

Frameworks of qualifications: A review of developments outside of the State

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Chapter 1 Overview of Qualifications Systems

Introduction

1. This paper aims to set out the nature of systems of qualifications that are in place internationally. The aim is to inform the Irish stakeholders on current international developments during the process of the development of a national framework of qualifications in Ireland. It is important to note that many systems are undergoing change and detailed information about systems and policy goes out of date quickly. We are grateful to all those from England, Scotland, the Netherlands, South Africa and Australia who have commented on the first draft. In addition to comments from South Africa we have also received a copy of the report of the study team on the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework. This report also includes a useful chapter on International Developments.

2. There are multiple systems of qualifications in operation in most countries. Various efforts have been to encompass these systems of qualifications within frameworks. Frameworks are devices to support coordination, correspondence, coherence, integration or harmonisation of alternative, sometimes competing, systems. Some of these attempts refer to the qualifications made within a given jurisdiction, whether regional or national. Others are international in scope. Frameworks may be comprehensive, that is including all sectors of education and training, or sectoral, distinguishing, for example, between vocational and academic education. A related distinction may be drawn between frameworks that are comprehensive with respect to all awards and those which cover a restricted part of a range, e.g., only higher education qualifications or only vocational education and training qualifications. Some frameworks refer only to qualifications relating to a specific field of learning. Finally, frameworks vary widely in their legal status, e.g. voluntary, regulatory, statutory and treaty-based. This paper first considers the foregoing typology of frameworks in greater detail. There then follows a review of some international frameworks or systems, and then looks in detail at developments within individual countries.

3. The approach to framework development that has been most comprehensive in ambition is that associated with New Zealand, the United Kingdom. (with separate frameworks in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England), Australia and South Africa. Each of these predominantly English-speaking, common law, Commonwealth states has formally developed and published a national framework of qualifications within the past decade or so. Although the resultant frameworks have been mutually informed they are by no means identical. They differ in objectives and details. For example, the Australian framework, which is designed to operate in a federal country, functions more as a comprehensive instrument of national policy than as a tightly-structured system of regulation as in New Zealand, where a single, central, authority has statutory responsibility for all qualifications, except those of universities.

A common feature of the inherited qualifications systems of these countries is a “mixed economy” of qualifications, partly derived from legal, governmental authority and partly from voluntary, mutual, recognition in the marketplace.

Many Continental European countries have traditionally differentiated between different sectors of education and training and maintained parallel frameworks for vocational or professional education and training and academic education and training. These frameworks (found, for example, in the Netherlands, Germany, Spain and France) extend from secondary through to tertiary education and training. The existing qualification systems in these countries are typically heavily dependent on legal public authority. The relative inflexibility associated with qualifications based in the legal code has raised issues for these systems in an era of internationalisation and globalisation which they are in the process of considering. These include internationalisation, the mobility of people with qualifications and of institutions bringing their award bearing programmes through extension and franchising. One consequence has been that public and private awarding bodies from Britain and Ireland have found business demand for their qualifications within other European countries. Continental countries, like the Anglophone countries, are also exposed to the globalised qualifications offered within what Adelman (Senior Research Analyst, U.S. Department of Education) has described as the “parallel universe” of professional qualifications, especially in information technology. These operate without reference to any national qualifications system or framework. Detailed accounts of individual continental and commonwealth frameworks are given below.

4. The United States has a distinctive system of education and training and in turn a distinctive philosophy underpinning its qualifications (“credentials”) system. At the centre lies a strong principle of voluntarism, with qualifications afforded minimal public legal protection as qualifications. There are public interest protections in respect of license to practice. In this marketplace of qualifications, mechanisms and conventions have evolved which constitute a de facto framework of qualifications based around a series of “portal” qualifications – high school diploma (or equivalent), associate degree, bachelors degree, graduate degree. Each of these can form the basis for progression to the succeeding level. There are also programmes which result in certificates. These are largely vocationally oriented and delivered through community colleges. The role of the federal government is largely through “soft” support mechanisms for voluntary activities. An example of this that touches on the maintenance of the quasi-framework of qualifications is the financial support of the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB). State government influences the system through regulation, planning and co-ordination of publicly-funded institutions. The United States is the birthplace of many of the professional qualifications based around the certification of competence. These challenge the United States qualifications systems every bit as much as they do those of the Continent or the Commonwealth.

5. Frameworks of qualifications may also incorporate mechanisms for the recognition of smaller bundles of learning outcomes than those associated with traditional qualifications. These are sometimes referred to as credit systems. New

Zealand, South Africa and Scotland have such systems. Unit standards can be registered as well as whole awards, across the levels of these frameworks. Northern Ireland and Wales have also introduced credit frameworks and progress is being made towards introducing one in England through the developing of existing consortia among awarding bodies. The credit frameworks in the United Kingdom are based in the experience of operating credit transfer arrangements among smaller pools of awarding bodies. They appear to be converging on a common unit of credit, based on notional learning time of 10 hours. A typical full-time year in school, further or higher education comprises of 1200 learning hours or 120 credits.

The United States has long experience of operating a credit accumulation and transfer system. This voluntary system is based around the Carnegie credit hour. This is a unit of measure representing an hour (50 minutes) of instruction over a 15-week period in a semester or trimester system or a 10-week period in a quarter system. It is applied toward the total number of hours needed for completing the requirements of a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award. The system is based around input rather than outcome standards. The decision to recognise the credits of another institution rests with the receiving institution and the system has numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements, which in some cases are regulated by the individual states for public institutions.

The emergence of widespread student mobility in higher education under the Erasmus and Socrates schemes of the European Union stimulated the development of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). This has provided a mechanism for the recognition of learning undertaken in another institution. The ECTS unit is based around 1/60th of a full-time academic year in higher education. There are currently a number of projects underway to investigate the feasibility of developing ECTS into a scheme for credit accumulation as well as transfer.

6. The highest level authoritative overview of international education and training systems is that of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was designed by UNESCO in the early 1970s to serve 'as an instrument suitable for assembling, compiling and presenting statistics of education both within individual countries and internationally'. It is a framework for collecting statistical information about provision of education and training rather than about qualifications but it shares two features with qualifications frameworks, namely a specification of levels and of fields of learning. In both these regards it aspires to be comprehensive and universal. Attached in appendix 1.

The growth in European integration and cooperation, as well as the advent of globalisation, has sparked the development of number of related frameworks or quasi-frameworks at a transnational level in Europe. The European Union's policies on the free movement of labour brought about recognition of the obstacles to movement related to incompatible qualifications systems. However, the Union has limited authority in the area of education, which is a national prerogative. Inasmuch as qualification systems depend on educational systems the Union cannot establish a European qualifications framework. In the area of vocational training, however, there is greater scope for EU action. This resulted in the establishment of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the adoption of

the European five-level framework of vocational training qualifications by European Council decision of 16 July 1985 (On the comparability of vocational training qualifications between the Member States of the European Community, 85/368/EEC). However as is discussed later in the paper, this CEDEFOP framework, while serving as a guide to the development and revision of qualification systems, has not been adopted by member states on a widespread basis. The European 5 level framework is attached in appendix 2.

7. The Bologna declaration in 1999 marks the formal commencement of a process to create a single higher education space in Europe. This is an intergovernmental agreement of 30 European states. Associated with the Bologna process is the development of more closely coordinated system of programmes of study and associated qualifications in the various countries. In particular there is a desire to introduce a first and second cycle (Bachelors and Masters awards) into each national system. This constitutes a partial framework for higher education in Europe. At this stage there is no agreed descriptor of these levels beyond the input specifications for the Bachelors agreed at Helsinki in the run-up to the Prague Conference of the Bologna Process. These were that the Bachelors degree should consist of 180 to 240 ECTS credits and should be based on a free-standing curriculum, not just part of a Masters programme. The Authority has joined with agencies from a number of other countries in the Joint Quality Initiative to identify whether a basis exist to develop further a common descriptor for the Bachelors and Masters degrees. A provisional outcome for this process is the set of shared descriptors produced at a meeting in Dublin and endorsed in Amsterdam in March 2002, Attached in appendix 5. The Bologna Declaration is attached in appendix 3 and the Prague Communiqué is attached in appendix 4.

8. There are a number of international disciplinary-based frameworks. These are designed to cover the various levels of learning within a single area of study. Perhaps the best developed of these is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. It was developed by the Council of Europe and has recently been adopted by the European Council as a recommended instrument for setting up systems to validate language competences. It is based on three broad levels (Basic, Independent and Proficient User), each of which has two sub-divisions. Detailed illustrative descriptors were devised for the six levels. Learners have various sets of competences in different aspects of language which are not all necessarily at the same level. The set of general competences is divided into knowledge, skills and know how and existential competence. A summary of this framework is attached appendix 6.

Descriptions of Outcomes

9. Among the Commonwealth group of national frameworks it is possible to identify many common elements. They have drawn off each other in their development as well as sharing common historical roots in their systems and philosophies of education and training. None of them explicitly use the three-fold description of learning in terms of knowledge, skill and competence that the Irish legislation does.

The following table sets out the approximate relationships between the outcome dimensions for the frameworks of Scotland, Northern Ireland, Australia and South Africa. Note that each of these frameworks has a separate, cohesive rationale for the way the classify outcomes and this comparative analysis, using the three strands of knowledge, know-how and skill, and competence defined in the policies and criteria for the Irish framework, does not really do justice to those rationales. The New Zealand framework level descriptors do not map readily onto the other framework. Levels below honours bachelors are described using the stem, “Carry out processes that ... employing ... applied in/with ...”. Higher degrees are described using the stem, “Involves skills and knowledge that enable the learner to ...”

Systems of classifying learning outcomes for determination of generic level

| Ireland | SCQF | NICATS | AQF* | SA NQF |
|-------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Knowledge | Knowledge and understanding | Intellectual skills and attributes - knowledge | Knowledge | (Foundational Competence) |
| Know-ho and Skill | Generic cognitive skills Communication, ICT & numeracy skills Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding | Intellectual skills and attributes - skills - problem solving - info mgmt | Skill Problem solving Use of information | Foundation Competence |
| Competence | Autonomy, accountability and working with others (Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding) | Processes - context - process - role & function Accountability - autonomy - output - quality | Application of skills in context Output accountability Responsibility for others | Practical Competence Reflexive Competence |

*AQF does not use levels. Qualifications outside the HE sector, however, are differentiated by a series of related questions about learning outcomes in various domains (not all of which are applied to each qualification).

10. The terms knowledge, skill and competence are widely used in the communication on life long learning from the Commission and in documentation from the OECD. The definition of life long learning from the European commission is that ‘All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.’

The OECD has a major project underway for the ‘Definition and Selection of Competencies’ (DeSeCo). It identifies knowledge and skills along with strategies, procedures, emotions, attitudes and the management of these components as criteria for the definition of competence. The objective of defining these criteria is to enable the study and comparison of education and training systems from around the world, and especially the levels of attainment of core, key, generic or transversal competencies acquired. The project’s current proposal is to use three constructs – acting autonomously, using tools interactively, joining and functioning in socially heterogeneous groups – as a conceptual tool for organising and describing the competencies referred to in the lists suggested by experts and national consultations.

11. Another indication of the significance currently being attached to systems of qualifications within the OECD is a project currently underway to investigate the role of qualifications systems in promoting lifelong learning. This project is seeking to share experiences of dealing with the pressures and demands on qualifications systems over the past decade, identify common policy issues and challenges, and share experience and instruments for designing and managing qualifications systems, including frameworks of qualifications. The Authority is co-ordinating the Irish input into this project. This project is welcome as there appears to be a dearth of comparative research on the effectiveness of the various initiatives in framework development.

