
- establish client support services mechanism;
- provide mentorship to RPL Practitioners;
- report to relevant institutions regularly;
- develop an RPL financing strategy;
- develop an RPL monitoring, evaluation, analysis and learning (MEAL); and
- domesticate standards and guidelines.

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## RPL/STD/02: COMMUNICATION

The institution shall publish and disseminate information about its activities, qualifications, in a clear, accurate and objective manner; and ensure that the information is up-to-date and accessible.

### **Guidelines**

The institution shall:

- i) implement the RPL Communication Strategy;
- ii) ensure that promotion of its qualifications is carried out in a fair and ethical manner, following acceptable best practices, and comply with all relevant laws;

- iii) develop promotional materials to give a clear and accurate view of the RPL Process – its provision, objectives and outcomes;
- iv) Provide information on qualifications offered, application process, entry requirements, benefits and information about the employment opportunities, Identification of qualifications, Qualification Awarding Institutions, Assessment Centers and its accreditation status, Mode of assessment, Level of the qualifications on the Kenya National Qualifications Framework (KNQF), charges involved, rights, obligations and commitments expected of applicants and complains and appeal procedures in line with its mandate; and
- v) Advise on the language of communication, duration of the RPL process and type of certification.

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### RPL/STD/03: AWARENESS CREATION AND PUBLICITY

Regulators and QAIs shall establish awareness creation and publicity plan on RPL in line with the RPL Communication Strategy.

#### **Guidelines**

Regulators and QAIs shall:

- i) develop an RPL awareness creation and publicity plan;
- ii) ensure that stakeholders, potential candidates, and the public are aware of the RPL process;
- iii) establish procedures on awareness creation and publicity;
- iv) prepare Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials for RPL awareness creation and publicity and
- v) regularly review RPL awareness creation and publicity plan.



## RPL/STD/04: ACCREDITATION

QAIs, Assessment Centres and RPL Practitioners shall seek accreditation from relevant regulatory bodies.

### **Guidelines**

- a) Institutions:
    - i. Shall be accredited in line with the RPL Policy
  - b) Qualifications:
    - i. QAIs shall ensure that the qualifications are accredited in line with KNQF
  - c) RPL Practitioners:
    - i. Regulator shall develop a framework for accrediting RPL Practitioners in line with National RPL policy
- 

## RPL/STD/05: REGISTRATION

Assessment centers and RPL Practitioners shall seek registration from relevant QAIs

### **Guidelines**

- a) Institutions shall be registered in line with the RPL Policy
  - b) QAI shall develop a framework for:
    - i) registering RPL Practitioners; and
    - ii) licensing RPL Practitioners in line with the Code of Conduct
  - c) QAI shall ensure certified candidates are registered in line with the laid down procedures.
- 

## RPL/STD/06: APPOINTMENT OF RPL PRACTITIONERS

QAIs shall recruit competent RPL Practitioners from industry and training institutions

### **Guidelines**

QAIs shall:

- i. develop guidelines and criteria for recruitment, appointment and engagement of RPL Practitioners as per RPL Practitioners guide and provisions of Articles 10 and 232 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010;
  - ii. induct RPL Practitioners upon appointment based on RPL Practitioner's manual; and
  - iii. establish a competitive reward and compensation framework that attracts RPL Practitioners.
-

## RPL/STD/07: CAPACITY BUILDING

Regulator and QAI shall continually build their capacity in line with legal mandate. The training of RPL Practitioners shall be guided by a National RPL Practitioners Training Manual.

### Guidelines

- a) The National RPL Practitioners Training Manual shall prescribe:
  - i. the minimum number of hours for training;
  - ii. the mandatory training units to be delivered;
  - iii. the entry requirements into the training program;
  - iv. the requirements for institutions and individuals to deliver the training; and
  - v. monitoring and evaluation plan.
  
- b) Regulator and QAI shall:
  - i. develop a framework for capacity building;
  - ii. implement National RPL Practitioners Training Manual;
  - iii. adhere to the tenets of Articles 10 and 232 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 in capacity building of RPL Practitioners; and
  - iv. develop a system to manage information about the practitioners.

