



Establishment of the Israeli National Qualifications Framework (NQF)  
as a mechanism to fostering the development of Israeli Human Capital  
IL 15 ENI SO 01 17(IL/14)



# Examples on the development of National Qualification Frameworks



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מדינת ישראל  
משרד החינוך  
STATE OF ISRAEL  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION





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## NQF LEGAL FRAMEWORK<sup>1</sup>

Qualification frameworks (QFs) may differ from country to country, as they try to give answer to the specific needs of each of them, even though they seek solutions to a number of key questions all countries have in common. Often, experts developing a framework are confronted with questions, which could be listed in three key processes:

### The development of qualifications

- What qualifications are to be included in a framework?
- How are these qualifications developed or adapted for use within the framework?
- How are these qualifications approved, maintained and updated?

### The use of qualifications for different purposes

- How are qualifications used in assessment and certification?
- How are qualifications used in education and training delivery?

### Coordinating and managing a qualifications framework across subsystems

- How is the qualifications framework coordinated?
- How are the structure and functioning of the framework, as well as the qualifications it comprises, communicated to users and beneficiaries?
- How is the quality of all related processes assured?

In the early steps of work of a country's QF development process, the related tasks are often divided among existing institutions and stakeholders, building on voluntary contributions. In order to move

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<sup>1</sup> This document present and re-adapt contents taken from various publications referenced in the Resources section.



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from this voluntary approach to a professional approach, formal roles and responsibilities need to be identified, allocated and endorsed.

There is a crucial need to coordinate the work of all different actors, since the work on establishment of a framework has both technical and political aspects. While on **technical level** the coordinating entity/authority coordinates the work to promote common principles and practical functions of the framework, on **political level** there is the need of broad consensus and the common understanding among stakeholders and actors. Consider that coordination functions evolve with the development of the QF, the coordination of qualification systems may vary, i.e. nomination of an **entity/authority** with clear task to foresee the implementation of standards and principles; **partnerships-oriented entity/authority** which ensures the experience is shared with all stakeholders; the education entity/authority taking upon itself the coordination role, or the **establishment of a new/special entity/authority** reporting to all stakeholders. Many countries have opted for the last one.

Coordination of the QF processes should be able to answer the following questions:

- To what extent are implementation arrangements based on existing roles?
- What is the coordinating and/or monitoring roles attributed to key institutions?
- How have they evolved and how are they expected to develop further?
- Has there been any transfer of responsibilities from existing bodies?
- What is the legal basis for the coordinating and monitoring functions?

When starting to work on the QF, the country should consider also the **budget factor**, which differs from one country to another, also based on own realities. Development of QFs in several countries has seen different scenarios, with the process in some developed countries generating considerable development and maintenance costs, with limited benefits and savings. Some other countries have seen a limited cost implication.

The general experience shows that there are **more benefits to a lighter approach than a radical change** introduced to a country when developing the QF. Following on the scope and tasks, also





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regulated by relevant legal framework, the Qualifications entity/authority and its tasks, would be as in the following table.

FUNCTION	TASKS
<b>FURTHER NQF DEVELOPMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maintain NQF structures.</li> <li>● Prepare policy decisions.</li> <li>● Link NQF to occupations in the labour market.</li> </ul>
<b>FACILITATE COOPERATION &amp; COORDINATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Formulate agreed positions.</li> <li>● Facilitate debate.</li> <li>● Address transversal competences.</li> <li>● Work with regional and sectoral bodies.</li> </ul>
<b>IDENTIFY NEEDS AND SET PRIORITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify new occupations.</li> <li>● Organize development/review of occupational standards.</li> <li>● Identify qualifications on offer that could enter the NQF.</li> <li>● Address proliferation/overlaps of qualifications.</li> <li>● Invite stakeholders to develop specific standards/qualifications.</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNICATE, INFORM &amp; ADVOCATE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NQF information dissemination at home and abroad, and via a website.</li> <li>● Use of common language.</li> <li>● Navigation tools.</li> </ul>
<b>INTERNATIONAL POSITIONING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Align with QF EHEA and EQF.</li> <li>● Act as contact point (EQF, European Higher Education Area (EHEA), EUROPASS, ENIC/NARIC).</li> <li>● Compare international qualifications.</li> </ul>
<b>MANAGE REGISTERS / DATABASES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Manage NQF register of qualifications, units, occupational standards, awarding bodies, assessment centres, experts, graduates, educational programmes, training providers, training companies, teachers and trainers, students, issue certificates in order to authenticate.</li> </ul>
<b>ASSISTANCE, CAPACITY-BUILDING AND GUIDANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support SSCs/professional bodies/awarding bodies with standards and qualifications development.</li> <li>● Guidance for qualification types, for validation of non-formal and informal learning and for training programmes.</li> </ul>
<b>ENSURE AND ENHANCE QUALITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accredite awarding bodies, standards, qualifications, learners.</li> <li>● Enhance coherence and relevance of qualifications.</li> <li>● Widen access and alternative pathways.</li> <li>● Enhance the quality of assessment/assessors/verifiers.</li> <li>● Enhance the quality of providers.</li> <li>● Monitor and evaluate different actors.</li> </ul>
<b>RESEARCH THE SYSTEM FUNCTIONING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assess the impact and effectiveness.</li> <li>● Gather systematic feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>SUPPORT TRAINING PROVIDERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support internal quality-assurance processes.</li> <li>● Development of curricula.</li> <li>● Support education and training provision.</li> <li>● Training of teachers and trainers.</li> </ul>

Table 1: Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks, vol. I and II, ETF 2017.



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## EXAMPLES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS<sup>2</sup>

Establishment, development and maintenance of a NQF is a work in progress and always on the go. Legal aspect is one of **key issues** to be discussed and considered from the very first steps of the work on establishing such framework.

### Degrees of regulation

When speaking of the legal aspect of such important national task, there is the need to consider the fact that legal traditions definitely influence on how qualifications are regulated. Legislation is often needed to create new conditions, stimulate new developments, and regulate roles and responsibilities, in particular in market oriented or state-led skill-formation systems, where the governance of such systems is not determined by social dialogue. It is recommended that countries start the legislative process with broad framework legislation, confirming the objectives, the levels of the NQF and general principles, but leave details to secondary legislation that can be more easily updated.

Experience has shown that in countries in which common laws are built around individual cases, governments have been less inclined to legislate the qualifications framework. In such cases, once qualifications are recognized as equivalent to the existing one and the civil effect such entitlements qualifications could provide, is an important issue to be considered. In other countries which apply a civil code, the tradition of state regulation based on logical principles has facilitated the creation of ruling principles for qualifications rather than letting qualification frameworks evolve around individual cases.

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<sup>2</sup>The examples are taken and slightly readapted from ETF working paper "Implementation arrangements for National Frameworks Qualifications and the role of stakeholders and Institutions", November 2011  
[https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/08EA60DCD9C98168C125791A002FE9D9\\_NQF.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/08EA60DCD9C98168C125791A002FE9D9_NQF.pdf)



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In Central European countries such as Germany and Austria, where social partners play an important role in setting the conditions for qualifications, and the entitlements that can be obtained from holding a qualification, qualifications standards for the dual vocational education system are compulsory and have the power of law.

### Scope of legislation: examples in practice

The following practical examples show that the legal arrangements can ignite from different angles, while having in common the establishment of the specific entity/authority responsible for the implementation and development of the NQF, therefore being considered as the official authorization to begin the implementation of the framework. However, this single act cannot stand on its own and detached from the rest of legal framework/laws in the country.