Chapter 2 European National Frameworks

12. This is a brief description and comparison of the national qualifications frameworks of Germany, Spain, France, Netherlands, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is based in part on “European structures of qualification levels” published by CEDEFOP in 2001. This document proposes criteria for the scope of national classification systems as follows:

- a) the application and use of the system is broader than for the identification and regulation of curricula and certification of vocational education programmes
- b) whether or not a system is a cohesive and comprehensive framework incorporating qualifications or a set of levels while these levels are defined coherently.
- c) whether or not the classification system is monopolistic in two senses, it comprises all qualifications that can be obtained and/or no other systems are in use.

CEDEFOP found that none of the five countries meets all these criteria. Presently it considered that England and France are closest, with Spain coming close to meeting the criteria. Overall they found a move towards the uncoupling of qualifications and curricula. There are also many cases of frameworks being made up of frameworks in order to meet the specific national requirements, i.e., separate vocational and tertiary frameworks. There were also different approaches taken based on whether they should be based on specific occupation or job characteristic or provide learners with a broader career perspective.

13. The CEDEFOP report also listed six criteria for defining levels:
1. Input criteria/admission requirements for education and training programmes.
 2. Characteristics of the programmes delivering qualifications, programme duration and learning venues.
 3. Output criteria in terms of learning outputs; the attainment goals.
 4. Output criteria in terms of occupational practice or characteristics of work.
 5. The position of a qualification in occupational hierarchies.
 6. Equivalence statements, formally stating the equality of qualifications at a certain level.

England and France are the only 2 countries that come close to meeting these criteria. The role of the state in developing and maintaining the standards and qualifications varies both between the countries and within the countries. The report states that qualifications are social constructs and thus the allocation of qualifications to levels can become subject to political and socio-cultural pressures. Overall, it found that none of the countries has a classification system consisting of one unique set of qualifications serving as the reference frame to certify a wide variety of learning and work experience at a wide and exhaustive range of levels. Also the report found that a completely unified structure does not seem to be very realistic, as there will always be somebody who will want to issue certificates outside the system. Only the English and French multi level frameworks cover both secondary and tertiary qualifications. In Germany, Holland and Spain vocational education and training and higher professional education can be regarded as subsystems within the national education system.

England

14. England and Wales have a national framework covering general secondary and tertiary education, vocational education and training, post initial training, work based learning and prior learning. The framework in England has 8 levels and three types of qualification (general, vocationally related and occupational).

There are national standards of occupational or professional competencies in the vocational/further sector. They focus on outcomes based on occupational competencies and sector standards. They are not curriculum specifications. They are open to local interpretation which has implications for quality assurance. They are not related to formal education and training provision. They are broken down into a modular/unit structure and can be used in different ways to build a qualification. Similarly some vocational qualifications can be unrelated and never seek or gain accreditation to the framework. However, the introduction of the 'modern apprenticeship' could be seen as a form of full certification. The UK is unique in European terms in not having a framework based totally on full certification. It is possible to have modules/units independently recognised and certified. This has led to complexity and there is now an attempt to reduce the number of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and the number of vocational qualifications that are not National Vocational Qualifications.

15. The development of national occupational standards which are used to build National Vocational Qualifications and Scottish Vocational Qualifications are regulated in the UK. National occupational standards are developed by National Training Organisations (NTOs) which are standards setting bodies. After draft standards are agreed by the four regulatory authorities across the UK nations they form the basis for qualifications which are developed in conjunction with awarding bodies. These in turn are submitted to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) or to the SQA in Scotland for acceptance to the national qualifications framework (NQF). More than one awarding body may develop qualifications based on the same set of occupational standards. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority has separate criteria for General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSE), General Certificate of Education (A level), General Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ's). A few National Training Organisations are also awarding bodies. National Vocational Qualifications are approved for a fixed period, normally 3-5 years.

16. Some General Vocational Qualifications have labels such as foundation, intermediate and advanced. The level gains meaning from the qualifications which have been placed in the adjacent higher or lower level. The National Vocational Qualifications do have descriptors which are output based and refer to the work activity only, not the characteristics of the learner. They are known by the 5 level system which is described below. The criteria are sufficiently vague to allow substantial variations across different occupational areas.

17. While National Vocational Qualifications 4 and 5 are intended to cover tertiary education they are not widely used by third level institutions. The Dearing

report recommended that tertiary education have 8 levels to include degrees and sub degrees. Responsibility for higher education is shared between the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the Quality Assurance Agency. It has the Higher Education Qualifications Framework which has 5 levels from Certificate to Doctorate. There is an overlap with the National Vocational Qualifications levels which could be interpreted as a national framework with 8 levels, but this has not been formally accepted in England. The English framework does not actively embrace credit within its specifications, nor does it attempt to make any reference to the 5 European levels. It can however be considered a state run system as it has a standing organisation responsible for maintaining the framework.

The National Vocational Qualifications 5-level framework for vocational qualifications is:

I Occupational competence in performing a range of tasks under supervision.

II Occupational competence in performing a wider, more demanding range of tasks with limited supervision.

III Occupational competence required for satisfactory, responsible performance in a defined occupation or range of jobs.

IV Competence to design and specify defined tasks, products or processes and to accept responsibility for the work of others.

Level V Should reflect competence at professional level with mastery of a range of relevant knowledge and the ability to apply it at a higher level than IV.

These levels are linked to school based qualifications and tertiary education as the following table shows:

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|---|---|-------------|
| Postgraduate & professional* | Capability Key Skills Award | | | BTEC Professional Development Diploma | NVQ Level 5 |
| degree* | Capability Key Skills Award | | BTEC Higher National Certificate/ Diploma | BTEC Professional Development Certificate | NVQ level 4 |
| *not offered by edexcel | | | | | |
| A level AS qualification | Advanced Key Skills Award | Advanced GNVQ | BTEC National Certificate/ Diploma | BTEC Professional Development Award | NVQ Level 3 |
| GCSE A*-C | Intermediate Key Skills Award | Intermediate GNVQ | BTEC First Certificate/ Diploma | | NVQ Level 2 |
| | | Part One | | | |
| GCSE D-G | Foundation Key Skills Award | Foundation GNVQ | | | NVQ Level 1 |
| | | Part One | | | |
| | Entry Key Skills Award | | | | |

The Quality Assurance Agency has defined the structure for the Higher Education Qualifications Framework as follows with an overlap at level 1 and 2 with level 4 and 5 of the National Vocational Qualification system.

| | | |
|----------------------|----------|--|
| 1 Certificate level | C | Certificates of Higher Education |
| 2 Intermediate level | I | Foundation degrees, ordinary (Bachelors) degrees, Diplomas of Higher Education and other higher diplomas |
| 3 Honours level | H | Bachelors degrees with Honours, Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas |
| 4 Masters level | M | Masters degrees, Postgraduate Certificates and Postgraduate Diplomas |
| 5 Doctoral level | D | Doctorates |

Wales

18. . The Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales (CQFW) has 9 levels (entry level plus level 1 to 8). It is also a credit framework. The Welsh framework will not replace the two existing qualifications frameworks but will be directly linked. These are the Higher Education Qualifications Framework and the National Qualifications Framework for general secondary and tertiary education, vocational education and training, post initial training, work based learning and prior learning. Both cover England Wales and Northern Ireland. Neither of these frameworks include credits within its specification.

A 'credit common accord' for assigning and awarding credit is being agreed with awarding bodies and in association with the qualification and curriculum authorities (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, QCA, and the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, ACCAC). Credit is defined as a measure of learning outcomes achievable in notional hours at a given level and an award made to a learner in recognition of the verified achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified level. One credit equates to learning outcomes achievable in 10 hours of notional learning time. Credit is currently used by most Higher Education Institutes in the UK. It has also been established as the standard unit of credit for the Northern Ireland and Scottish single (post-16) framework developments.

19. Nine credit levels have been developed through work undertaken in Wales and England and consolidated in Northern Ireland (see below). It embraces all learning from entry to postgraduate level. While the credit framework is unique to Wales, the same qualifications and structures are used in Wales and England.

As in England there is no direct reference to the 5 European levels. Qualification levels (summative outcomes of whole qualifications) and credit levels (demand on the learner for achieving individual units/modules) are not the same, but they are related as indicated below.

| CQFW | Credis and | NQF Qualification Levels | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Credit Levels | HE Credit Levels | | |
| 8 | HE 5 | Doctoral (D) | |
| 7 | HE 4 (Masters) | Masters (M) | NVQ 5 |
| 6 | HE 3 | Honours (H) | NVQ 4 |
| 5 | HE 2 | Intermediate (I) | NVQ 4 |
| 4 | HE 1 | Certificate (C) | NVQ 4 |
| 3 | 3 | | NVQ 3 / Advanced |
| 2 | 2 | | NVQ 2 / Intermediate |
| 1 | 1 | | NVQ 1 / Foundation |
| Entry | Entry | | Entry |

The generic level descriptors used in the Welsh framework are the same as those developed in Northern Ireland and are included in that section.

Scotland

20. The Scottish Framework includes qualifications across academic and vocational sectors into a single credit based framework. It is managed by a partnership of national bodies. It has 12 levels and covers all stages of education and training. They are made up of three overlapping streams, the secondary educational, vocational and tertiary.

The levels of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) are broad generic levels of outcome. Each Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework level has a descriptor, which sets out in relatively brief, generic terms, the outcomes associated with each level. The levels and the descriptors are designed as a national set of reference points for use by all providers and all stakeholders and against which any learning outcomes can be located.

21. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework level descriptors are published by the Joint Advisory Committee for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. They relate to all qualifications within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and therefore refer not only to qualifications of higher education institutions but also, for example, at a single level (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework 7) to Advanced Highers and Higher National Certificates as well as to Certificates of Higher Education. Each qualification will be distinguished by its particular purpose and characteristic outcomes (as outlined in the qualification descriptors) and by the volume of credit required for its award. The level descriptors can, therefore, aim to provide only a general shared understanding of each level. In designing their own programmes or parts of programmes, institutions may use these generic descriptors, or they might wish to develop their own set of descriptors that reflect the particular focus of their provision. Alternatively, and where the focus is on whole qualifications, they will use the qualification descriptors as set out. The framework is also credit based and results in Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SCOTCAT) points. However the awarding bodies and universities will continue to determine the extent to which credit transfer can take place.

These concepts are used consistently throughout the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and, apart from credits, are shared also with the higher education framework for the rest of the UK. As with the UK system there is no linkage to the European 5 levels.

| The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework | | | | |
|---|--|--|---------------|------------|
| SCQF level | SQA National Units, Courses and Group Awards | Higher Education | SVQs* | SCQF level |
| 12 | | Doctorates | | 12 |
| 11 | | Masters | SVQ 5 | 11 |
| 10 | | Honours Degree Graduate Diploma/Certificate** | | 10 |
| 9 | | Ordinary Degree Graduate Diploma/Certificate** | | 9 |
| 8 | | Higher National Diploma Diploma in Higher Education | SVQ 4 | 8 |
| 7 | Advanced Higher | Higher National Certificate Certificate in Higher Education | | 7 |
| 6 | Higher | | SVQ 3* | 6 |
| 5 | Intermediate 2 Credit Standard Grade | | SVQ 2 | 5 |
| 4 | Intermediate 1 General Standard Grade | | SVQ 1 | 4 |
| 3 | Access 3 Foundation Standard Grade | | | 3 |
| 2 | Access 2 | | | 2 |
| 1 | Access 1 | | | 1 |

Northern Ireland

22. The Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System is a credit and qualifications framework which has been developed to allow learning to be recognised in all its shapes and forms, no matter how it is acquired. It is a set of principles and guidelines to value, describe, measure and recognise all learning. This includes learning in traditional settings such as schools, colleges and universities and also learning within the community and in the workplace.

The Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System has produced a model for designing programmes of learning that places less emphasis on qualifications and more emphasis on credit for smaller blocks of learning. It doesn't replace qualifications but it does allow programmes of learning to be offered to learners in smaller blocks for which credit at a specified level is then given.

23. The Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System recognises 9 levels which are described as entry level to level 3 (Further Education); and levels 4-8 (Higher Education).

Learners can build these credits towards a qualification. So, someone with an A level in French will be recognised as having achieved a certain number of Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System credits at a particular level. Another person holding a very different qualification, such as a National Vocational Qualification in Business Administration will also be seen to have achieved a specified number of credits at a particular level. This means that people who aren't familiar with A levels and National Vocational Qualifications, some employers perhaps, will be able to compare and contrast these two different awards because each will be described in terms of Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System credits and levels - this is the common language for learning which the Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System offers.

When all learning is expressed in this way, people will be able to hold a transcript of all the NICATS credits that they have accumulated in their learning career.

24. NICATS is not an awarding body. However, it is working in partnership with the awarding bodies to prescribe guidelines for the recognition of credit. In addition, these same guidelines enable training and education providers to devise programmes that are compatible with the principles and guidelines recommended by NICATS.

The Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System - Summary of the generic level descriptors:

The level descriptors should be seen as a developmental continuum in which preceding levels are necessarily subsumed within those which follow.

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

ENTRY LEVEL - employ recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas, exercise basic skills within highly structured contexts, and carry out directed activity under close supervision.

LEVEL 1 - employ a narrow range of applied knowledge, skills and basic comprehension within a limited range of predictable and structured contexts, including working with others under direct supervision, but with a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible action.

LEVEL 2 - apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas and employ a range of skills within a number of contexts, some of which may be non-routine; and undertake directed activities, with a degree of autonomy, within time constraints.

LEVEL 3 - apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories; access and analyse information independently and make reasoned judgements, selecting from a considerable choice of procedures, in familiar and unfamiliar contexts; and direct own activities, with some responsibility for the output of others.

LEVEL 4 - Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base; employ a range of specialised skills; evaluate information using it to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems; and operate in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.

LEVEL 5 - generate ideas through the analysis of concepts at an abstract level, with a command of specialised skills and the formulation of responses to well defined and abstract problems; analyse and evaluate information; exercise significant judgement across a broad range of functions; and accept responsibility for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

LEVEL 6 - critically review, consolidate and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge, utilizing specialised skills across an area of study; critically evaluate new concepts and evidence from a range of sources; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills and exercise significant judgement in a range of situations; and accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

LEVEL 7 - display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills, employing advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for related decision making including use of supervision.

LEVEL 8 - Make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry demonstrating a command of methodological issues and engaging in critical dialogue with peers; accepting full accountability for outcomes.

Spain

25. Spain is introducing a comprehensive classification framework. Work is in progress on a national catalogue of vocational qualifications and regulated vocational training. It will be managed by a national commission who will set up a new system of qualification levels. This will also co-ordinate the development of standards.

Presently there are 3 systems in the vocational sector, State certifications, regulated and vocational qualification certificates. Currently there is no modular certification and qualifications are linked to vocational and educational programmes. There are 3 levels in the vocational system and are based on the nature and context of work and the skills, knowledge and experience required. Level 1 is part of a social guarantee process. Level 2 and 3 are directly linked to the European levels. The work in this sector is done by a tripartite consultative body, the General Council for Vocational Training. It uses sectoral studies and produces standards for two type of training, occupational vocational training and regulated vocational training. There is ongoing debate on whether to continue with the European levels or adopt a National Vocational Qualifications type approach.

26. There are 3 levels in the tertiary sector which mirror the European levels 4 and 5 and the proposed levels from the Bologna process. The placing of sub degree programmes at level 4 is causing problems as to whether they are in higher or vocational. The universities are directly responsible for organising and establishing their own educational services and curricula. This must meet the guidelines and be approved by the Universities Council. These official degrees and diplomas are regulated by the government. In addition, state universities and many private institutions award private degrees which are not officially recognised but do have currency with employers. There does not appear to be a national system of credits.

The following table describes level 2 and 3 of the Spanish Vocational system:

| Descriptors | Nature and context of the Work | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|--|----------------------------------|
| | Work processes and procedures | Information and inputs | Nature and types of decisions | Scope of relations | Type of organisational relations |
| Intermediate (Level 2) | Formalised Technical variables | Defined and pre-existing Indicative and binding Technique: Part specifications, instruction manuals, Codes | Alternatives limited to certain resources, tools and rates | Individual and possibly group Internal | They require task control |
| Advanced (Level 3) | Non-formalised Technical/scientific and organisational variables | Totally or partly undefined Technical/organisational/economic: general plans, process manuals. Need to process information | They affect procedures, resources and technical efficiency | Group regulated reciprocally Unit External | They require supervision of aims |

France

27. There is a proposal to parliament to introduce an all encompassing framework. The existing system is based on grades of the Ministry of Education. They are organised within an architecture of levels and fields. Formal vocational diplomas in initial education are the responsibility of the Ministry of education in conjunction with other relevant ministries. The work is carried out in consultation with a certification and recognition commission based on social partnership. The framework is underpinned by three documents. These are the occupational activity frame of

reference, the certification framework which includes the skills to be attained and the legally binding exam regulations. The certification framework has 5 elements.

The occupational field/activity

Skills summary

Competencies and know how.

Table of relationships between know how and knowledge

Specifications for associated knowledge

28. The standards are education and provision based. Qualifications are normally obtainable only through educational and training programmes. While there are certification of units, the units have no value on their own as there is a specific requirement in terms of units for a diploma. There are 6 levels and three pathways or diploma type. These are General, Technical and Vocational. Diplomas are school/provider specific with the result that there are 1,000s of diplomas. Because of this there is a move towards occupation defined diplomas. The national commission is responsible for positioning these. There is a national classification of training specialities and occupations.

29. Objectives of the education/training programmes are the key elements of the framework. The system is not suitable for international comparability as at each level a wide range of qualifications are classified. It is normal to rank diplomas independently of specific education/training programmes. France can be considered to have a set of criteria for defining levels.

While there is presently no direct link with the European levels the French system of the 1980s inspired the European levels. There are tensions between the needs of employers and those of the state. The levels extend to third level education and training, Levels I, II and III cover tertiary with II at honours bachelor level. The six different levels of the training level classification system classify individuals both by jobs and diplomas, criteria from which a normal equivalence is established.

The different levels are described below:

Levels I and II: personnel occupying positions usually requiring a level of training equal or superior to the "licence" of engineering schools.

Level III: personnel occupying positions usually requiring the higher technician diploma training level or a diploma from the IUTs (higher technological institutes) and end of the first cycle of higher education.

Level IV: personnel occupying supervisory staff positions or possessing a level of qualification equivalent to a technical or technician baccalaureate or technician diploma.

Level V: personnel occupying positions usually requiring a training level equivalent to the BEP (Vocational Studies Certificate) and the CAP (Certificate d'Aptitude Professionnelle).

Level Va: personnel occupying positions requiring a short training of a year maximum, leading in particular to the *Certificat d'éducation professionnelle* (Certificate of vocational education) or any other certification of the same nature.

The following comparison has been produced by Égide, who manage the French government's international cooperation initiatives.

| UK | France |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Youth Training (NVQ Level 1, 2) | CAP (Certificate d'Aptitude Professionnelle) |
| BTEC First Diploma | BEP (Brevet d'Etude Professionnelle) |
| GNVQ Foundation (NVQ Level 1) | |
| GCSE'S under C grade (D - G) | BEPC (Brevet des Collèges) |
| GNVQ Intermediate | |
| GCSE'S above C grade (NVQ Level 2) | No equivalent |
| A LEVELS | BACCALAUREAT GENERAL |
| BTEC National / | Baccalauréat Technologique |
| GNVQ Advanced (NVQ Level 3) | Baccalauréat Professionel |
| | OR Brevet Technicien (Taken while working) |
| BTEC HND | BTS (Brevet de technicien Supérieur) |
| Diploma of Higher Education | DEUG (Diplôme d'Etude Universitaire Générale) |
| | DEUST (Diplôme d'Etude Universitaire de |
| | Science et Technologie) |
| BA/BSC Degree (NVQ Level 4) | Licence |
| MA/MSC (NVQ Level 5) | Maîtrise |
| PHD (Doctor of Philosophy) | Doctorat |

Germany

30. Germany does not have a comprehensive classification framework for all education and training. It does have classification at individual and vocational areas.

At further/vocational level it has 5 distinct subsystems with 3 levels. These levels are skilled worker, apprentice/craft worker and mastercraft worker/technician. The main criteria for defining the framework is the law that is applied e.g., national, federal or lander. There are national state regulated apprenticeships that are work linked. These have clearly defined national exit qualifications. There are federal and state regulated which are full time school based. Meister is subject based with federal exam requirements.

31. The higher professional and universities are within a federal framework law for higher education. In addition, there are higher education laws of the 16 federal Lander. Vocational colleges and other providers are governed by Land laws. The classification of qualifications in the vocational and further area are related to the programme content. This can result in considerable differences between individual awards and branches of study. Unification is not possible in Germany and is actively opposed, especially at vocational level. At tertiary level until recently full

qualifications only were possible. The introduction of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has brought about changes in this area.

32. Many stakeholders are involved at all levels with the exception of tertiary and all qualifications have legal status. The Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB) plays a central role in most vocational qualifications, either as the main developer or as support to the Lander and social partners. Standards are incorporated into curricula and qualifications and are directly linked to provision. The body that issues the regulation is responsible for updating, normally the Ministry of Education and Research. It checks every 5 years and it can take up to 2 years to change. An early warning system is now in place to speed up the process.

33. At tertiary level the State approves exam regulations only. It is normally left to providers at 3rd level to develop the standards with the assistance of whoever they decide. It is proposed to follow the Bologna process with 3 levels to replace the existing parallel system at 3rd level. This parallel system results in different career paths for people with the same award but from different providers. There are non university higher education colleges that also award degrees (Diplom) which are more acceptable by industry than by state employers. Germany is also unique in this area in that it has 4 levels at tertiary, it has a post doctoral award for lecturers. It is proposed to replace the Diplom with the 'Bologna bachelors'.

34. There are problems in comparing the German levels with the European levels. Due to the descriptions used an apprenticeship is equated to European level 2. This is one level lower than in most other European countries. There is a corresponding shift with the other German levels also and this has led to complaints from employers. It is more common to compare the German qualifications with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) classification with level 3, 4 and 5 applying to the vocational area and 5, 6 and 7 applying to third level. Level 3 is equated to apprenticeship and 5 to bachelors.