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## RPL/STD/08: ETHICAL PRACTICE AND CODE OF CONDUCT

RPL Practitioners shall exhibit highest level of professionalism by conducting themselves in accordance with relevant legal and professional instruments.

### Guidelines

The RPL Practitioner shall:

- i. adhere to the tenets of Article 10 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010;
- ii. observe RPL Practitioners' Code of Conduct;
- iii. comply with Standards, Rules, Regulations and Guidelines of relevant regulators and QAIs;
- iv. guide clients to meet their expectations;
- v. ensure regular consultations with RPL stakeholders and provide feedback; and
- vi. be subjected to disciplinary action in line with relevant laws and regulations.

## RPL/STD/09: APPLICATION FOR RPL ASSESSMENT

Application for RPL assessment shall be done in accordance with the prescribed format by respective QAIs.

### **Guidelines**

The QAIs shall:

- i. prescribe and provide RPL assessment application format and procedure as per the RPL Policy;
- ii. develop standards operating procedures for receiving and processing applications; and
- iii. invite applicants for counselling and facilitation.

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## RPL/STD/10: COUNSELLING AND FACILITATION

QAIs shall appoint and accredit RPL Counsellors who shall ensure candidates interested in RPL are properly oriented.

QAIs shall ensure candidates interested in RPL obtain detailed information and orientation from qualified RPL Counsellors appointed by accredited QAI.

### **Guidelines**

a) Counselling and Facilitation shall be:

- i. conducted in line with National RPL policy and implementation guidelines;
- ii. carried out in an accredited assessment centers; and
- iii. carried out by accredited RPL practitioners.

b) Portfolio of Evidence (POE) Collection and Assessment

- i. The RPL Counsellor shall guide the candidate to have a POE in line with the qualification level and Assessment Guide.
- ii. The RPL Practitioner shall assess the POE in line with the Assessment Guide.
- iii. The RPL Practitioner shall provide appropriate recommendations based on the outcomes of the assessment.
- iv. The RPL Practitioner shall document and provide feedback in line with the QAI requirements.

c) QAI shall ensure that quality assurance is integrated in the counselling and facilitation process.

## RPL/STD/11: ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION

Assessment shall be conducted to ascertain that the candidate possesses the expected competencies.

### **Guidelines**

- a) Assessment shall be:
  - i. conducted in line with National RPL Policy and Implementation guidelines;
  - ii. carried out in an accredited assessment center by relevant QAI; and
  - iii. carried out by accredited RPL practitioners.
- b) Regulator and QAI shall ensure that quality assurance is integrated in the assessment and that
- c) standards are adhered to.
- d) Regulator and QAI shall develop standards and operating procedures on certification.

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## RPL/STD/12: POST-RPL SUPPORT

Support and feedback shall be provided to all the key stakeholders who participate in the RPL assessment for purposes of continuous improvement of the process.

### **Guidelines**

Support shall be provided to:

- i. candidates to help them realize their full potential. Such support may include skill gap training opportunities, linkages to employment service centers of entrepreneurial hubs, career advice, etc.;
- ii. RPL Practitioners to help them better unpackage RPL given the assessment methodology is different from the traditional assessment;
- iii. institutions (RPL Coordinators) to assure quality of the whole assessment process;
- iv. Employers (Managers) to effectively prepare for the RPL assessment and best leverage on the RPL outcomes as a talent management strategy; and
- v. Carry out tracer studies to establish the impact of RPL.

## RPL/STD/13: COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

To ensure fairness in the RPL process, complaints and appeals handling mechanism shall be defined and communicated.

### **Guidelines**

The institution shall:

- i. develop a complaints and appeals handling procedure;
  - ii. define the period for resolution of complaints and appeals;
  - iii. define the cost implication of appeals;
  - iv. provide feedback to all complaints and appeals; and
  - v. document and report on complaints and appeals in line with the RPL policy and other relevant laws.
- 

## RPL/STD/14: QUALITY ASSURANCE

For efficiency, effectiveness and continual improvement of RPL process, Regulators shall incorporate quality assurance in the RPL process.