What really counts is how the NQF starts filtering through in all relevant legislation. NQF impact would be limited, with no reference of it in other national legislation. This might need adjustments to the relevant existing laws/national regulations.

Following examples show how the work for the establishment of the NQF has been ignited in several countries.

- The first relevant piece of legislation **in England** was the Act to establish the National Council for Vocational Qualifications in 1986, although it took until 2000 before the NQF became a reality.<sup>3</sup>
- [The Education Act](#) of 1989 **in New Zealand** defined the responsibilities of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

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<sup>3</sup> The examples are taken and slightly re-adapted from ETF publication Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks, vol. I and II, ETF 2017: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/2222>



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- The NQF in **South Africa** started with the [South African Qualifications Authority Act \(No. 58, 1995\)](#).
- In **France**, the [Law on Social Modernization \(2002\)](#) created the National Commission for Professional Certification under the authority of the ministry responsible for vocational education, which established the NQF through a national register (RNCP).
- In **Montenegro**, the Law on National Vocational Qualifications (2008) preceded the [Law on the NQF](#) in 2010.
- In **Turkey**, a [Law on the Vocational Qualifications Authority \(VQA\) \(5544/2006\)](#) was the start, although only in the Amendment Law on VQA of 2011 was there reference to developing the NQF.
- In **Ukraine**, a government decree on the NQF (2011) started the legislative process.
- In **Armenia** (2011), a government decree on the NQF started the legislative process.
- In **Croatia**, a [Law on the Croatian Qualifications Framework was adopted \(2013\)](#).

The examples below are presented with the purpose to give a clear picture of the main challenges, drivers for the development of the NQF and the scope of such framework.

The time line shows the different stages as well as legal acts taken by national authorities of these countries to enable the development and the establishment of the NQF over the years.



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## AUSTRALIA

### Main challenges

Australia has six states: New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, and Western Australia. It has two major mainland territories: the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.

Australia has traditionally been a country of migrants. Immigration has been tightened, and all migrants are evaluated using a points system that includes an assessment of their skills and qualifications. In 2010, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship introduced a Skilled Occupations List with high-value skills that are in demand. It is reviewed annually.

Australia's education and training systems are predominantly the responsibility of states, rather than of the federal authorities. VET and schools are mainly funded by state governments and there is considerable diversity among the states. For higher education there is federal funding. Standards and regulations have traditionally played an important role in the school sector and VET provision, while the higher education sector has to a large extent been self-regulating. VET has an Australian Quality Training Framework which focuses on the quality of provision by registered training organizations. These can be public as well as private. Training can take place in training institutions, in companies and through apprenticeships. Social partners are actively involved in VET. Together with industry representatives and organizations, 11 Industry Skills Councils are responsible for the development of Training Packages. A Training Package is an integrated set of nationally endorsed units of competence, Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications and assessment guidelines designed for a specific industry.

In higher education there are 38 universities and four private universities, two of which are foreign university campuses. The main challenges are to ensure quality and recognition for learners across the country as a whole, to address emerging skills shortages and to provide better opportunities for the disadvantaged, in particular for indigenous Australians. There is a clear agenda for improved access to tertiary education, and a clear aim to raise attainment levels further.





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## Drivers for NQF Development

In the federal Australian context, the AQF seeks to ensure that there is a national system of qualifications overarching the decentralized responsibilities. It was originally established in 1995 as a framework linking the sub-systems of general schools, the VET system and the higher education system. Before 2010 the system contained generic qualifications descriptors but no levels and the links between the subsystems were weak, with separate quality arrangements and regulators for each sub-sector. Recently, the AQF has been reviewed and strengthened, introducing levels and more precise qualifications descriptors and credit values for 14 types of qualification. This is seen as an important step towards a better integration of the VET and higher education sectors and enabling the widening of participation in tertiary education.





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Figure 1: The Australian qualification Framework (source: <https://www.aqf.edu.au/>)

The AQF is also clearly a tool to make the Australian system of qualifications better understood abroad. It is a reference document for people who want to study or migrate to Australia. The strengthened AQF is seen to facilitate stronger links to other international developments such as the EQF and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, the Pacific Qualifications Register, the NZQF of New Zealand, and possible frameworks for the ASEAN and APEC communities.

The AQF is a tool to support lifelong learning and is a policy matrix bringing all of Australia's education and training qualifications into one comprehensive framework. It defines the relationships and pathways between qualifications through descriptors and specifications for each qualification and through policies regarding issuance of qualifications and pathways between qualifications. The application of AQF qualifications and requirements is underpinned by state-level legislation for the accreditation of qualifications and the registration of providers.

## Scope

The AQF is the single quality-assured national framework for qualifications in general schools, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education in Australia. The Australian Qualifications Framework Council is responsible for technical development and management of the qualifications system and provides expert advice to the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE). The council does not regulate individual qualifications. These are accredited by separate national regulators for VET and higher education and for the school sector by states.

## Timeline

1972-1995

- [Nomenclature and Guidelines for Awards in Advanced Education, Australian Council on Awards in Advanced Education, 1972](#)



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- [Guidelines for the National Registration of Awards, Australian Council on Tertiary Awards, 1983](#)
- [Guidelines for the National Registration of Awards in Advanced Education, Australian Council on Tertiary Awards, 1984](#)
- [Guidelines for the National Registration of Awards in Advanced Education, Australian Council on Tertiary Awards, 1986](#)
- [Guidelines for the National Registration of Awards in Advanced Education, Australian Council on Tertiary Awards, 1987](#)
- [Guidelines for the National Registration of Awards in Advanced Education, Australian Council on Tertiary Awards, 1989](#)
- [Register of Australian Tertiary Education \(RATE\), various editions May 1991-1994](#)

1995

- AQF is phased in and replaces the registers.
- AQF describes qualifications across Australia for school sector, VET and higher education.
- AQF Advisory Board established. It advises on implementation of the AQF but does not accredit qualifications.
- Regulation is decentralized.
- Higher education institutions become self-regulating.

2000-2006

- Full scale implementation of the AQF. It is used by Australian Education International, the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition, professional associations and others when assessing overseas qualifications.
- The state of Victoria develops a credit matrix that is tighter than the AQF and introduces levels and credit for all types of awards.





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2008

- The Bradley Review of Higher Education proposes to transform the scale, potential and quality of higher education and to provide wider access and a voucher system of higher education funding.
- An OECD review of VET in Australia recommends changes in funding, improving labour market intelligence, and an outcome-led approach for all VET standards, including apprenticeship schemes.
- [The Australian Qualifications Framework Council \(AQFC\)](#) replaces AQF advisory board, which becomes responsible for technical development and management of the qualifications system in Australia and provides expert advice to the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE).

2009-2010

- Redesign of the AQF. A ten-level framework is introduced. Generic outcomes for 14 qualification types are described, including an indication of the volume of learning involved.
- Regulations for VET and higher education are strengthened.
- Legislation is passed for the establishment of a national VET regulator.
- The Skilled Occupations List is introduced by Department of Immigration and Citizenship to define skills requirements for migrants. The list is updated every six months to match current skill shortages.

2011

- The MCTEE approved the strengthened AQF in November 2010 with some amendments. These were approved in March 2011 together with the AQF Council's advice on implementation
- On 1 July the implementation of the new AQF starts.



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- [A Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency \(TEQSA\)](#) is established on 30 July to regulate all Australian higher education providers.

2013

- Merger of the national VET regulator with TEQSA.

2018-2019

- In the 2017-18 the Australian Government announced a review of the AQF. Since then there have been technological advances in education delivery, increased uptake of sub-qualifications and changes to international practice related to qualifications frameworks. The review will be completed by September 2019.