Classification of the main initial and advanced vocational qualifications in Germany:

| | Qualifications regulated at federal (national) level | Qualifications regulated by the <i>Länder</i> (federal states) | Qualifications regulated at chamber level |
|---------------|--|---|---|
| ISCED level 3 | State-recognised traineeship qualifications Qualifications in the health care sector | assistant qualifications (particularly in the services sector and for technical functions in scientific fields) Qualifications in the health care and social services sector | |
| ISCED level 4 | <i>Meister</i> qualification in the crafts, agriculture, institutional management or industry Certified ... (e.g. <i>Fachwirt</i> in industry, social counsellor) | State-certified (<i>Techniker</i> , e.g. <i>Fachwirt</i> in banking, <i>Betriebswirt</i> or <i>Gestalter</i> in conjunction with a specialism) Advanced vocational qualifications in the health care and social services sector | programmer, restoration mason, etc. |

Netherlands

35. The Netherlands has four frameworks for the various sections of the educational and training system: 1) the framework covering secondary vocational education programmes, 2) the framework covering adult (second chance) education, 3) the framework for language programmes and ‘Dutch as a second language’, 4) the framework for higher education. While there are 5 levels in the vocational system, level 5 is seen as part of the higher system as the Bachelors and higher professional. There is new legislation for vocational and adult education. The 1997 Adult Education and Vocational Education and Training Act (WEB) contains detailed guidelines for the formulation of exit qualifications, relevant for the first and second frameworks. Even in conjunction, these frameworks do not cover the entire field of vocational and professional education programmes and training courses.

36. There are separate procedures in both 1st and 2nd systems for developing standards and qualifications. In the vocational sector standards are based on job description and occupational tasks and the characteristics of professional practice. The system also facilitates lifelong learning and prior learning. Units are certified and learners can pick and mix units, within a limited range, and build up to a qualification. As in France, a full qualification requires all units to be achieved. Social partners are involved in developing qualifications.

The four-level qualification framework for secondary vocational education consists of all standards, organised in qualifications. It is the Regional Education Centres (ROC) responsibility to develop the programmes for meeting the standards.

37. The objective of the new framework was to have a simple and coherent framework with qualifications divided into units. In the Netherlands, level 2 is regarded to be the minimum level for entering the labour market and staying lifetime employable. The assistant level, level 1, is designed for those who are not able to obtain a qualification at level 2. People with a level 3 qualification will normally have responsibilities over and above their own duties. It is the job of business and industry to indicate the qualifications these people need.

Twenty-two sector-based National Bodies for Vocational Education (LOB) have been made responsible for the development of standards and qualifications for their sector. There are in fact 22 qualification frameworks, each sector having a number of qualifications defined at each level, resulting in 700 qualifications altogether. Recently National Bodies are expected to reduce the number of qualifications, but there is no agreement yet to the exact number of qualifications thought acceptable.

Besides vocational standards, each qualification has to contain general standards and standards needed to move up to a higher qualification level. Standards and qualifications have to be approved by the Ministry of Education if the qualifications are to be used for secondary vocational education.

The levels of the vocational framework are:

Level 1 assistant

Level 2 basic occupational practitioner

Level 3 all round occupational practitioner

Level 4 middle management practitioner

Level 5 occupational practitioner

38. Besides the classification framework for secondary vocational education, adult (second chance) education has its own qualification framework. Both vocational education and adult education are provided by Regional Education Centres (ROC's). The adult education framework has six levels. Unlike vocational education, adult education is not concerned with qualifying its participants for a particular occupation. Adult education's goal is to provide a solid basis for vocational and secondary general education.

There is no direct comparison with the European levels, however the development of the new system took them as a reference point and may have decided on 5 levels as a result.

The 3rd framework for 'Dutch as a second language' is only used in immigrant courses, indicating the learner's capacities in reading and speaking Dutch and this in turn indicates the next level the learner can continue on to.

39. A fourth qualification framework encompasses the qualifications in higher professional and academic education. Higher professional education provides programmes at one level only, academic education provides programmes at two levels. In the eyes of secondary vocational education higher professional education is

labeled as level 5 and can be entered when a level 4 programme has been completed. Higher professional education itself seldom uses this level indication as it regards itself as a part of higher education (Bachelors – Masters framework).

Higher level education has its own internal classification system linked to the Bologna process. There is a proliferation of awards at higher level which can lead to confusion. There is also a binary approach in that Higher Vocational Training (HBO) colleges also issue degrees, and more recently masters, similar to the Universities. In addition, the Universities have their own two-level classification system; they offer programmes for two degrees: a Master degree programme and a fixed number of research facilities for PHD degree. They are also adding bachelors awards.

Chapter 3 National Frameworks outside Europe

Australia

40. The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) provides a comprehensive, nationally consistent yet flexible framework for all qualifications offered on a national basis in post-compulsory education and training. The Framework was introduced in January 1995 with a transition period of five years and full implementation from 2000 onwards.

The AQF was developed under instruction from State, Territory and Commonwealth education and training ministers meeting as the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), in response to a decision that the overall system of qualifications needed to support the reforms in vocational education and training. The Ministerial Council also established an AQF Advisory Board to promote and periodically review the AQF qualifications titles and descriptors and to advise Ministers on the operation of the AQF, including compliance, and recommend any appropriate changes.

The Australian Qualifications Framework recognises that the schools sector, vocational education and training sector and higher education sector each have different industry and institutional linkages. It connects these in a coherent single Framework incorporating qualification levels, titles and guidelines. Australia is a federation of State, Territory and Commonwealth governments, and implementation of the AQF is the responsibility of the individual jurisdictions, through their legislated authorities, including the self-accrediting institutions established under acts of parliament. AQF qualifications titles and descriptors are reflected in national policies and regulatory frameworks within and across sectors and jurisdictions. The national qualifications are also an authoritative basis for international recognition agreements.

Under the AQF, each sector establishes its own qualifications, according to standards relevant to each sector. Some qualifications are dual sector: this acknowledges the situation where two sectors have established sufficiently similar outcomes for a qualification that they can be recognised under the same title, with common characteristics descriptors. In addition, AQF qualifications, or part-qualifications, may be delivered in a sector other than the sector responsible for setting its standard, by arrangement with the accrediting authorities and in compliance with relevant national policies.

41. Main objectives of the AQF

- to bring together the qualifications issued by the schools, VET and higher education sectors into a single comprehensive system of titles and standards (characteristics descriptors);
-

- to support flexible education and training pathways between sectors and lifelong learning;
- to encourage parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications;
- to offer flexibility to suit the diversity of purposes of education and training and provide for the differences in the constitution of the sectors;
- to encourage cross-sectoral partnerships; and
- to underpin national policies, in particular on quality assurance and articulation and credit transfer.

42. It should be also noted that there are no standardised rankings or equivalences between different qualifications issued in different sectors, as these qualifications recognise different types of learning reflecting the distinctive educational responsibilities of each sector. Where the same qualifications are issued in more than one sector but authorised differently by each sector (i.e., Diploma, Advanced Diploma) they are equivalent qualifications, although sector-differentiated. The twelve qualifications are shown below, grouped according to the sector in which they are most commonly issued. Qualifications according to sector:

| Schools sector | Vocational education and training sector | Higher education sector |
|---|---|---|
| Senior Secondary Certificate of Education | Advanced Diploma Diploma Certificate IV Certificate III Certificate II Certificate I | Doctoral Degree Masters Degree Graduate Diploma Graduate Certificate Bachelor Degree Advanced Diploma Diploma |

A Statement of Attainment may be issued in the event that only part of a qualification is completed, as a formal record of achievement towards an AQF qualification. A Statement of Attainment may also be issued for short courses accredited in accordance with national principles in the vocational education and training sector.

The criteria for defining qualifications are based on the general characteristics of education and training at each qualification level. These characteristics are expressed principally as learning outcomes. The guidelines provide common ground for qualifications across the sectors. Differences in approach between the sectors are, in

the main, related to the area of authority for learning outcomes, and these are reflected in the guidelines.

43. There are principles for articulation to establish connections between the qualifications in the Framework and principles for the issuance of qualifications and protection of titles. This includes provision for the issuance of 'Statements of Attainment' to verify the achievements of a person who has completed part of a qualification. There are arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the Framework, through the establishment of the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board.

The AQF is a policy-oriented framework based on consensus rather than regulation, unlike the more highly-structured regulatory frameworks in some other countries. It is not organised according to a set of numbered levels and does not utilise a credit point system. This more policy-oriented Framework model reflects a number of factors:

- there is *no central accreditation and assessment authority* in Australia, which is a federated political structure of eight States and Territories and a Federal government, each with different legislation and administrative structures;
- the three education sectors operate under their own distinctive arrangements for accrediting qualifications, as follows:
 - *higher education qualifications* are accredited by the self-accrediting institutions (mainly universities) and the state government accreditation agencies;
 - *vocational education and training qualifications* are accredited both at a national level through national industry advisory bodies subject to endorsement by the national government agency (known as the Training Package process), and at state level, through government agencies (which may delegate accreditation powers to institutions); and
 - the *schools qualification* is accredited through state government statutory bodies.
- the AQF has a history shaped by a well-established tradition of a small number of interlinking national qualifications, which has been largely maintained under the recent reform of vocational qualifications, so that a further organising structure such as a set of numbered levels and a system of credit points has not been required.

44. The framework is to encourage individuals to progress through the levels of education and training by improving access to qualifications, clearly defining avenues for achievement, and generally contributing to lifelong learning. The framework is to promote national and international recognition of qualifications offered in Australia.

A key part of the qualifications framework is the National Training Framework which is made up of two elements: the Australian Recognition Framework and Training Packages. It builds on many aspects of the National Framework for the Recognition of Training and is centred on the use of competency standards.

Training Packages include three components which are endorsed by the Australian National Training Authority's National Training Framework Committee: competency

standards, assessment guidelines and qualifications. Training Packages are flexible in design and developed through an extensive consultation process.

45. Under the Australian Recognition Framework, registration of training organizations becomes the key critical quality assurance mechanism for the vocational education and training sector and the pivotal point of Mutual Recognition. The focus of registration will change significantly away from recognition related to the provision of accredited courses, to recognition for the provision of particular products and services primarily related to Training Packages.

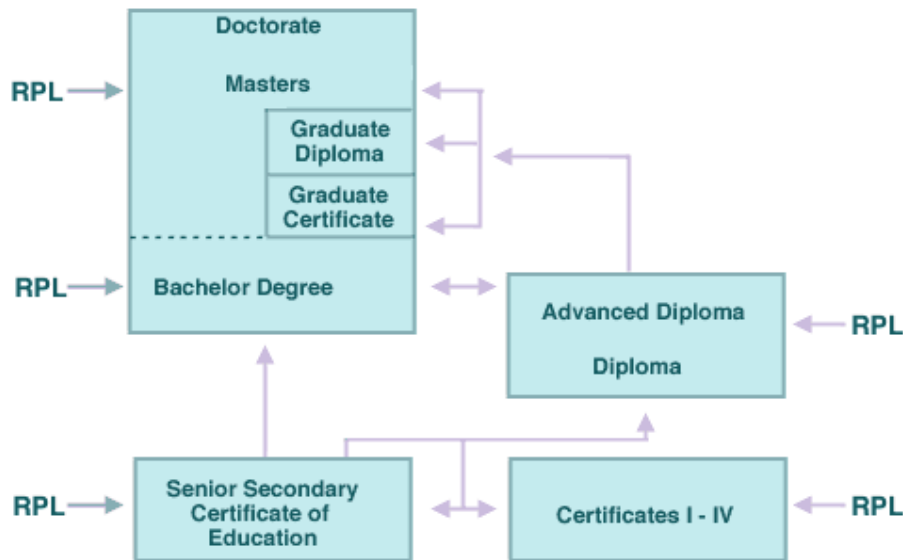
Mutual Recognition is the core of the Australian Recognition Framework. The principles that underpin the Australian Recognition Framework establish that all the Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications and Statements of Attainment issued by a Registered Training Organisation must be accepted and recognised by any other Registered Training Organisation. Another significant aspect of the Australian Recognition Framework is the provision for Registered Training Organisations to receive delegations from State or Territory Recognition Authorities to self-manage certain recognition functions. This process is called Quality Endorsement.