### **Guidelines**

a) Regulators shall develop a Quality Assurance Manual to prescribe:

- i. internal quality assurance mechanisms and processes;
- ii. external quality assurance process;
- iii. quality assurance Systems;
- iv. frequency of carrying out quality assurance audits;
- v. timeframe for implementing recommendations; and
- vi. penalties for non-compliance.

b) Institutions shall:

- i. establish institutional quality assurance structures;
- ii. continuously conduct quality assurance audits;
- iii. subject themselves to periodic external review by relevant bodies;
- iv. ensure that quality assurance audit findings are disseminated and implemented; and
- v. undertake periodic review of the quality assurance framework as per the National policy and guidelines.

## RPL/STD/15: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The institutions shall establish policy and system to ensure that the design and the implementation of the RPL process is in line with national and international standards.

### **Guidelines**

The institutions shall:

- i. participate in an annual M&E exercise every five years to determine the impact of RPL; develop and implement RPL M&E strategy;
- ii. establish an M&E Unit;
- iii. develop M&E Tools;
- iv. prepare and submit regular reports;
- v. ensure RPL Practitioners adhere to M&E guidelines;
- vi. ensure availability of competent staff to execute RPL Processes;
- vii. have formal agreement/MoU with relevant actors;
- viii. establish structures and procedures with the approval by relevant bodies;
- ix. effective mechanism for stakeholders in RPL process;
- x. ensure that qualifications are aligned to level descriptors;
- xii. ensure assessment process are in line with QAIs requirements; and
- xiii. ensure maintenance of all documents of RPL processes and follow –up mechanisms.

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## RPL/ STD/16: RPL COSTING

The costing for RPL process shall be implemented in line with the RPL Financing strategy.

### **Guidelines**

Institutions shall:

- i. develop an RPL assessment fee structured in line with the approved differentiated unit cost; and
- ii. implement the approved revenue sharing model;



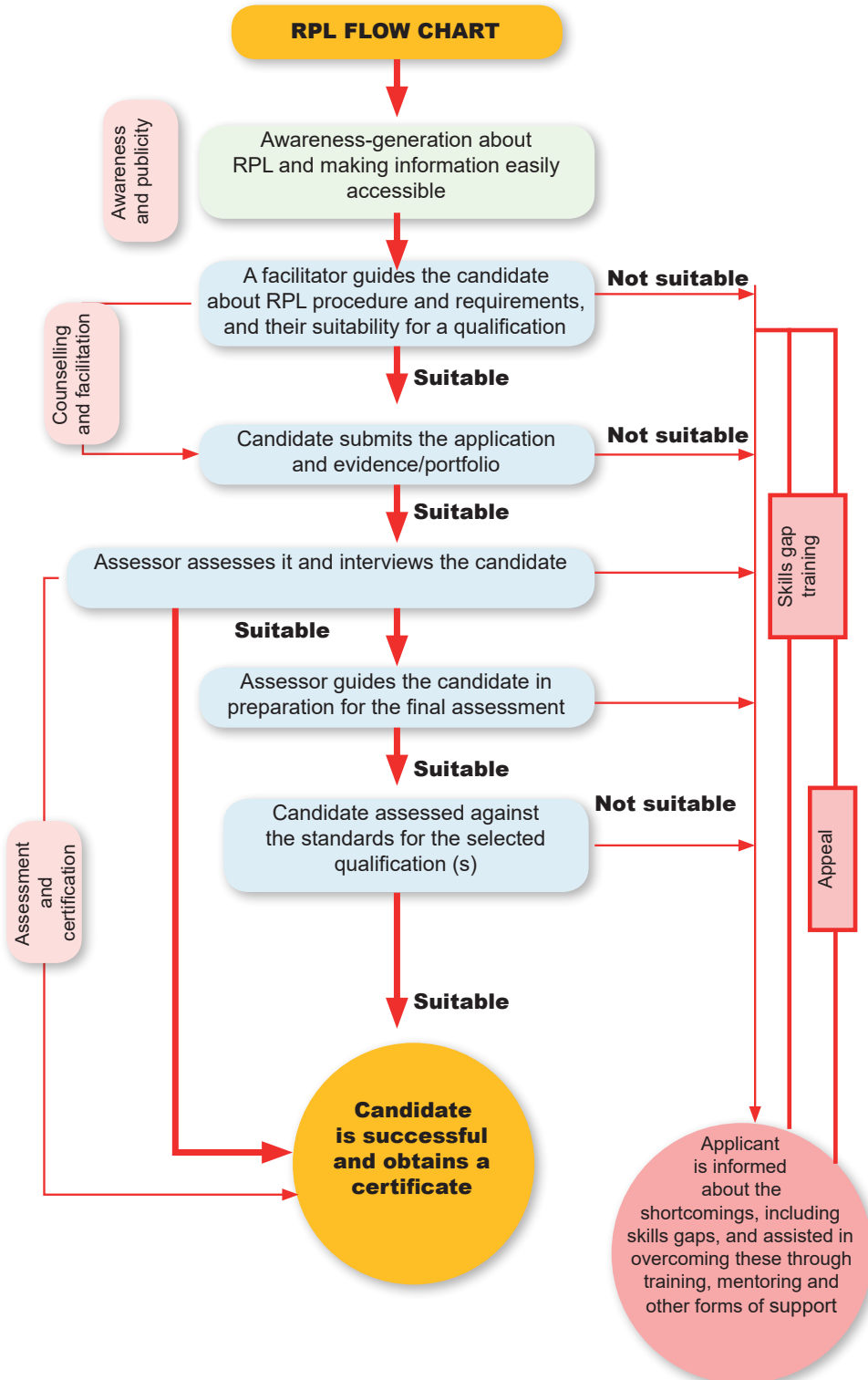
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# APPENDIX