[The Australian Qualifications Framework](#) (AQF) is the single quality-assured national framework for qualifications in general, vocational, and higher education in Australia. At the national level, the Australian Qualifications Framework Council (AQFC) is responsible for technical development and management of the qualifications system in Australia and for the provision of expert advice to Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE).

The AQFC does not regulate individual qualifications. These are accredited by separate national regulators for VET and higher education and for the schools sector by individual states.

#### Sources:

- Australian Qualification Framework: <https://www.aqf.edu.au/>
- Australian Qualifications Framework Review: <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-qualifications-framework-review-0>



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## ENGLAND

Reference to England and not UK is linked with the fact that since devolution in 1998 there have been different systems developing in Wales and Northern Ireland, while Scotland always had its own qualifications system. England is a particularly interesting example of a ‘market of qualifications’ developed by a large number of awarding bodies and universities in a large country.

### Main challenges

#### Employment and education and training

England has one of the least regulated labour markets in Western-Europe. There is a relatively strong social diversification.

### Qualifications

England has sought to bring its education and training system more in line with the changing needs of the labour market and to offer opportunities to young people for a career and social mobility. There has been a strong preoccupation with standards, qualifications, assessment and certification (credentialism) in education policies, with frequent policy changes. Many actors are involved in the development of standards and education and training provision in England. The VET system initially developed independently of the state, with charities specialized in arts and trades setting examinations for technical subjects. These awarding bodies remained a major feature of the VET system. Thus, a market of qualifications has been created, based on labour market requirements, rather than on public education and training policies. Through private initiatives, England always has great examples of good practice, but governments have been looking continuously for system solutions promoting equal opportunities and labour market relevance. They have undertaken several attempts to regulate the awarding bodies and the qualifications that were developed by them.



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Main stages of education/employment	Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland www.qaa.ac.uk	Regulated Qualifications Framework for England and Northern Ireland www.ofqual.gov.uk www.ccea.org.uk	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales www.cqfw.net	National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland www.qqi.ie	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework www.scf.org.uk
Qualifications can be taken at any age in order to continue or return to education or training	LEVEL	LEVEL	LEVEL	LEVEL	LEVEL
Professional or postgraduate education, research or employment	8 Doctoral Degrees	8 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 8	8 Doctoral Degrees, Industry Qualifications, for example, Chartered Accountant	10 Doctoral Degrees, Higher Doctorates	12 Doctoral Degrees, Professional Apprenticeships, Professional Development Awards (PDA), Award
Higher education	7 Master's Degrees, Integrated Master's Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Postgraduate Certificates	7 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 7	7 Master's Degrees, Vocational Qualifications, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Apprenticeships	9 Master's Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas	11 Master's Degrees, Integrated Master's Degrees, Professional Apprenticeships, SVQ, PDA, Postgraduate Diplomas, Postgraduate Certificates, Award
Advanced Skills Training	6 Bachelor's Degrees with Honours, Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Graduate Diplomas, Graduate Certificates	6 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 6	6 Honours Degrees, Vocational Qualifications, Professional Certificates in Education, Apprenticeships	8 Honours Bachelor Degrees, Higher Diplomas	10 Bachelor's Degrees with Honours, Professional Apprenticeships, SVQ, PDA, Graduate Diplomas, Graduate Certificates, Award
Entry to professional graduate employment	5 Foundation Degrees, Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE), Higher National Diplomas (HND)	5 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 5, Higher National Diplomas (HND)	5 Foundation Degrees, Vocational Qualifications, Higher National Diplomas (HND), Apprenticeships	7 Ordinary Bachelor Degrees	9 Bachelor's/Ordinary Degrees, Technical Apprenticeships, PDA, SVQ, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificates, Award
Specialised education and training	4 Higher National Certificates (HNC), Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE)	4 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 4, Higher National Certificates (HNC)	4 Higher National Certificates (HNC), Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE), Vocational Qualifications, Apprenticeships	6 Advanced Certificate, Higher Certificate	8 Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE), Technical Apprenticeship, PDA, SVQ, Award
Qualified/Skilled worker	3 Access to HE Diploma*	3 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 3, GCE AS and A Levels	3 Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced, Vocational Qualifications, AS and A Level, Access to HE, Apprenticeships	5 Level 5 Certificate, Leaving Certificate	7 Higher National Certificates (HNC), Modern Apprenticeships, PDA, SVQ, Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE), Scottish Baccalaureate, Advanced Higher, Award
Entry to higher education	*The Access to HE Diploma is regulated by QAA but is not part of the FHEQ.	2 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 2, GCSEs at grade A* - C, and from 2017 grade 4-9 (England), Functional Skills Level 2 (England), Essential Skills Qualifications (NI)	2 Welsh Baccalaureate National, Vocational Qualifications, Essential Skills, GCSEs grades A*-C, Apprenticeships	4 Level 4 Certificate, Leaving Certificate	6 Higher, Modern Apprenticeships, SVQ, PDA, National Progression Award (NPA), National Certificate, Award
Completion of secondary education	The table gives an indication of how you can compare qualifications across national boundaries. Examples of major qualifications at each level are provided. For more detail of the qualifications that are current at the time of publication in each country, you will need to consult the website given at the head of each column.	1 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 1, GCSEs at grade D-G and from 2017 grade 3-1 (England), Functional Skills Level 1 (England), Essential Skills Qualifications (NI)	1 Welsh Baccalaureate Foundation, Vocational Qualifications, Essential Skills, GCSEs at grade D-G	3 Level 3 Certificate, Junior Certificates	5 National 5, Modern Apprenticeships, SVQ, NPA, National Certificate, Award
Progression to skilled employment	This leaflet is designed to give some information to help you begin this process, for example, by telling you what your qualification, or qualifications you are interested in studying, are broadly comparable to in other countries.	Entry Level	Entry Level	2 Level 2 Certificate	4 National 4, SVQ, NPA, National Certificate, Award
Continuation of secondary education		Entry Level Certificates (sub levels 1-3), functional skills Entry Level (England), English, Mathematics & ICT, Essential Skills Qualifications (NI)	Entry Level Qualifications	1 Level 1 Certificate	3 National 3, NPA, National Certificate, Award
Secondary education. Initial entry into employment or further education					2 National 2, NPA, National Certificate, Award
					1 National 1, Award

Figure 2: Qualifications can cross boundaries. A guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and the Ireland (Source: <https://www.qqi.ie/Documents/Qualifications%20can%20cross%20boundaries%20June%202017.pdf>)

## Drivers for NQF development

Qualifications have played a central role in education and training policies in England. There seem to have been four main drivers for the NQF developments in England:

- Bringing order in a fragmented system of qualifications and making the linkages between qualifications more explicit, so that the system could be better understood, and learners could make more informed choices about their career opportunities. In VET and general secondary education this has been achieved by regulating the qualifications offered, while in higher education and privately provided education the use of voluntary reference tools has been promoted.
- Developing systemic approaches to the process of identifying and describing what is a good qualification in order to improve the relevance of qualifications.



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- Strengthening public confidence in qualifications through a focus on standards, assessment and certification procedures, and quality assurance.
- Creating linkages between the different parts of the qualifications system and improving the links between vocational and academic education in order to raise attainment levels and to support access and progression.

Government intervention into the qualifications market has been strong since the 1980's, in particular in the field of vocational qualifications.

A series of agencies have been established to oversee or regulate the quality of standards, qualifications and assessment practices (NCVQ, SCAA, QAA, QCA, QCDA, OFQUAL). Others have been established to articulate and coordinate the needs of the labour market (NTOs, SSCs, UKCES).