The guidelines specify the characteristics of learning outcomes as well as explaining the responsibilities for assessment, issuance and certification. They are set out in a common format to enable comparisons and assist in distinguishing between levels.

46. At a State/Territory level, requirements for Senior Secondary Certificates of Education are set by Statutory Boards which are responsible for the development and accreditation of courses of study, assessment and issuance of the qualification. In the vocational education and training sector, all qualifications are based on nationally endorsed competency standards where they exist or on competency standards developed by relevant industry, enterprise, community or professional groups. The qualifications certify achievement of learning outcomes generally identified as sets of competencies for levels of workplace performance reflected in the characteristics and distinguishing features of each qualification. The focus in the vocational education and training sector is on the capacity to directly assess the performance criteria in the competencies specified within the Training Package. This will represent increasingly a shift away from the previous reliance on regulation through course accreditation with the assessment being against course learning outcomes.

47. In the higher education sector, objectives and academic requirements of courses are set by universities having regard for requirements set by peer review and the requirements of relevant professional bodies and employer groups. Universities often establish course advisory committees comprising a range of interested parties including practitioners, employers, community representatives and academic staff from other institutions to facilitate ongoing review of content and relevance.

Australian Qualifications Framework pathways diagram including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):



New Zealand

48. New Zealand has one of the longest established of the new style of comprehensive qualifications frameworks. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority was established in 1990 with a key function of having an overview of qualifications in compulsory and post-compulsory education and training. This function was exercised initially through the development of the National Qualifications Framework, comprising National Certificates and Diplomas and their component unit standards. This framework has now been expanded through the development of the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (the "Register"). In March 2001, the Board of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority agreed the policy framework and qualifications definitions for the Register.

49. The Register has ten levels and is comprised of qualifications that are registered in accordance with an agreed set of title definitions.

| LEVEL | NAMING SEQUENCE |
|-------|---|
| 10 | Doctorates |
| 9 | Masters Degrees |
| 8 | Postgraduate Diplomas & Certificates, Bachelors Degrees with Honours |
| 7 | Bachelors Degrees, Graduate Diplomas & Certificates |
| 6 | Diplomas |
| 5 | |
| 4 | Certificates |
| 3 | |
| 2 | |
| 1 | |

A qualification must be assigned to one of the ten levels. Levels of qualifications are assigned by the highest number of credits that are at or above the particular level at which the qualification will be registered – for example a “certificate” must have 40 credits at or above the level at which it is registered. Consequently, it is possible for qualifications to include credit achieved at levels above and below the level at which the qualification is registered. A level 2 certificate may include credit achieved from above level 2 and below level 2. Consent to use the terms “national” or “New Zealand” to describe a qualification remain is a power of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

50. Each of the named qualifications has a definition. These specify the characteristics of the programme, and the requirements in terms of credits. Some include entry requirements and progression characteristics and outcomes in the definition.

The amount of learning and assessment that is typically required in gaining a qualification is measured in terms of “notional learning hours.” This determines the credit value for a course or qualification. In estimating notional learning hours, a qualification developer or provider evaluates how long it would typically take people to achieve the stated outcomes in the context specified. Notional learning hours include direct contact time with teachers and trainers (“directed learning”), time spent in studying and doing assignments etc (“self-directed” or “on-task” learning) and time spent in assessment.

51. For each qualification on the Register there must be a statement of learning outcomes. This includes statements about: what the whole qualification represents in terms of the application of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes; and the components of the qualification which, in their combination, make up the wholeness of the qualification. The Register requires the registration of whole qualifications only. There is no requirement for the registration of components. Each qualification on the Register must have a credit value attached to it. Each qualification on the Register must be placed within a relevant classification system.

52. There are a number of bodies responsible for approving qualifications in New Zealand. These bodies are responsible for the quality that underpins the delivery of qualifications also. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority currently approves all degrees outside of universities, all national qualifications and all qualifications delivered by Private Training Establishments. The Committee on University Academic Programmes of the New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Committee approves all university qualifications.

The New Zealand Polytechnics Programmes Committee of the Association of Polytechnics in New Zealand approves sub-degree qualifications under delegated authority from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. The Colleges of Education Accreditation Committee of the Association of Colleges of Education in New Zealand approves sub-degree qualifications under delegated authority from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

The New Zealand qualifications framework:

| LEVEL | PROCESS | LEARNING DEMAND | RESPONSIBILITY |
|-------|---|--|---|
| 1 | Carry out processes that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are limited in range - are repetitive and familiar - are employed within closely defined contexts | Employing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recall - a narrow range of knowledge and cognitive skills - no generation of new ideas | Applied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in directed activity - under close supervision - with no responsibility for the work or learning of others |
| 2 | Carry out processes that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are moderate in range - are established and familiar - offer a clear choice of routine responses | Employing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - basic operational knowledge - readily available information - known solutions to familiar problems - little generation of new ideas | Applied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in directed activity - under general supervision and quality control - with some responsibility for quantity and quality - with possible responsibility for guiding others |
| 3 | Carry out processes that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - require a range of well developed skills - offer a significant choice of procedures - are employed within a range of familiar contexts | Employing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some relevant theoretical knowledge - interpretation of available information - discretion and judgement - a range of known responses to familiar problems | Applied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in directed activity with some autonomy - under general supervision and quality checking - with significant responsibility for the quantity and quality of output - with possible responsibility for the output of others |
| 4 | Carry out processes that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - require a wide range of technical or scholastic skills - offer a considerable choice of procedures - are employed in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts | Employing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a broad knowledge base incorporating some theoretical concepts - analytical interpretation of information - informed judgement - a range of sometimes innovative responses to concrete but often unfamiliar problems | Applied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in self-directed activity - under broad guidance and evaluation - with complete responsibility for quantity and quality of output - with possible responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others |
| 5 | Carry out processes that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - require a wide range of specialised technical or scholastic skills - involve a wide choice of standard and non-standard procedures - are employed in a variety of routine and non-routine contexts | Employing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a broad knowledge base with substantial depth in some areas - analytical interpretation of a wide range of data - the determination of appropriate methods and procedures in response to a range of concrete problems with some theoretical elements | Applied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in self-directed and sometimes directive activity - within broad general guidelines or functions - with full responsibility for the nature, quantity and quality of outcomes - with possible responsibility for the achievement of group outcome |
| 6 | Carry out processes that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - require a command of wide-ranging highly specialised technical or scholastic skills - involve a wide choice of standard and non-standard procedures, often in non-standard combinations - are employed in highly variable routine and non-routine contexts | Employing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - specialised knowledge with depth in more than one area - the analysis, reformatting and evaluation of a wide range of information - the formulation of appropriate responses to resolve both concrete and abstract problems | Applied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in managing processes - within broad parameters for defined activities - with complete accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes |
| 7 | Carry out processes that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - require a command of highly specialised technical or scholastic and basic research skills across a major discipline - involve the full range of procedures in a major discipline - are applied in complex, variable and specialised contexts | Requiring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - knowledge of a major discipline with areas of specialisation in depth - the analysis, transformation and evaluation of abstract data and concepts - the creation of appropriate responses to resolve given or contextual abstract problems | Applied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in planning, resourcing and managing processes - within broad parameters and functions - with complete accountability for determining, achieving and evaluating personal and/or group outcomes |
| 8 | Involves skills and knowledge that enable a learner to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide a systematic and coherent account of the key principles of a subject area; and - undertake self-directed study, research and scholarship in a subject area, demonstrating intellectual independence, analytic rigour and sound communication. | | |
| 9 | Involves knowledge and skills that enable a learner to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrate mastery of a subject area; and - plan and carry out – to internationally recognised standards – an original scholarship or research project. Demonstrated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The completion of a substantial research paper, dissertation or in some cases a series of papers. | | |
| 10 | Involves knowledge and skill that enable a learner to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide an original contribution to knowledge through research or scholarship, as judged by independent experts applying international standards. | | |

South Africa

53. The South African Qualifications Authority was established through the South African Qualifications Authority Act of 1995, the first Act of the democratic, post-apartheid parliament. The South African Qualifications Authority's role is to oversee the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework. The National Qualifications Framework is a means for transforming the education and training in South Africa and has been designed to:

- create a single, integrated, national education and training framework for the whole nation
- make it easier for learners to enter the education and training system and to move and progress within it
- improve the quality of education and training in South Africa
- enable learners to develop to their full potential and thereby support the social and economic development of the country as a whole
- accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities

54. The National Qualifications Framework is essentially a quality assurance system with the development and registration of standards and qualifications as the first important step in implementing a quality education and training system in South Africa. The bodies responsible for generation and recommendation of qualifications and standards are respectively called Standards Generating Bodies and National Standards Bodies. The bodies responsible for the quality assurance of the standards and qualifications are called Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies that will carry out their functions in cooperation with education training providers and moderating bodies.

55. The South African Framework is built around four parameters: Level, Band, Types of Qualifications and Certificates, and Locations of Learning for Units and Qualifications. South Africa has made significant progress with the development of generic level descriptors of the kind seen in, for example, the Northern Ireland frameworks. Work is continuing to this end in parallel with the main thrust of activity which has been to develop standards and quality assurance systems for named awards.

The following criteria must be met for a qualification to be included in the framework:

- Represent a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose and which is intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning;
- Add value to the qualifying learner by providing status, recognition, enhancing marketability and employability;
- Provide benefits to society and the economy;
- Comply with the objectives of the National Qualifications Framework;

- Include both specific and critical cross-field outcomes that promote lifelong learning;
- Where applicable, be internationally comparable;
- Incorporate integrated assessment appropriately to ensure that the purpose of the qualification is achieved. Assessment should include a range of formative and summative assessment methods such as portfolios, simulations, workplace assessments and also written and oral examinations;
- Indicate in the rules governing the award of the qualification that the qualification may be achieved in whole or in part through the recognition of prior learning, which concept includes but is not limited to learning outcomes achieved through formal, informal and non-formal learning and work experience.

56. There is provision in the regulations for the registration of qualifications constructed from unit standards as well as the registration of whole qualifications, not constructed from unit standards. Unit standard means registered statements of desired education and training outcomes and their associated assessment criteria together with administrative and other information as specified in the regulations. Both formats of qualification structure however require the specification of learning outcomes, the latter format requiring the articulation of exit level outcomes and associated assessment criteria.

Each level will be assigned a unique level descriptor the guidelines for which are being developed by Each National Standards Body in cooperation with the Standards Generating Bodies. Those guidelines will explain the process of assigning levels to standards, other components of qualifications and qualifications.

