


Building a Qualifications Framework



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- **WHAT IS A QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK?**
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What means qualification?

- At European level a qualification is defined as the formal result of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards
- It is based on learning outcomes and standards or references

What is a Qualifications Framework?

- An instrument for the classification of existing qualifications in a country, in an educational sector, in an economic sector according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved independantly of the institutions and of the type of learning (formal, non formal and informal)
- It aims to integrate and coordinate national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society;

Why a Qualifications Framework?

- Creating a qualifications system facilitating **lifelong learning by establishing links** between different education and training sectors; facilitating access and progression;
- Providing a tool for **social inclusion by opening up the qualifications system to** recognise other forms of learning (non-formal and informal);
- Facilitating **transnational understanding of qualifications**
- Ensuring the **quality of qualifications recognised**

- Enhancing the **competitiveness of national qualifications system by ensuring** coordination with the world of employment;
- Improving the comprehension of qualifications and **simplifying the qualifications** systems by introducing common references and by referencing together qualifications from different sub-systems (HE/VET, public or national/ private or social partners' qualifications, etc.).



- The role of national qualifications frameworks within a qualifications system and their interaction with the existing elements of the system also varies.
- NQFs can be developed as to either describe a **status quo of the national qualifications system** in which case their role is to make explicit the existing levels and relations.
- NQFs can also be a tool to **reform the qualifications system in view of achieving one or more** of the above policy objectives;

Expected results



- Making the content of qualifications (certificates, diplomas and titles) easier to understand:
- helps individuals to enter and progress through quality education and training throughout life
- encourages citizens to change career or move abroad
- makes qualifications and training more compatible
- leads to more consistent policies in the fields of employment and education and training.

Stages in building a Qualifications Framework



Three main stages



- Purpose and scope: what goals will the NQF help to achieve and on which education or occupational sectors are to be included?
- Strategy: decisions on how unified or centrally controlled should the NQF be, what additional policy measures might be necessary?
- Design and implementation: decisions about the design, implementation process and governance and management (updating)

Design : On the academic side: 4 main steps

- Identify the existing qualifications
- Identify the learning outcomes
- Identify the relevant descriptors
- Identify the levels

Level

- Each level has a unique definition
- The definitions used at each level are generic and intended to provide a general, shared understanding of each level
- These definitions allow broad comparisons between qualifications at different levels independently of sectors
- They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements
- Every qualification will not have all of the characteristics

Descriptor

- A level descriptor offers a generic description of the characteristics of the competences typical for the qualifications at that level
- The purpose of such a description is to assist in placing existing or future qualifications in the qualifications framework

NQF Ireland: 8 descriptors

- Knowledge: breadth
- Knowledge: kind
- Know-how and skill: range
- Know-how and skill: selectivity
- Competence: context
- Competence: role
- Competence: learning to learn
- Competence: insight

Portugal: 3 descriptors

- Knowledge: « the body of facts, principles, theories and practices related to a field of study or professional activity »
- Skill: « the ability to apply knowledge and use know how to carry out tasks and solve problems. A skill may be cognitive or practical »
- Attitude: « the ability to carry out tasks and solve problems of lesser or greater degrees of complexity and involving various levels of autonomy and responsibility »

Belgium (Flemish community): 5 descriptors

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Context
- Autonomy
- Responsibility

The Netherlands: 3 descriptors and 6 sub-descriptors

- Knowledge
- Skills
 - Applying knowledge
 - Problem solving skills
 - Learning and development skills
 - Information skills
 - Communication skills
- Competence
 - Responsibility and independence

Design: On the economic sector side

- Identify the levels of activity
- Identify the main competences
- Identify the relevant descriptors

Then

- Compare the two results
- Come to a common agreement on descriptors and levels
- Position the existing qualifications on the basis of descriptors and levels

The European referencing process

The 10 referencing criteria

It is required to demonstrate:

- The responsibility and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process (N°1)
- That there is a clear and demonstrable link between the national qualifications framework and the level descriptors of EQF (N°2)
- That national frameworks and their qualifications are based on learning outcomes (N°3)
- That the processes for including qualifications in NQFs are transparent (N°4)
- That national quality assurance systems refer to NQFs (N°5)

- Agreement of Quality Assurance bodies (N°6)
- Involvement of international experts (N°7)
- Certification by the competent national body (bodies) of referencing of the national framework with the EQF (N°8)
- Registered in the official EQF platform public listing of countries having completed the referencing process (N°9)
- Clear reference to the EQF level on all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents (N°10)

Conditions to meet

- Two dimensions : a technical dimension involving experts, a political dimension to ensure implementation and sustainability
- Involvement of professional sectors
- A balanced approach between educational and professional dimension, a real dialogue
- A dialogue between sectors, to come to a common understanding and vision, learn to work together
- Prepare from the beginning the next steps