It is currently the role of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to confirm that vocational qualifications are in line with sectoral qualifications strategies.

Different types of qualifications have been developed by government agencies at different moments to make qualifications more relevant and easier to understand. These have included NVQs, GNVQs, QCF qualifications, Access to Higher Education diplomas, foundation degrees, English baccalaureates and others.

## **Awarding organizations and centres**

### *Awarding organizations*

Awarding bodies are predominantly private actors that develop qualifications, oversee assessment practice and certificate individual learners. There are a handful of large awarding bodies that offer vocational and general qualifications, including City & Guilds, Edexcel and OCR. These coexist with smaller and larger branch-specific awarding bodies offering specialized qualifications. Currently the register of regulated qualifications mentions 182 recognized awarding bodies and almost 13,000





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qualifications. Awarding organizations must gain recognized status from the qualifications regulator [OFQUAL](#) before they can propose qualifications for accreditation.

The principal roles of awarding organizations are:

- designing and developing qualifications;
- approving and monitoring centres to offer qualifications to the standards required;
- ensuring assessment is carried out in a way that is fair, valid and reliable and conforms to the rules and regulations that all awarding organizations and their qualifications must meet;
- ensuring equality of access to qualifications;
- awarding qualifications to learners who have met the qualification requirements.

The majority of the 156 awarding organizations across the UK which deliver regulated qualifications provide vocational qualifications. Four awarding organizations in England – known as exam boards – offer GCSEs and A Levels (general qualifications offered in schools and colleges) to meet Ofqual's requirements. The exam boards are AQA, Eduqas (WJEC), OCR and Pearson. They were originally established as consortia of universities providing common entrance examinations on a regional basis. This system has since given way to a more open market, in which schools' and colleges' choice of awarding organization is strongly influenced by accountability measures and funding considerations.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) is a central body for the seven largest awarding organizations in the UK. It provides common regulations setting out the key administrative requirements and referencing the national agreements on the conduct of general qualification exams and assessments, and outlines special arrangements for individuals with particular requirements.

### *Centres*

Centres, sometimes known as examination centres, conduct the examinations and assessments set by awarding organizations. In most instances, centres are schools and colleges, although they may also be training providers, adult education centres, offender learning units or employers.



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Centres choose which awarding organization(s) to work with and must be recognized by these to deliver their qualifications. They must have sufficient resources, expertise, and organizational and administrative processes to support and assess learners to the standards required. Centres are responsible for internal quality assurance and must make their systems, processes and practices available for inspection and review by the awarding organization.

## Scope

Historical note: the first nationwide qualifications framework to be used in the UK, known as the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) framework, was introduced in 1987. The NVQ framework classified vocational qualifications outside of higher education according to their occupational sector and level of difficulty (of which there were five). It aimed to make the vocational qualifications system easier to understand and to validate new work-based training programs for young people. In 2003, the NVQ framework was expanded to nine levels and opened up to cover a wider range of qualifications, including general qualifications.

At that time, it was renamed the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and used across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) was introduced alongside the NQF in 2008. This aimed to recognize smaller units of learning, each of which carried a certain number of credits.

Concerns about the QCF emerged during a consultation in 2015, which highlighted that QCF rules imposed a one-size-fits-all approach to the design of qualifications and that this was not always consistent with the development of high-quality vocational qualifications that met employers' needs. As a result, the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) was developed, replacing the NQF and QCF in October 2015.

The RQF is similar to the NQF and QCF, in that qualifications are still assigned 'Levels' according to their difficulty. However, unlike the QCF, the RQF does not require qualifications to be combined of units which are assigned credit. Awarding organizations can now choose whether or not it is necessary to break their qualifications up into units, and whether these units should bear credit.



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There are actually four qualifications and credit frameworks in place in England at the moment. The NQF is the national qualifications framework of accredited qualifications. It was established in 2000. It originally had five levels, but since 2004 there are eight levels as well as separate entry levels.

Since 2008 vocational qualifications have migrated from the NQF to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), but the NQF still contains important general education qualifications. In the QCF all qualifications are unitized, have a credit value and the titling has been standardized. The NQF and QCF are regulated by Ofqual, the independent regulator of qualifications in England. Ofqual recognizes awarding bodies and accredits qualifications that are registered in the Register of Regulated Qualifications. Government funding is linked to the award of regulated qualifications.

In higher education degrees, can be issued by universities and in some cases colleges. Higher education institutions are autonomous in developing qualifications, but there are a number of reference documents developed by the Quality Assurance Agency (in cooperation with higher education institutions) to ensure quality and transparency.

The most important reference documents are a Code of Practice for Quality Assurance, the Framework of Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ, established in 2001 and reviewed in 2008), the Credit Framework for Higher Education that was adopted in 2008, and subject area benchmarks.

The levels of the four frameworks mentioned are aligned, but there are four different sets of level descriptors. In 2008, the FHEQ was self-certified against the Qualifications Framework of the European Area for Higher Education, while in 2010 the QCF and NQF were referenced against the European Qualifications Framework. There have been also arrangements with the framework authorities in Ireland, Wales and Scotland to align their frameworks.

## Timeline

1986

- De Ville Review of Vocational Qualifications.
- National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) established.





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- Development of the five-level NVQ framework, based on occupational standards.
- Creating linkages between the different parts of the qualifications system and improving the links between vocational and academic education in order to raise attainment levels and to support access and progression.

1995-97

- Beaumont Report published, new rules for NVQs defined.
- Merger of the NCVQ with the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority to form the
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).
- The Dearing Report Inquiry in higher education recommends a credit-based NQF for higher education.
- The Quality Assurance Agency is established

2000/01

- The National Qualifications Framework is established. Qualifications in the NQF are accredited by the QCA and become part of the National Database of Qualifications.
- The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) is published.

2004

- The NQF is expanded from five to eight levels to better align with the FHEQ,
- Consultation on a Framework for Achievement.
- A credit-based framework for all kind of achievements is proposed.

2008

- The Qualifications and Credit Framework is introduced, initially only for vocational qualifications, while general qualifications remain in the NQF.



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- The FHEQ is reviewed and its numbering levels are aligned to the NQF.
- The Credit Framework for Higher Education is published.
- The FHEQ is self-certified against the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area.

2009/10

- Ofqual becomes the independent regulator of qualifications reporting to parliament.
- The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) continues curriculum and examination functions of the QCA
- The Qualifications and Credit Framework and the NQF are referenced against the European Qualifications Framework.

2011

- The QCDA is closed down.
- The Wolf Review of Vocational Education recommends Ofqual to accredit only awarding bodies and not qualifications and proposes a reduced role of Sector Skills Councils with a stronger role for awarding bodies.
- The government partially agrees to strengthen the role of awarding bodies.

The liberalized nature of the qualifications market in England ensures very broad stakeholder involvement but presents challenges in coordination. Over the past decades different solutions and setups have been tested. Four qualifications and credit frameworks are in place today.

The NQF is the national qualifications framework of accredited qualifications established in 2000. Since 2008 vocational qualifications have been migrated from the NQF to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), but the NQF still contains important general education qualifications.



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In higher education, degrees can be issued by universities and in some cases colleges. Higher education institutions are autonomous in developing qualifications, but there are a number of reference documents developed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and higher education institutions to ensure quality and transparency.

The levels of the four frameworks mentioned are aligned, but there are four different sets of level descriptors. In 2008 the FHEQ was self-certified against the Qualifications Framework of the European Area for Higher Education, while in 2010 the QCF and NQF were referenced against the EQF. There have also been arrangements with the framework authorities in Ireland, Wales and Scotland to align the different frameworks.