Structure of the South African National Qualification Framework(NQF)

| NQF level | | General | | Articulation – horizontal and diagonal | Career-focused / vocational | |
|-----------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|----------------------------|
| 8 | Postgraduate 4 | Doctor of Philosophy | | Articulation credits, credit transfers, RPL, also additional qualifications that facilitate mobility and access e.g. Master's Certificate | Doctor of Philosophy, Professional Doctorate | |
| | Postgraduate 3 | Research Master's degree | Structured Master's degree | | Research Master's degree, | Structured Master's degree |
| | | | | | Master of Technology | |

| | | | | |
|---|----------------|--|--|--|
| | Postgraduate 2 | Master's Diploma | e.g Postgraduate Certificate | Professional Master's degree, Master's Diploma |
| | Postgraduate 1 | Bachelor Honours degree Postgraduate Diploma | e.g. Graduate Certificate, Advanced Certificate | Advanced career-focused Bachelor's degree, Bachelor of Technology Postgraduate Diploma |
| | 7 | General Bachelor's degree | | Career-focused Bachelor's degree, National Certificate (L7) - master artisan |
| | 6 | National Diploma | e.g. Foundation Certificate | National Diploma, National Certificate (L6) |
| | 5 | | e.g. Bridging Certificate | National Certificate (L5) |
| | 4 | Further Education and Training Certificate – FETC (L4) | | National Certificate (L4) |
| | 3 | | | National Certificate (L3) |
| | 2 | | | National Certificate (L2) |
| 1 | ABET 4 / GETC | General Education and Training Certificate - GETC (L1) For all aspects, the requirements are not exclusionary | | |
| | ABET 3 | ABET level 3 Certificate | | |
| | ABET 2 | ABET level 2 Certificate | | |
| | ABET 1 | ABET level 1 Certificate | | |

Draft level descriptors

| NQF level | Applied competence | Autonomy of learning |
|--|---|---|
| Typically, a learning programme leading to the award of a qualification or unit standards at this level should develop learners who demonstrate: | | |
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. general knowledge of one or more areas or fields of study¹, in addition to the fundamental areas of study b. an understanding of the context within which the learner operates c. an ability to use key common tools and instruments² d. sound listening and speaking, reading and writing skills e. basic numeracy skills including an understanding of the symbolic systems f. an ability to recognise and solve problems within a familiar, well-defined context g. an ability to recall, collect and organise given information clearly and accurately h. an ability to report information clearly and accurately in spoken and written form | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a a capacity to apply themselves to a well-defined task under direct supervision b an ability to sequence and schedule learning tasks c an ability to access and use a range of learning resources d an ability to work as part of a group |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a basic operational knowledge of one or more areas or fields of study³, in addition to the fundamental areas of study b. an understanding of the environment within which the learner operates in a wider context c. an ability to use a variety of common tools and instruments⁴ the ability to apply literacy and numeracy skills to a range of different but familiar contexts d. an ability to use their knowledge to select and apply known solutions to well-defined routine problems e. a basic ability to collect, organise and report information clearly and accurately a. an ability to express an opinion on given information clearly in spoken and written form | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a capacity to work and learn in a disciplined manner in a well-structured and supervised environment b. an ability to manage their time effectively c. an ability to develop sound working relationships and an ability to work effectively as part of a group |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a basic understanding of one or more field's or discipline's key concepts and knowledge⁵, in addition to the fundamental areas of study b. an understanding of the organization or operating environment as a system c. application of skills in measuring the environment using key instruments and equipment⁶ operational literacy and numeracy skills⁷ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a capacity to operate within clearly defined contexts b. an ability to work and learn within a managed environment c. a capacity to actively contribute to team |

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| | <p>use basic procedures and operations to complete complex tasks</p> <p>d. an ability to use their knowledge to select appropriate procedures to solve problems within given parameters</p> <p>e. a basic ability to summarise and interpret information relevant to the context from a range of sources</p> <p>f. an ability to take a position on available information, discuss the issues and reach a resolution; produce a coherent presentation and report, providing explanations for positions taken</p> | effectiveness |
| 4 | <p>a. a fundamental knowledge base of the most important areas of one or more fields or disciplines⁸, in addition to the fundamental areas of study an informed understanding of the key terms, rules, concepts, established principles and theories in one or more fields or disciplines</p> <p>b. an understanding of the organisation or operating environment as a system within a wider context</p> <p>c. an ability to apply essential methods, procedures and techniques of the field or discipline; an ability to apply and carry out actions by interpreting information from text⁹ and operational symbols or representations</p> <p>d. an ability to use their knowledge to solve common problems within a familiar context; an ability to adjust an application of a common solution within relevant parameters to meet the needs of small changes in the problem or operating context; an ability to motivate the change using relevant evidence¹⁰</p> <p>e. a basic ability in gathering relevant information, analysis and evaluation skills</p> <p>f. an ability to communicate and present information reliably and accurately in writing and verbally</p> | <p>a. a capacity to take responsibility for their own learning within a supervised environment</p> <p>b. take decisions about and responsibility for actions</p> <p>c. evaluate their own performance against given criteria</p> <p>d. a capacity to take the initiative to address any shortcomings they find</p> |
| 5 | <p>a. a fundamental knowledge base of the main areas of one or more fields or disciplines¹¹; an informed understanding of the important terms, rules, concepts, principles and theories in one or more fields or disciplines</p> <p>b. an understanding of the organisation or operating environment as a system within a wider context and in relation to the society</p> <p>c. an ability to effectively apply essential methods, procedures and techniques of the field or discipline; an ability to interpret, convert and evaluate text¹² and operational symbols or representations</p> | <p>a. a capacity to take responsibility for their own learning within a supervised environment</p> <p>b. take decisions about and responsibility for actions</p> <p>c. evaluate their own performance against given criteria</p> |

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| | <p>d. an ability to use their knowledge to solve well-defined problems both routine and unfamiliar within a familiar context; an ability to adjust an application of a solution within relevant parameters to meet the needs of changes in the problem or operating context;</p> <p>an ability to evaluate the change using relevant evidence¹³</p> <p>e. efficient information-gathering, analysis and synthesis, and evaluation skills</p> <p>f. presentation skills using appropriate technological skills; an ability to communicate information coherently using basic conventions of an academic / professional¹⁴ discourse reliably in writing and verbally</p> | |
| 6 | <p>a a solid knowledge base in at least one discipline/field</p> <p>b a sound understanding of one or more discipline/field's key terms, rules, concepts, established principles and theories; some awareness of how the discipline/field relates to cognate areas</p> <p>c effective selection and application of the central procedures operations and techniques of a discipline/field</p> <p>d an ability to solve well-defined but unfamiliar problems using correct procedures and appropriate evidence</p> <p>e a critical analysis and synthesis of information; presentation of information using basic information technology</p> <p>f an ability to present and communicate information reliably and coherently, using academic/professional discourse conventions and formats appropriately</p> | <p>a. a capacity to evaluate their own learning and identify their learning needs within a structured learning environment</p> <p>b. a capacity to take the initiative to address these needs</p> <p>c. a capacity to assist others with identifying learning needs</p> |
| 7 | <p>a. a well-rounded and systematic knowledge base in one or more disciplines/fields and a detailed knowledge of some specialist areas</p> <p>b. a coherent and critical understanding of one or more discipline/ field's terms, rules, concepts, principles and theories; an ability to map new knowledge onto a given body of theory; an acceptance of a multiplicity of 'right' answers</p> <p>c. effective selection and application of the essential procedures, operations and techniques of a discipline/ field;</p> | <p>a. a capacity to operate in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts, requiring responsibility and initiative</p> <p>b. a capacity to accurately self-evaluate and identify and address own learning needs</p> <p>c. an ability to interact</p> |

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| | <p>an understanding of the central methods of enquiry and research in a discipline/ field; a knowledge of at least one other discipline/ field's mode of enquiry</p> <p>d. an ability to deal with unfamiliar concrete and abstract problems and issues using evidence-based solutions and theory-driven arguments</p> <p>e. well-developed information retrieval skills; critical analysis and synthesis of quantitative and/ or qualitative data; presentation skills following prescribed formats, using IT skills appropriately</p> <p>f. an ability to present and communicate information and their own ideas and opinions in well-structured arguments, showing an awareness of audience and using academic/ professional discourse appropriately</p> | effectively in a learning group |
| 8 | <p>a. a comprehensive and systematic knowledge of one or more disciplines/fields with depth, specialisation and up-to-date knowledge in some areas</p> <p>b. an informed and critical understanding of the theory and research methodology of one or more disciplines/fields and an understanding of how these relate to research problems in the field; an ability to relate theory to practice and <i>vice versa</i> and an ability to think epistemologically</p> <p>c. an ability to select and apply research methods effectively and to undertake a research project in an area of specialisation</p> <p>d. an ability to deal with complex problems using the intellectual, research and technological resources and tools provided by a discipline/ profession</p> <p>e. effective information retrieval and processing skills; an ability to critically engage with current research and scholarship in an area of specialisation</p> <p>f. an ability to present and communicate academic/ professional work effectively, using the full resources of an academic/professional discourse appropriately</p> | <p>a. a capacity to operate in complex, unfamiliar contexts, requiring personal responsibility and initiative</p> <p>b. a capacity to accurately self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing professional/ academic development</p> <p>c. a capacity to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically</p> <p>e. a capacity to critically evaluate own and others' work with justification.</p> |

Level 8 is sub-divided into 4 postgraduate sub-levels. A composite level descriptor is sub-levels.

| NQF level & Sub-level | Applied competence | | Autonomy of learning |
|--|---------------------------|--|--|
| Typically, a learning programme leading to the award of a qualification or unit standards at this level should develop learners who demonstrate: | | | |
| 8 | PG 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a comprehensive and systematic knowledge base in one or more disciplines/fields and a depth of knowledge in some specialist areas, informed by current developments in the field b. an informed and critical understanding of the principles and theories of one or more disciplines/fields and of emerging issues and debates in an area of specialisation; acceptance of the provisional nature of knowledge and of the boundaries and limitations of a discipline/field c. effective application of a discipline/field's basic methods of enquiry, research and technology d. an ability to identify, analyse and deal with concrete and abstract problems using evidence-based solutions and theory-driven arguments e. an ability to identify information needs and retrieve information accordingly; critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation of quantitative and/or qualitative data; an ability to engage with journal articles, scholarly reviews and primary sources f. an ability to present and communicate academic/professional work effectively, catering for a range of audiences and using academic/professional discourse appropriately | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a capacity to operate in unfamiliar contexts, requiring personal responsibility and initiative b. a capacity to accurately self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing professional/academic development c. a capacity to maintain professional working relationships d. an awareness of the social and ethical implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts |

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| 8 | PG 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a comprehensive and systematic knowledge base in a discipline / field and a depth of knowledge in some areas of specialisation b. a coherent and critical understanding of the principles and theories of a discipline/field; an ability to critique current research and advanced scholarship in an area of specialisation; an ability to make sound theoretical judgements based on evidence and an ability to think epistemologically c. an understanding of a range of research methods, techniques and technologies and an ability to select these appropriately for a particular research problem in an area of specialisation d. an ability to identify, analyse and deal with complex and/or real world problems and issues using evidence-based solutions and theory-driven arguments e. efficient and effective information retrieval and processing skills; the identification, critical analysis, synthesis and independent evaluation of quantitative and/or qualitative data; an ability to engage with current research and scholarly or professional literature in a discipline/ field f. an ability to present and communicate academic/ professional work effectively, catering for a range of audiences by using a range of different genres appropriate to the context | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a capacity to operate effectively in complex, ill-defined contexts b. a capacity to self-evaluate exercising personal responsibility and initiative c. a capacity to manage learning tasks autonomously, professionally and ethically d. a capacity to continue to learn independently for continuing academic / professional development |
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| 8 | PG 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a comprehensive and systematic knowledge base in a discipline/ field with specialist knowledge in an area at the forefront of the discipline/field or area of professional practice b. a coherent and critical understanding of the theory, research methodologies and techniques relevant to a discipline/field; an ability to rigorously critique and evaluate current research and participate in scholarly debates in an area of specialisation; an ability to relate theory to practice and <i>vice versa</i> and to think epistemologically c. mastery of the application of research methods, techniques and technologies appropriate to an area of specialisation; an ability to undertake a research project and write up a research dissertation under supervision d. an ability to identify, analyse and deal with complex and/or real world problems and issues drawing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a capacity to operate effectively in complex, ill defined contexts b. a capacity to critically self-evaluate and continue to learn independently for continuing professional development c. a capacity to manage learning tasks autonomously professionally and ethically d. a capacity to critically evaluate own and others' work with justification |
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| | | <p>systematically and creatively on the theory, research methods and literature of a discipline/field</p> <p>e. advanced information retrieval and processing skills; identification, critical analysis, synthesis and independent evaluation of quantitative and/or qualitative data; an ability to undertake a study of the literature and current research in an area of specialisation under supervision</p> <p>f. an ability to effectively present and communicate the results of research to specialist and non-specialist audiences using the resources of an academic/professional discourse; the production of a dissertation or research report which meets the standards of scholarly/professional writing</p> | |
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| 8 | PG 4 | <p>a. a comprehensive and systemic grasp of a discipline/field's body of knowledge with expertise and specialist knowledge in an area at the forefront of the discipline, field or professional practice</p> <p>b. a critical understanding of the most advanced research methodologies, techniques and technologies in a discipline/field; an ability to participate in scholarly debates at the cutting edge of an area of specialisation; an ability to apply knowledge, theory and research methods creatively to complex practical, theoretical and epistemological problems</p> <p>c. substantial, independent research and advanced scholarship resulting in the (re) interpretation and expansion of knowledge which is judged publishable by peers</p> <p>d. an ability to identify, conceptualise, design and implement research projects that address complex, ill-defined problems at the cutting edge of a discipline/field</p> <p>e. advanced information retrieval and processing skills; an ability to independently undertake a study and evaluation of the literature and current research in an area of specialisation</p> <p>f. an ability to effectively present and communicate the results of research and opinion to specialist and non-specialist audiences using the full resources of an academic/professional discourse; the production of a thesis which meets international standards of scholarly/professional writing</p> | <p>a. a capacity to operate autonomously in specialised, complex, ill-defined and unpredictable contexts</p> <p>b. intellectual independence and research leadership through managing advanced research and development in a field professionally and ethically</p> <p>c. a capacity to critically evaluate own and others' work on the basis of independent criteria</p> |
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Appendix 1

ISCED LEVELS OF EDUCATION

| How to determine the level of a programme | | Name of the level | Code | Complementary dimensions |
|--|--|--|------|--|
| Proxy criteria for contents | | | | |
| Main criteria | Subsidiary criteria | | | |
| Educational properties School or centre-based Minimum age Upper age limit | Staff qualification | Pre-primary education | 0 | None |
| Beginning of systematic apprenticeship of reading, writing and mathematics | Entry into the nationally designated primary institutions or programmes Start of compulsory education | Primary education First stage of basic education | 1 | None |
| Subject presentation Full implementation of basic skills and foundation for lifelong learning | Entry after some 6 years of primary education End of the cycle after 9 years since the beginning of primary education End of compulsory education Several teachers conduct classes in their field of specialization | Lower secondary education Second stage of basic education | 2 | Type of subsequent education or destination Programme orientation |
| Typical entrance qualification Minimum entrance requirement | | (Upper) secondary education | 3 | Type of subsequent education or destination Programme orientation Cumulative duration since the beginning of ISCED level 3 |
| Entrance requirement, Content, | | Post-secondary non tertiary education | 4 | Type of subsequent education or destination |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| Age, Duration | | | | Cumulative duration since the beginning of ISCED level 3 Programme orientation |
| Minimum entrance requirement, Type of certification obtained, Duration | | First stage of tertiary education (not leading directly to an advanced research qualification) | 5 | Type of programmes Cumulative theoretical duration at tertiary National degree and qualification structure |
| Research oriented content, Submission of thesis or dissertation | Prepare graduates for faculty and research posts | Second stage of tertiary education (leading to an advanced research qualification) | 6 | None |

Appendix 2

European training levels.

Level 1

Training providing access to this level: compulsory education and professional initiation. This professional initiation is acquired at an educational establishment, in an out-of-school training programme, or at the undertaking. The volume of theoretical knowledge and practical capabilities involved is very limited.

This form of training must primarily enable the holder to perform relatively simple work and may be fairly quickly acquired.

Level 2

Training providing access to this level: compulsory education and vocational training (including, in particular, apprenticeships). This level corresponds to a level where the holder is fully qualified to engage in a specific activity, with the capacity to use the instruments and techniques relating thereto.

This activity involves chiefly the performance of work which may be independent within the limits of the relevant techniques.

Level 3

Training providing access to this level: compulsory education and/or vocational training and additional technical training or technical educational training, or other secondary level training.

This form of training involves a greater fund of theoretical knowledge than level 2. Activity involves chiefly technical work which can be performed independently and/or entail executive and coordination duties.

Level 4

Training providing access to this level: secondary training (general or vocational) and postsecondary technical training.

This form of training involves high-level technical training acquired at or outside educational establishments. The resultant qualification covers a higher level of knowledge and of capabilities. It does not generally require mastery of the scientific bases of the various areas concerned. Such capabilities and knowledge make it possible in a generally autonomous or in an independent way to assume design and/or management and/or administrative responsibilities.

Level 5

Training providing access to this level: secondary training (general or vocational) and complete higher training.

This form of training generally leads to an autonomously pursued vocational activity – as an employee or as self-employed person – entailing a mastery of the scientific bases of the occupation. The qualifications required for engaging in a vocational activity may be integrated at these various levels.

Appendix 3

Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education convened in Bologna on the 19th of June 1999

The European process, thanks to the extraordinary achievements of the last few years, has become an increasingly concrete and relevant reality for the Union and its citizens. Enlargement prospects together with deepening relations with other European countries, provide even wider dimensions to that reality. Meanwhile, we are witnessing a growing awareness in large parts of the political and academic world and in public opinion of the need to establish a more complete and far-reaching Europe, in particular building upon and strengthening its intellectual, cultural, social and scientific and technological dimensions.

A Europe of Knowledge is now widely recognised as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competencies to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space. The importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies is universally acknowledged as paramount, the more so in view of the situation in South East Europe.

The Sorbonne declaration of 25th of May 1998, which was underpinned by these considerations, stressed the universities' central role in developing European cultural dimensions. It emphasised the creation of the European area of higher education as a key way to promote citizens' mobility and employability and the Continent's overall development.

Several European countries have accepted the invitation to commit themselves to achieving the objectives set out in the declaration, by signing it or expressing their agreement in principle. The direction taken by several higher education reforms launched in the meantime in Europe has proved many Governments' determination to act.

European higher education institutions, for their part, have accepted the challenge and taken up a main role in constructing the European area of higher education, also in the wake of the fundamental principles laid down in the Bologna Magna Charta Universitatum of 1988. This is of the highest importance, given that Universities' independence and autonomy ensure that higher education and research systems continuously adapt to changing needs, society's demands and advances in scientific knowledge.

The course has been set in the right direction and with meaningful purpose. The achievement of greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education nevertheless requires continual momentum in order to be fully accomplished. We need to support it through promoting concrete measures to achieve tangible forward steps. The 18th June meeting saw participation by authoritative experts and scholars from all our countries and provides us with very useful suggestions on the initiatives to be taken.

We must in particular look at the objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education. The vitality and efficiency of any civilisation can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries. We need to ensure that the European higher education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions.

While affirming our support to the general principles laid down in the Sorbonne declaration, we engage in co-ordinating our policies to reach in the short term, and in any case within the first decade of the third millennium, the following objectives, which we consider to be of primary relevance in order to establish the European area of higher education and to promote the European system of higher education world-wide:

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system;
- Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries;
- Establishment of a system of credits - such as in the ECTS system - as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility. Credits could also be acquired in non-higher education contexts, including lifelong learning, provided they are recognised by the receiving universities concerned;
- Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to:
 - for students, access to study and training opportunities and to related services;
 - for teachers, researchers and administrative staff, recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights;
- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies;
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.

We hereby undertake to attain these objectives – within the framework of our institutional competencies and taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and of University autonomy – to consolidate the European area of higher education. To that end, we will pursue the ways of intergovernmental co-operation, together with those of non governmental European organisations with competence on higher education.

We expect Universities again to respond promptly and positively and to contribute actively to the success of our endeavour.

Convinced that the establishment of the European area of higher education requires constant support, supervision and adaptation to the continuously evolving needs, we decide to meet again within two years in order to assess the progress achieved and the new steps to be taken.

Signed by:

Austria, Belgium (French community), Belgium (Flemish community), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Swiss Confederation, United Kingdom.

Appendix 4

Towards the European Higher Education Area

Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Prague on May 19th 2001

Two years after signing the Bologna Declaration and three years after the Sorbonne Declaration, European Ministers in charge of higher education, representing 32 signatories, met in Prague in order to review the progress achieved and to set directions and priorities for the coming years of the process. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the objective of establishing the European Higher Education Area by 2010. The choice of Prague to hold this meeting is a symbol of their will to involve the whole of Europe in the process in the light of enlargement of the European Union.

Ministers welcomed and reviewed the report "Furthering the Bologna Process" commissioned by the follow-up group and found that the goals laid down in the Bologna Declaration have been widely accepted and used as a base for the development of higher education by most signatories as well as by universities and other higher education institutions. Ministers reaffirmed that efforts to promote mobility must be continued to enable students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff to benefit from the richness of the European Higher Education Area including its democratic values, diversity of cultures and languages and the diversity of the higher education systems.

Ministers took note of the Convention of European higher education institutions held in Salamanca on 29-30 March and the recommendations of the Convention of European Students, held in Göteborg on 24-25 March, and appreciated the active involvement of the European University Association (EUA) and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) in the Bologna process. They further noted and appreciated the many other initiatives to take the process further. Ministers also took note of the constructive assistance of the European Commission.

Ministers observed that the activities recommended in the Declaration concerning degree structure have been intensely and widely dealt with in most countries. They especially appreciated how the work on quality assurance is moving forward. Ministers recognized the need to cooperate to address the challenges brought about by transnational education. They also recognized the need for a lifelong learning perspective on education.

Further actions following the six objectives of the Bologna process

As the Bologna Declaration sets out, Ministers asserted that building the European Higher Education Area is a condition for enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education institutions in Europe. They supported the idea that higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility (regulations etc.), and that students are full members of the higher education community. From this point of view Ministers commented on the further process as follows:

Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

Ministers strongly encouraged universities and other higher education institutions to take full advantage of existing national legislation and European tools aimed at facilitating academic and professional recognition of course units, degrees and other awards, so that citizens can effectively use their qualifications, competencies and skills throughout the European Higher Education Area.

Ministers called upon existing organisations and networks such as NARIC and ENIC to promote, at institutional, national and European level, simple, efficient and fair recognition reflecting the underlying diversity of qualifications.

Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles

Ministers noted with satisfaction that the objective of a degree structure based on two main cycles, articulating higher education in undergraduate and graduate studies, has been tackled and discussed. Some countries have already adopted this structure and several others are considering it with great interest. It is important to note that in many countries bachelor's and master's degrees, or comparable two cycle degrees, can be obtained at universities as well as at other higher education institutions. Programmes leading to a degree may, and indeed should, have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs as concluded at the Helsinki seminar on bachelor level degrees (February 2001).