## Appendix 1: RPL Flow Chart

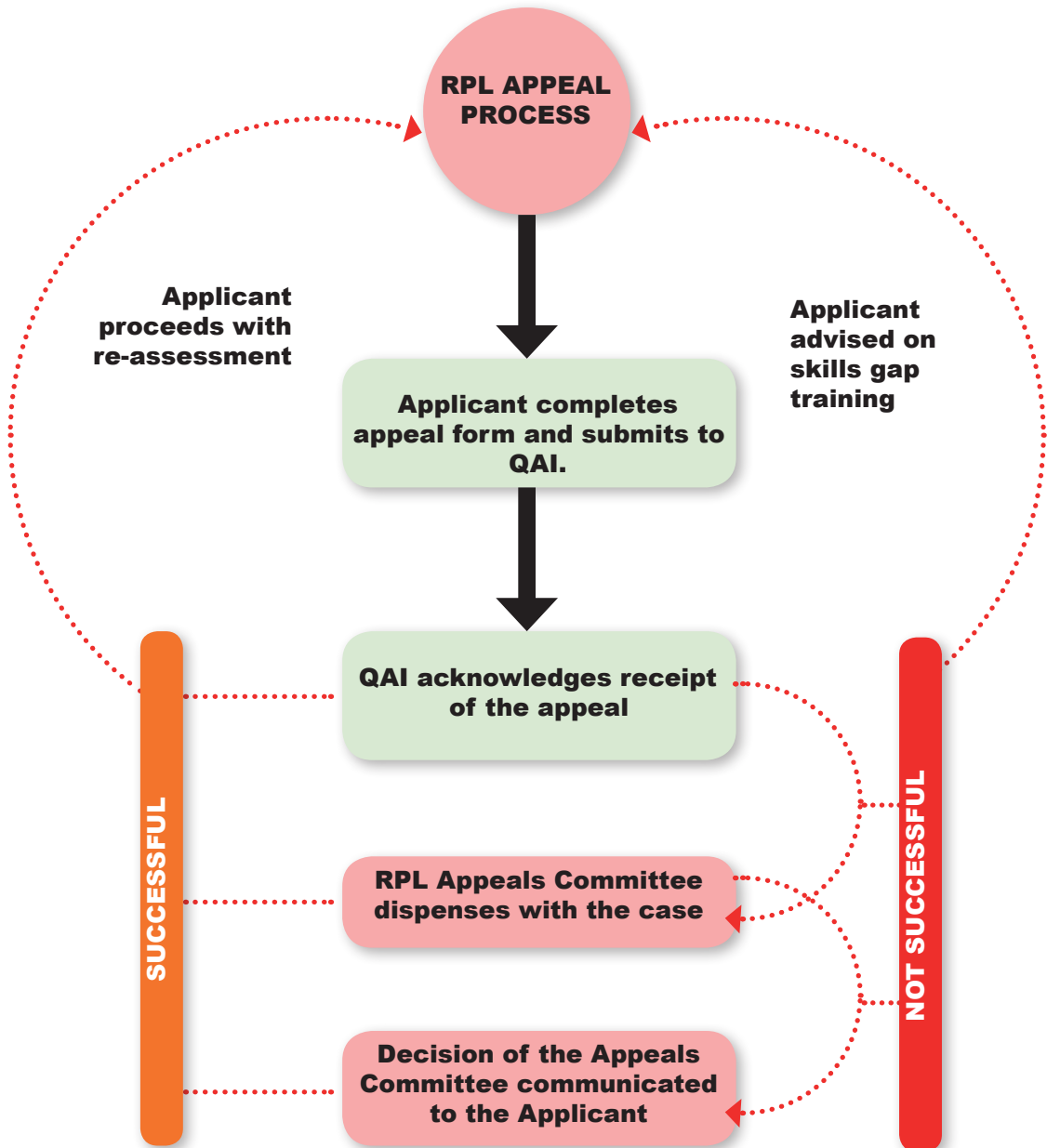


## Appendix 2: KNQF

### KNQF STRUCTURE

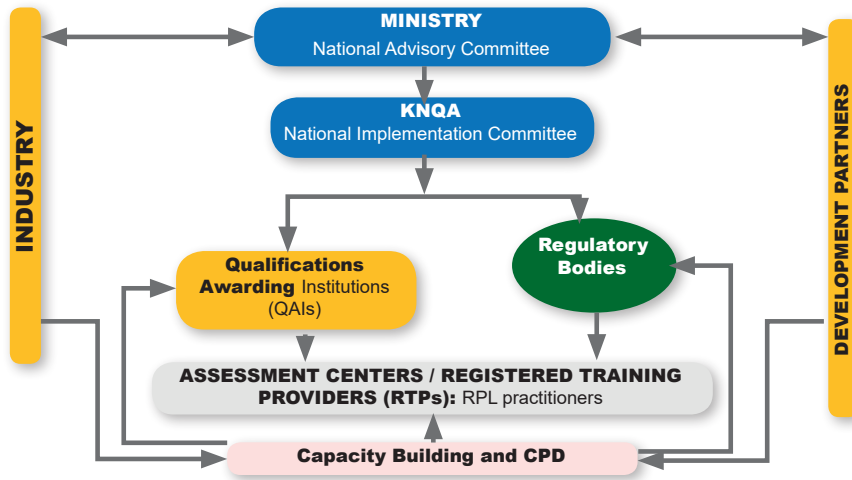
KNQF Level	General and Further Education and Training Sub-Framework		Notional hours (minimum)
10	Doctorate Degree		3600 after KNQA level 9
9	Master's degree		2400 after KNQA level 7
8	Post-Graduate Diploma	Professional Bachelor's Degree	1200 after KNQA level 7 or 6000 after KNQA level 2
7	Bachelor's Degree		Master Crafts Person –I or Management Professional
6	National Diploma		Master Crafts Person –II or Professional Diploma
5	Craft Certificate National Certificate National Vocational Certificate-IV		Professional Certificate or Master Craft Person III
4	National Vocational Certificate- III/Artisan Certificate		National Skills Certificate –I GTT-I
3	National Vocational Certificate-II		National Skills Certificate -II / (GTT – II)
2	Secondary Certificate	National Vocational Certificate- I	National Skills Certificate -III / Government Trade Test (GTT-III)
1	Primary Certificate		Basic Skills/Skills for Life Birth Certificate

### Appendix 3: The Appeal Process



## Appendix 4: Institutional Arrangement

### Institutional arrangement



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