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## IRELAND

The Irish national framework of qualifications (NFQ) is among the early developed qualifications frameworks in Europe, the concept having been first proposed in [legislation in 1999](#). The development of the framework was undertaken by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) supported by the two main awarding bodies, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Award Council (HETAC).

The NFQ was officially launched in 2003 following extensive public consultation and has now reached an advanced operational stage. It is a comprehensive and learning outcomes-based framework, covering all subsystems and levels of qualifications. It is defined as a 'single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards' (NQAI, 2009)<sup>4</sup>. The 10 levels, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence, capture all learning, from initial stages to the most advanced.

### Scope

Implementation was carried out by agreement within the education and training subsectors, with strong support from national stakeholders. The NFQ is seen as an enabler of institutional reform and further policy development in education, training and qualifications. Since 2012, the body responsible for the maintenance, implementation, further development and promotion of the framework is Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), a new agency established under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act<sup>5</sup>.

Although the NFQ was conceptualized as a driver of systemic change towards the objective of lifelong learning, it is currently viewed more as an enabler – rather than a driver – of wider reform,

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<sup>4</sup> Framework Implementation and Impact Study Report of Study Team, September 2009, <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Framework%20Implementation%20and%20Impact%20Study.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012. <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2012/a2812.pdf>



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with implications for setting standards, developing awards, teaching, assessment, and program design.

The specific aims for the development of the NFQ included: (a) development of a more flexible and integrated system of qualifications that could recognize all learning acquired by learners in Ireland; (b) establishment of learning outcomes as a common reference point for qualifications and for recognition of non-formal and informal learning; (c) responding to the qualification needs of individuals, society and the economy through a range of available qualifications and the recognition of diverse forms of learning (NQAI, 2009).

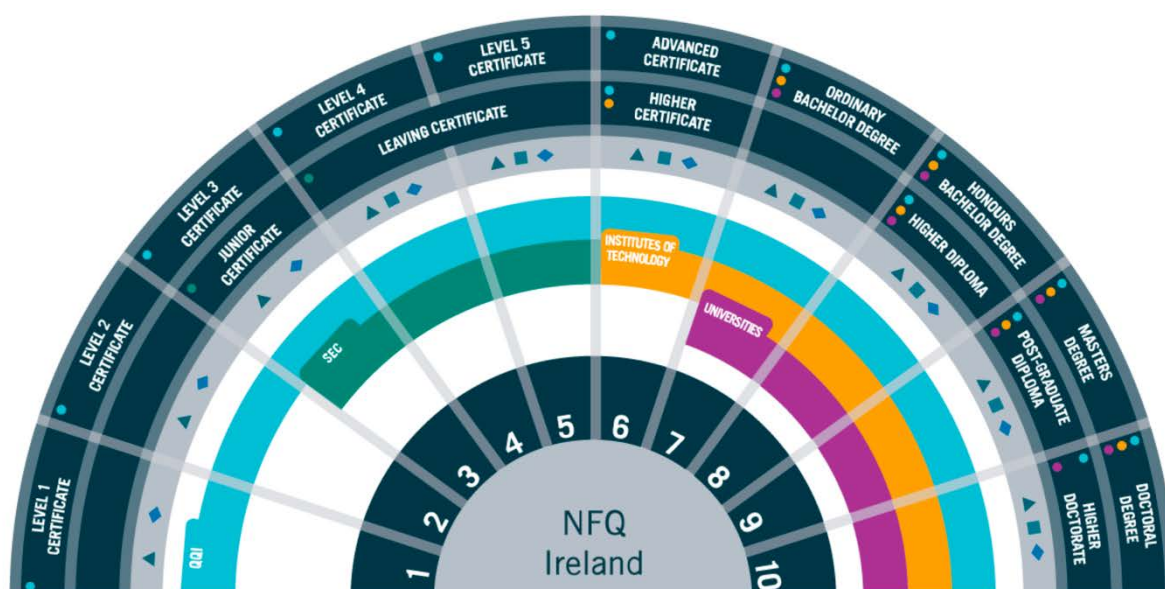


Figure 3: Irish Qualifications Framework (source: [https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-\(NFQ\).aspx](https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx))

## Important lessons and future plans

Implementing the NFQ relies on a broad partnership approach, incremental development, and strong support from different stakeholders. The deeper the implementation, the greater the support required from different stakeholders. According to the 2009 impact study conducted by NQAI, ‘sustained leadership and oversight of the implementation process is required. Flexibility and partnership should



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remain the guiding principles for managing the NFQ.’ (NQAI, 2009, p. 50). The establishment of QQI in 2012 has been a key step in this direction. The increased institutional coherence, the statutory basis underpinning the NFQ, a commitment to decision-making by consensus, and political support since its establishment have been important factors in the success of the Irish NFQ. In a recent survey conducted by Cedefop, QQI identified new opportunities and challenges for the Irish NFQ. The structural and strategic reforms that are currently underway in Ireland – Further education and training strategy 2015-20; National strategy for higher education to 2030; and Review of apprenticeship training in Ireland – present an opportunity to establish the NFQ as a mechanism contributing to the quality and qualifications interests of these reforms. A key challenge remains: to demonstrate the impact of the framework. The sustainability of NFQ depends on whether or not it can be shown to contribute to education, training and labour market national policy agendas. Several factors have already been suggested as determining the impact and utilization of the Irish NFQ: institutional and statutory arrangements, consensus and capacity building, timing issues, international influences, and connections with broader policy agendas. However, further empirical studies and evidence-informed explanations are necessary to assess more rigorously the effects of the NFQ, its relevance to education and skills policy in Ireland and the conditions necessary for its sustainability, to warrant public and private investment in the framework. As a first step in tackling this challenge, QQI has initiated discussion and critical reflection on the purpose and contribution of the NFQ, and on the appropriate design and methodology for the framework review to be carried out in 2016.





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## SCOTLAND

### The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) brings together all mainstream Scottish Qualifications. The SCQF is the responsibility of a partnership involving the Scottish Government, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (Scotland), Colleges Scotland, and Universities Scotland.

The framework incorporates all the mainstream Scottish qualifications from Access 1 (National 1 from 2015/16) to Doctorate level. Future changes resulting from the Curriculum for Excellence review of qualifications are detailed below. It includes both academic and vocational qualifications achieved in schools, further education, higher education and the workplace.

Qualifications are allocated SCQF credit points and placed at one of the twelve component levels of the framework. Individual academic qualifications are credit-rated according to their “size” in terms of notional learning hours (1 credit point for each 10 hours of learner effort, assuming a 1200 hour learning year).

### Scope

The SCQF is designed to make the Scottish qualifications system easier to understand for everyone, including employers, learners, and those involved in the provision of learning. It demonstrates the relationships between qualifications. It allows learners to plan progress towards their learning and career goals. Since it facilitates the transfer of credits from one qualification towards another in relevant subjects, it avoids repetition of learning.

SCQF developments will incorporate achievements in community learning and development, in aspects of college and school work not at present certificated, in the social services and health sectors and in employment. For example, ten Community Learning and Development organizations were supported in 2012/13 to have their learning programs credit rated onto SCQF. Framework



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developments will also enable the system to give credit to prior and experiential learning. The framework will continue to develop and expand to include other kinds of qualifications and learning.

## Compatibility with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

In December 2009 the UK Qualifications Framework EQF Referencing Report - Scotland Report was published. The following table summarizes the levels of the SCQF and the principal qualifications in the framework. It also shows the EQF equivalents to the SCQF levels.