Establishment of a system of credits

Ministers emphasized that for greater flexibility in learning and qualification processes the adoption of common cornerstones of qualifications, supported by a credit system such as the ECTS or one that is ECTS-compatible, providing both transferability and accumulation functions, is necessary. Together with mutually recognized quality assurance systems such arrangements will facilitate students' access to the European labour market and enhance the compatibility, attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education. The generalized use of such a credit system and of the Diploma Supplement will foster progress in this direction.

Promotion of mobility

Ministers reaffirmed that the objective of improving the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff as set out in the Bologna Declaration is of the utmost importance. Therefore, they confirmed their commitment to pursue the removal of all obstacles to the free movement of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff and emphasized the social dimension of mobility. They took note of the possibilities for mobility offered by the European Community programmes and the progress achieved in this field, e.g. in launching the Mobility Action Plan endorsed by the European Council in Nice in 2000.

Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance

Ministers recognized the vital role that quality assurance systems play in ensuring high quality standards and in facilitating the comparability of qualifications throughout Europe. They also encouraged closer cooperation between recognition and quality assurance networks. They emphasized the necessity of close European cooperation and mutual trust in and acceptance of national quality assurance systems. Further they encouraged universities and other higher education institutions to disseminate examples of best practice and to design scenarios for mutual acceptance of evaluation and accreditation/certification mechanisms. Ministers called upon the universities and other higher education institutions, national agencies and the European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), in cooperation with corresponding bodies from countries which are not members of ENQA, to collaborate in establishing a common framework of reference and to disseminate best practice.

Promotion of the European dimensions in higher education

In order to further strengthen the important European dimensions of higher education and graduate employability Ministers called upon the higher education sector to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with "European" content, orientation or organisation. This concerns particularly modules, courses and degree curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognized joint degree.

Furthermore ministers emphasized the following points:

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area. In the future Europe, built upon a knowledge-based society and economy, lifelong learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life.

Higher education institutions and students

Ministers stressed that the involvement of universities and other higher education institutions and of students as competent, active and constructive partners in the establishment and shaping of a European Higher Education Area is needed and welcomed. The institutions have demonstrated the importance they attach to the creation of a compatible and efficient, yet diversified and adaptable European Higher Education Area. Ministers also pointed out that quality is the basic underlying condition for trust, relevance, mobility, compatibility and attractiveness in the European Higher Education Area. Ministers expressed their appreciation of the contributions toward developing study programmes combining academic quality with relevance to lasting employability and called for a continued proactive role of higher education institutions.

Ministers affirmed that students should participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions. Ministers also reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna process.

Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

Ministers agreed on the importance of enhancing attractiveness of European higher education to students from Europe and other parts of the world. The readability and comparability of European higher education degrees world-wide should be enhanced by the development of a common framework of qualifications, as well as by coherent quality assurance and accreditation/certification mechanisms and by increased information efforts.

Ministers particularly stressed that the quality of higher education and research is and should be an important determinant of Europe's international attractiveness and competitiveness. Ministers agreed that more attention should be paid to the benefit of a European Higher Education Area with institutions and programmes with different profiles. They called for increased collaboration between the European countries concerning the possible implications and perspectives of transnational education.

Continued follow-up

Ministers committed themselves to continue their cooperation based on the objectives set out in the Bologna Declaration, building on the similarities and benefiting from the differences between cultures, languages and national systems, and drawing on all possibilities of intergovernmental cooperation and the ongoing dialogue with European universities and other higher education institutions and student organisations as well as the Community programmes.

Ministers welcomed new members to join the Bologna process after applications from Ministers representing countries for which the European Community programmes Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci or Tempus-Cards are open. They accepted applications from Croatia, Cyprus and Turkey.

Ministers decided that a new follow-up meeting will take place in the second half of 2003 in Berlin to review progress and set directions and priorities for the next stages of the process towards the European Higher Education Area. They confirmed the need for a structure for the follow-up work, consisting of a follow-up group and a preparatory group. The follow-up group should be composed of representatives of all signatories, new participants and the European Commission, and should be chaired by the EU Presidency at the time. The preparatory group should be composed of representatives of the countries hosting the previous ministerial meetings and the next ministerial meeting, two EU member states and two non-EU member states; these latter four representatives will be elected by the follow-up group. The EU Presidency at the time and the European Commission will also be part of the preparatory group. The preparatory group will be chaired by the representative of the country hosting the next ministerial meeting.

The European University Association, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the National Unions of Students in Europe and the Council of Europe should be consulted in the follow-up work.

In order to take the process further, Ministers encouraged the follow-up group to arrange seminars to explore the following areas: cooperation concerning accreditation and quality assurance, recognition issues and the use of credits in the Bologna process, the development of joint degrees, the social dimension, with specific attention to obstacles to mobility, and the enlargement of the Bologna process, lifelong learning and student involvement.

Appendix 5

Towards shared descriptors for Bachelors and Masters

A report from a Joint Quality Initiative informal group.

I. Background

1. The Bologna declaration / process proposes the introduction, within a European higher education space, of a system of qualifications in higher (tertiary) education that is based on two cycles. The first (undergraduate) cycle culminates in the award of Bachelor's degrees. The second cycle of study seeks to build on those attributes gained during the first cycle, leading to (postgraduate) qualifications that include Master's degrees and doctorates. The Bologna process also seeks to encourage a nomenclature of awards that is comparable between countries and is easily readable, thus enhancing understanding of HE qualifications and encouraging mobility of those studying within the European higher education space.

2. One aspect of the work under the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI) has been to consider the development of descriptors for Bachelor's and Master's (BaMa descriptors) that might be shared within Europe and be available for a variety of purposes depending on particular national, regional or institutional contexts and requirements. A group with members from several national or region QA organisations (see Annex A) has discussed the diverse requirements for, and characteristics of, such BaMa descriptors, and have developed descriptors that may now be tested and shared.

3. Several national and regional projects have sought, or are currently working, to identify the characteristics associated with particular HE qualifications, and develop taxonomies and frameworks that clarify the relationships between qualifications. The work of the JQI group has included detailed consideration of such projects and has additionally drawn on the outcomes of discussions in Helsinki on common characteristics of Bachelor's. The Helsinki discussions characterised Bachelor's by the extent of study (years or ECTS); the work of the JQI group has been concerned with identifying the academic and other requirements that, as the outcomes of study, characterise and distinguish between Bachelor's and Master's.

4. A survey was carried out amongst participants in the JQI project in preparation for the discussions on the possible form, content and application of BaMa descriptors. Responses indicated a variety of needs and potential uses for such descriptors, and also the importance of having a shared understanding of the terms used both within the descriptors and to describe the context(s) in which they may be applied.

5. All participants agreed that each descriptor should indicate an overarching summary of the outcomes of a whole programme of study. The descriptor should be concerned with the totality of the study, and a student's abilities and attributes that have resulted in the award of the qualification. The descriptor should not be limited to describing merely the outcomes of units of assessment at the level of the qualification. The group has thus sought to develop a shared *qualification descriptor*, not a shared *level descriptor*. It was however noted that within some national, regional and institutional contexts there might also be a requirement for the local development of level descriptors.

6. The JQI group discussed the merits of seeking a single shared descriptor for Bachelor's and similarly one for Master's, as opposed to seeking a process to demonstrate 'compatibility' between descriptors developed for national, regional or institutional purposes and that that reflect the detail of local contexts. In line with the essence of Bologna the group concluded that it should seek a single generic descriptor for *all* Bachelor's degrees, and similarly a single generic descriptor for *all* Master's degrees. The group recognises that the development of these descriptors should not hinder any national, regional or local requirements for additional descriptors.

7. There are a wide variety of programmes leading to Bachelor's awards, differing in content, delivery and process, and nomenclature; for example, a number of countries discriminate between Professional Bachelor's and Academic Bachelor's awards. Similarly, there are a wide variety of programmes leading to different types of Master's degree. It was agreed that the value of the generic descriptors would be enhanced substantially if they could be cross-referenced to more detailed programme profiles or specifications.

8. A programme profile / specification would identify the particular components of the programme leading to the qualification; for example it might include prerequisites for entry to the programme, details of the components, their delivery and assessment, and any requirements relating to regulated professions. The form and components within the profile would reflect national, regional or institutional contexts and be related to the needs and responsibilities of those awarding or accrediting the particular programme.

9. The JQI group considered that, in keeping with the Bologna process, the shared descriptors should be formulated in a language and style that is 'readable' by all who would have an interest in them, in particular students, their sponsors, employers, HE academics and their managers, and the general public. The following represents proposals towards generic descriptors that may be useful as indicators or reference points to the abilities and qualities of holders of Bachelor's and Master's degrees awarded within the European higher education space.

II. Shared descriptors for Bachelor's and Master's

10. Bachelor's degrees are awarded to students who:

have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon and supersedes their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;

can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional¹ approach to their work or vocation, and have competences² typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;

have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;

can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;

have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.

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- 1 The word 'professional' is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, relating to those attributes relevant to undertaking work or a vocation and that involves the application of some aspects of advanced learning. It is not used with regard to those specific requirements relating to regulated professions. The latter may be identified with the profile / specification.
 - 2 The word 'competence' is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, allowing for gradation of abilities or skills. It is not used in the narrower sense identified solely on the basis of a 'yes/no' assessment.

11. Master's degrees³ are awarded to students who:

have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with Bachelor's level, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research⁴ context;

can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;

have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements;

can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;

have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.

III Testing the shared descriptors

12. Members of the group have initiated discussions about options for testing the BaMa descriptors in joint 'pilot studies' that involve different approaches to QA. Such studies will seek to investigate the utility of the descriptors, and in particular their form, components and levels of expectations. In addition to contributing to transparency concerning the nature of Bachelors and Masters qualifications, it is anticipated that such trans-national investigations will also contribute to enhancing the understanding and recognition of the various purposes and characteristics of different evaluation systems.

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- 3 Some JQI representative suggested that MBA programmes should be specifically excluded; others consider that MBA programmes should reflect the attributes contained within the shared Masters descriptor.
- 4 'research' is used to cover a wide variety of activities, with the context often related to a field of study; the term is used here to represent a careful study or investigation based on a systematic understanding and critical awareness of knowledge.

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Appendix 6

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Global scale

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| Proficient User | C2 | Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations. |
| | C1 | Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices. |
| Independent User | B2 | Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. |
| | B1 | Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. |
| Basic User | A2 | Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need. |
| | A1 | Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help. |

References

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training - CEDEFOP

<http://www.cedefop.gr/>

<http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/default.asp>

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority – QCA

<http://www.qca.org.uk/>

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the UK- QAA

<http://www.qaa.org.uk/>

Scottish Qualifications Authority

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/>

The Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System – NICATS

<http://www.nicats.ac.uk/mainindex.html>

The New Zealand Qualifications Framework

<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework/>

The South African Qualifications Framework

<http://www.saqa.org.za/>

The Australian Qualifications Framework

<http://www.aqf.edu.au/>

The National Skill Standards Board (NSSB)

<http://www.nssb.org/>

Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development - OECD

<http://www.oecd.org/EN/home/0,,EN-home-176-5-no-no-no-0,FF.html>

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/en/pub/pub0.htm>

Joint Quality Initiative, including the Dublin descriptors

<http://www.jointquality.org/>

Clifford Adelman, Senior Research Analyst, U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.aahe.org/change/paralleluniverse.htm>

A Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/documents_intro/common_framework.html

Definition and Selection of Competencies- DESECO

http://www.statistik.admin.ch/stat_ch/ber15/desecco/