The SCQF Partnership continues to work closely with other UK frameworks owners on projects relating to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and in the related areas such as the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK					
This Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at <a href="http://www.scqf.org.uk">www.scqf.org.uk</a> to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database.					
SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications			Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Apprenticeships & SVQs
12				Doctoral Degree	Professional Apprenticeship
11				Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship SVQ
10				Honours Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship
9			Professional Development Award	Bachelors / Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
8		Higher National Diploma		Diploma Of Higher Education	Higher Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
7	Advanced Higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate		Certificate Of Higher Education	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
6	Higher, Awards, Skills for Work Higher				Modern Apprenticeship Foundation Apprenticeship SVQ
5	National 5, Awards, Skills for Work National 5				Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
4	National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 4	National Certificate	National Progression Award		SVQ
3	National 3, Awards, Skills for Work National 3				
2	National 2, Awards				
1	National 1, Awards				

Figure 4: Scottish qualifications framework (Source: <https://scqf.org.uk/interactive-framework/>)





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## New and revised qualifications

To ensure that the SCQF reflects the values, purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence, it has recently been reviewed and new qualifications have been designed (for more information about the Curriculum for Excellence please see 2.1 Fundamental Principles and National Policies).

- The existing Advanced Higher (level 7) and Higher (level 6) qualifications were retained as points of stability and have been reviewed to ensure they fully reflect Curriculum for Excellence.
- New revised Higher qualifications became available in 2014/15 and the new revised Advanced Higher qualifications became available in 2015/16.
- New qualifications were offered as of 2013/14 at:
  - SCQF level 5 'National 5' replacing Standard Grade Credit;
  - SCQF level 4 'National 4' replacing Standard Grade General;
  - SCQF level 3 'National 3' replacing Standard Grade Foundation.
- Intermediate 2 (level 5), Intermediate 1 (level 4) and Access 3 (level 3) were available until 2014/15. National 5, 4 and 3 are now awarded instead.
- Access 2 (level 2) and Access 1 (level 1) were also available until 2014/15 and were replaced by National 2 and National 1 from 2015/16.

Scottish Baccalaureates in Languages and Sciences became available in school year 2009/10, with first certification in 2010. Further Baccalaureates in Expressive Arts and Social Sciences have been available since 2012/13. The Baccalaureates consist of a coherent group of current Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications in science or languages and an Interdisciplinary Project. The Interdisciplinary Project is an Advanced Higher Unit in which subject knowledge is applied in realistic contexts by carrying out an investigation or practical assignment. It enables learners to develop and show evidence of initiative, responsibility, and independent working.



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## FRANCE

Since the Law on social modernization no. 2002 – 73, France has a *Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles* (RNCP - National repository of professional certifications) controlled by the Commission (CNCP).

Aims of the *Répertoire national de certifications professionnelles* (RNCP - National repository of professional certifications).

The *Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles* - National Repository of Professional Certifications aims to provide individuals and companies with constantly updated information on professional diplomas and titles. It facilitates access to employment, human resources management and professional mobility. Certifications registered in the repository are recognized throughout France. In practice, the RNCP is a means to consult certification description: targeted activities, sector, acquired skills, access conditions, etc. An updated quantitative statement of the repository (number of sheets available on-line, number of sheets pending validation, statement per certifying body, etc.) is regularly available to users.

### Certification classification criteria

The decree founding the [RNCP](#) (decree 2002/616) specifies that certifications should be classified into two criteria:

- the fields of activity specified by the nomenclature of specialties is used to identify professional or disciplinary fields concerned by certification;
- a training level. The National professional certification commission (*Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle* - CNCP), in charge of the RNCP, is in charge of drafting a new nomenclature of required training levels, linked to occupied jobs capable of allowing European and international comparisons. In the meantime, it uses the national 5-level nomenclature, adopted in 1969:
  - level V: brevet des collèges level (lower secondary school leaving certificate);



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- level IV: baccalauréat level (upper secondary school leaving certificate );
- level III: baccalauréat level + 2 years' additional study;
- level II: baccalauréat level + 3 or + 4 years' additional study;
- level I: level at least equal to the baccalauréat + 5 years' additional study.

Each certification is described in terms of learning results / professional finality. Certifications are considered to be "qualification indicators" when they state that an individual has a proven level of knowledge, skills and attitudes certifying that he or she is capable of combining them all in a broad professional context with previously defined level of responsibility and autonomy.

### Categories of identified certifications

Three types of recordable certifications have been defined:

- certifications issued by the Department for Education and 6 other ministries with specific commissions composed of State and social partner representatives: Ministries of Agriculture, Culture (only for certain certifications), Employment, Health, Social affairs, Youth and Sport;
- certifications issued by professional branches and decided within the framework of agreements between social partners;
- certifications issued by other departments, public or private institutions or chambers of commerce and guilds.

The creation of the RNCP aimed at setting up a unique reference area to identify professional certifications. The repository of general certifications does not include: brevet des collèges (lower secondary school leaving certificate), general and technological baccalauréats (upper secondary school leaving certificate). However, the minister for higher education and research has decided to register all university certifications when it considers that they have a vocational purpose. This explains the large number of university certifications rightfully present in the RNCP.

Organization responsible for the RNCP: [\*Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle\*](#) - national vocational certification commission



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Funded by  
the European Union

The National Vocational Certification Commission (*Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle* - CNCP) is responsible for the creation and monitoring of the RNCP. Established by the Law of social modernization no. 2002 – 73, the CNCP is placed under the authority of the Minister in charge of vocational training. It consists of 43 members: ministerial representatives, regional representatives, social partners (e.g. professional organizations representing employers and employees), representatives of guilds, chambers of commerce and chambers of agriculture and qualified persons. Its mission is to:

- List the range of vocational certifications (creation and updating of the *Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles* - national vocational certification repository);
- Inform people and companies about the certifications listed by the national repository and certifications recognized in the member states of the European community;
- Ensure consistency, complementarity and renewal of diplomas and titles as well as their adaptation to the evolution of qualifications and work organization;
- Give a public opinion prior to elaborating and creating vocational certifications rightfully registered in the national repository;
- Make a public assessment of vocational qualification certificates;
- Make recommendations aimed at institutions issuing diplomas, vocational titles or professional qualification certificates;
- Notify any total or partial matches between certifications registered in the national repository as well as between them and other certifications, in particular, European ones;
- Elaborate a new nomenclature of certification levels in line with jobs occupied.

Under the authority of its president, the CNCP relies on the work of a specialized commission, a permanent secretariat and a network of regional correspondents.

### Links between the RNCP and lifelong education and training policy



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Within the RNCP, each certification is described in terms of learning results / professional finality and not simply in terms of diplomas. Each certification should therefore be accessible through the validation of *Validation des Acquis d'Expérience* (VAE - validation of learning from experience). The VAE is one of the pillars of French lifelong education and training: it is a measure that allows anyone, regardless of their age, level of qualification or status, to validate acquired experience to obtain a professional certificate. Three years' experience related to the content of the targeted certification is required.

### Links between the RNCP and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

The CNCP contributes to international work on qualifications transparency. It is in charge of elaborating new nomenclature on levels of certification liable to match up with the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong education and training (EQF).

In 2010, the CNCP particularly focused its efforts on building a new nomenclature that will better differentiate levels of higher education, in compliance with the Bologna Process and better take into account changes having occurred in recent years in the vocational certification field. Two types of problems have been raised during this work:

- Certifications raise problems in terms of matching in view of the difference between their notification on the employment market and their level in the RNCP;
- The Bologna process (installation of the Bachelor-Master-Doctorate structure, matching of university certifications within Council of Europe countries) encourages a "relaxation" of level I and II of the current nomenclature and between several levels: it is envisaged to take levels I and II higher education diplomas towards 3 levels of certification scheduled by the EQF (levels 6, 7 and 8). The 5 levels of the current nomenclature do not seem to be sufficient to establish effective matches with the 8 EQF levels.

### Main challenges

In France, there is no state monopoly for designing and awarding qualifications. Any institution



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(university, private or public training center, high school, chamber, professional body, company, etc.) is entitled to create certificates and qualifications and to award these in its own name to people after a training session or a process of assessment. This very liberal approach to certification has resulted in a proliferation of qualifications, degrees and titles of which there are an estimated 15,000 now. In a country where the ‘culture of the national diploma’ is deeply rooted, the challenge is to ensure transparency in this market and safeguard the relevance of the proposed qualifications in the labour market. Rules are needed to inform and protect the individual users.

### Drivers for NQF development

Even if the term ‘qualifications framework’ is not used in France outside the world of qualifications experts, a French national framework of qualifications has existed for a long time. The first classification of (five) levels, the nomenclature des *niveaux de formation*, was created in the years 1967-1969 and is still used. The first body in charge of accreditation and registration of the qualifications, the *Commission Technique d’Homologation*, was created in 1971. However, in 2002 the need for a more effective and more easily understood qualification framework, and for a quality-driven registration process and the introduction of validation of prior learning (VAE), led to the adoption of a new structure, including a national body (the *Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle*, or CNCPE) and a new instrument for the registration of qualifications with new procedures (*Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles*, or RNCPE). The reinforcement of the outcomes approach and of the need for qualifications to be more labour-market oriented have resulted in a real reform of the NQF, followed some years later by other reforms, such as the introduction of more vocationally oriented higher education. The development of a structure of new levels is enshrined in the 2002 law but it still seems in limbo. One can assume that the adoption of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and the exercise of referencing existing French qualifications will be one of drivers for reshaping the nomenclature.

### Scope and participation

All certificates, titles and diplomas can be listed in the *Répertoire National* by the CNCPE and can thus be legally registered by the state and officially referenced to the national qualification levels. As





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such, there is no monopoly for the design and award of qualifications but there are two types of qualifications: those officially registered in the RNCP by the state and those that are not registered. Registration in the RNCP and consequently the referencing of each qualification (or type of qualification) against the five levels of the nomenclature, can take place for these qualifications under several conditions and technical criteria.

The main conditions:

- all qualifications covered by the framework must be first accredited by tripartite councils or committees, including representatives of social partners,
- all qualifications covered by the framework must be achievable through a process of validation of prior learning,
- to be registered, qualifications must be described in terms of learning outcomes in a common format.

The CNCP is under the authority of the minister responsible for VET. The commission is composed of 43 members, including representatives of ministries, regions, social partners, chambers and qualified persons.

## Timeline

1969

- Approval of the five-level nomenclature of levels, based on a six-level training scale adopted in 1967.

1971

- Creation of the Commission Technique d'Homologation des Titres

1992

- Introduction of validation of on the job learning achievements.



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2002

- Establishment of the CNCP and RNCP. Registration procedure based on learning outcomes and value of the qualifications on the labour market.
- Introduction of the validation of prior learning.

2009

- The CNCP is empowered by new legislation to provide opinions on all qualifications to be designed and registered in the RNCP.

2010

- The levels of the French nomenclature are referenced to the EQF.

2012-2013

- A new basis for the levels of the French NQF that is more coherent with the EQF levels

**In France**, any institution (a ministry, public body, university, private or public training centre and high school, chamber, professional association, company etc.) that creates certificates/qualifications in its own name is responsible for the identification and distribution of roles in the development of qualifications. The involvement of social partner therefore varies from one institution to another. The RNCP procedure includes only a mandatory provision that the qualification(s) for which the registration is requested is designed with the involvement of representatives of the appropriate economic sector.

- The categories of qualifications registered in the RNCP:
- National qualifications, issued by the State (various ministries) or in the name of State (which is the case for higher education).
- National qualifications issued by sectoral trade bodies (branches), so called “*certificats de qualification professionnelle-CQP*).





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All certificates, titles and diplomas can be listed in the national register (RNCP) by the *Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle* (CNCP). Thus, there is no monopoly for the design and award of qualifications but there are two categories of qualifications: those officially registered in the RNCP by the state and those not registered.

The framework covers qualifications regardless of the certifying authorities. The CNCP operates under the authority of the minister responsible for VET (for all levels, including higher education). It is composed of 43 members, including representatives of ministries, regions, social partners, chambers and experts.



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## GERMANY

### National Qualifications Framework

The development of the German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning ([Deutscher Qualifikationsrahmen](#) – DQR) is part of a European process. In April 2008, the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Establishment of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) entered into force. To implement the EQF, 39 European countries have now decided to develop national qualifications frameworks (NQFs). These NQFs can have a different number of levels and pursue different objectives. In addition to Germany, 32 other countries have assigned their NQFs to the EQF as part of the referencing process. The EQF portal provides information on the current status of developments.

The EQF, as a reference framework for lifelong learning, maps the learning outcomes of the respective European national education systems in eight levels. It serves as a translation device between the education and qualifications systems of the EU member states and is intended to make learning outcomes from all educational sectors internationally more comprehensible and more comparable, thus promoting the mobility of employees in Europe.

Like the EQF, the DQR describes eight levels that describe learning outcomes that are bundled into competences independently of the degree. In principle all DQR levels should be accessible via various educational pathways. In levels 5 to 8 the DQR opted for parallel descriptions allowing the allocation of academic and vocational qualifications. Compatibility with the Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Qualifications (Qualifikationsrahmen für Deutsche Hochschulabschlüsse – HQR) adopted in 2005 is guaranteed in DQR levels 6 to 8.

At the end of January 2012, the Federation, Länder, social partners and business organizations agreed on a fundamental line for the introduction of the DQR. The allocation of general school-leaving certificates was deferred for a five-year trial period.

The allocation of the DQR levels to the EQF levels was carried out in the so-called referencing process. The German Referencing Report was successfully presented to and approved by the EQF



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Advisory Group, the advisory body at European level, in December 2012. The exclusion of general education was criticized.

The signing of the Joint Resolution on the DQR by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF), the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie – BMWi), the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK) and the Conference of Ministers of Economics of the Länder (Wirtschaftsministerkonferenz – WMK) in May 2013, laid the foundation for the introduction of the DQR.

The aim of the DQR is to make the German qualification system more transparent, to support reliability, permeability and quality assurance and to increase the comparability of qualifications. The Federation and the Länder have agreed that the assignment of qualifications and degrees to levels does not replace the existing system of entrance qualifications. The allocation takes place in accordance with the principle that each qualification level should always be accessible via various educational pathways. The achievement of a level does not provide automatic entitlement to access the next level and is not considered in conjunction with the implications for collective wage agreements and laws relating to remuneration. The EU Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications remains unaffected by the EU Recommendation.

The German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning is the first framework to cover all qualifications of the German education system across all educational sectors. In the Annex to the Joint Resolution, the qualifications of the formal sector assigned by consensus are presented in a tabular overview. A learning outcome-oriented justification is attached in each case. In most cases, an anchor qualification stands for a qualification type. The exemplary reason is then followed by a list of qualifications that correspond to this type and are assigned in the same way.

In 2017, the Standing Conference decided on the allocation of general education degrees. The Hauptschulabschluss (HSA) was assigned DQR level 2, the Mittlere Schulabschluss (MSA) DQR level 3 and the Fachhochschulreife (FHR), the Fachgebundene Hochschulreife (FgbHR) and the Allgemeine Hochschulreife (AHR) DQR level 4. An allocation to two levels was confirmed for initial



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vocational education and training: Level 3 for two-year training programs and level 4 for three-year and three-and-a-half-year training programs. This ensures the equivalence of vocational and general education and training in the assignment process to the DQF.

The indication of the EQF/DQR reference level on new certificates issued for qualifications is being carried out by the respective authorities (schools, chambers, etc.). In higher education, the EQF/DQF level is shown in the Diploma Supplement. A uniform formulation is used in all areas of education. The current exception to this is the classification of general qualifications. The DQR level is not shown for qualifications obtained before the Joint Resolution came into force. The assignment is only noted on qualification certificates of qualifications that are listed in the annually updated "List of Assigned Qualifications".

In principle, all assignments of qualifications from the formal area are also shown bindingly in the DQR Qualifications Database in German (partly also in English).

As well as qualifications from the formal sector, in future the qualifications of the non-formal sector are also to be allocated to the DQR – i.e. from the area that works with regulatory means that are not regulated by laws or ordinances. A pilot procedure for this was launched in September 2017. The aim is to develop procedures and criteria for assigning qualifications of non-formal learning to the levels of the DQR. Results are expected in autumn 2018. In a further stage it shall be possible to include informally acquired competences in the DQR too. The development of procedures required to determine and assess the results of informal learning ("validation") is taking place outside the DQR process.

The DQR Manual explains the DQR to all interested persons. It serves as a guide for authorities which are responsible for allocating qualifications to the DQR. It specifies the criteria and procedures for the description of qualifications for the DQR and is intended to ensure that the allocation of newly developed qualifications always follows the same criteria and procedures. It lays down binding allocations which indicate the competences acquired through a particular qualification, thereby making the allocations comprehensible, and also describes the competences and sources of information. A glossary explains the terms which are important to understand the DQR.



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## TURKEY

Technical and administrative studies for the preparation of the TQF started in August 2010 with the establishment of an NQF Preparation Commission which consisted of members from MoNE, CoHE, and VQA. The planning of the NQF was conducted by this preparation commission.

Planning and development activities on the TQF had been carried out jointly by the Commission and the Working Group established by the Commission in October 2010. The working group included representatives from MoNE, CoHE, VQA, relevant ministries, public institutions, labor unions, and professional organizations.

Decisions regarding the establishment of policies for the preparation of NQF are as among the priorities of many important policy documents such as Ninth Development Plan (2007-2013), 2008 Turkey's National Program of Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper (2009-2013), Employment and Empowerment of Vocational Education Relations Action Plan, the Tenth Development Plan (2014 - 2018), the National Employment Strategy (2014-2023), Turkey Learning Strategy Paper Lifelong and Action Plan (2014-2018), Turkey Vocational and Technical Education Strategy document and Action Plan (2014-2018).

Final drafts of the TQF Regulation and TQF Paper taking account of these changes were submitted to the Cabinet and the TQF Regulation came into force upon their [Decision No 2015/8213, published in the Official Journal No. 29537 dated 19/11/2015](#).

[The TQF Paper](#) came into force on publication of the Official Journal No. 2958 dated 2/1/2016. The TQF Document, annexed to the Communiqué, consists of five chapters and annexes, including the concept of national qualification framework, justification, legal basis, structural characteristics, management and implementation of TQF.

The establishment, development and timeliness of the TQF is the responsibility of the Vocational Qualifications Authority. In order to provide effective cooperation and a participatory management approach among the stakeholders, the Agency has established advisory, decision and implementation units such as TQF Coordination Board, TQF Board and TQF Consultation Council. All work on these



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units, Turkey is executed by the Office of Qualifications Framework. All institutions and organizations that are the main stakeholders of TQF have a say in TQF decisions.

The TQF structure comprises levels and qualification types. The eight-level structure is the basis of the TQF and the level descriptors are the minimum common learning outcomes of each level. The level descriptors are also the mechanism for identifying the relevant level of the qualification types and for referencing the TQF to other frameworks. The qualification types are the main instrument through which many qualifications will be allocated to the TQF levels and they will enable the categorization of different qualifications at the same level. The learning outcomes of qualifications types will be developed by elaborating and enriching the relevant level descriptors. The interaction of the levels and qualification types provides a flexible structure for describing all kinds of qualifications and for supporting the development of qualifications suitable for all kinds of learning.

TQF is a framework that is based on the current competencies. In addition, this framework is also expected to cater for some other applications, which are given as follows:

- i. Developing new competencies,
- ii. Recognizing the previous learning,
- iii. Enabling vertical and horizontal transitions among the competencies and
- iv. Facilitating the internationally valid comparison of the competencies.

Turkish Qualifications Framework in Turkey (TQF) offers an integrated structure of the competencies with the sole goal of attaining a primary, secondary and tertiary educational cycles secured by a quality assurance system, and it was developed to cover all of the educational cycles, all of the educational programs that are in effect as well as the other competencies that are part of the educational objectives.

The TQF is designed in a structure consisting of eight (8) levels. Each level in the TQF is defined according to the common learning outcomes of qualifications at that level. A series of definitions for learning outcomes that define each level in terms of knowledge, skills and competences is called the level descriptor and the level descriptors constitute the core of the TQF.





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In the TQF, level 1 qualifications define the competences to fulfill the basic tasks, while the 8th level qualifications define the ability to solve new and complex problems by using approaches and methods in different fields.

One of the most important outcomes of the TQF is to get the diplomas, certificates and vocational qualification documents to be recognized and accredited across the EU countries. To this end, the TQF was put into effect by publishing it on the official gazette on 19/11/2015. The second important step of the process is to have the TQF be referenced in the EQF. Within this frame, the Turkish Qualifications Framework is to be associated with the EQF, European Higher Education Arena and the proof of a sound association should be depicted so as to provide internationally valid educational diplomas and certifications. The referencing process is carried out by the MoNE in cooperation with the Council of Higher Education and relevant shareholders, and this process is supported by certain project mechanisms funded by the Erasmus+ Program.

The most important factor of TQF is quality assurance. In this context, the Regulation on the Ensuring Quality Assurance of Qualifications to be included in the TQF (briefly the Quality Assurance Regulation) was published in the Official Gazette dated March 25, 2018 and numbered 30371 and entered into force.

The regulation includes arrangements for the quality assurance of all qualifications, as a result of validation of formal and non-formal education and training programs as well as the validation of non-formal and informal learning, the determination of quality assurance criteria and the duties and responsibilities of the institutions responsible for quality assurance. It is designed in accordance with the quality assurance principles defined in the European Qualifications Framework and covers all the quality, qualification and certification requirements of the certificates issued in Turkey.

## Main challenges

Education reforms are progressing steadily, improving the participation rate in secondary education but many challenges remain. The VET system is fragmented with different sub-systems operating in parallel. It has been under reform with substantial EU support. Competence-based curricula have



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been introduced. Further reforms address the system of preservice and in-service teacher training. School governance is gradually being decentralized.

**In Turkey**, a qualifications framework for lifelong learning links at least three sub-systems. These are: the National Vocational Qualifications System (NVQS) of adult qualifications based on national occupational standards and coordinated by the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA); the qualifications systems of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) which covers secondary general, secondary vocational and teacher qualifications; and the higher education qualifications framework which covers college (MYO), bachelor, master and PhD degrees. Each of these systems is under development. How linking them through the new comprehensive framework will influence the qualifications development process in each of the sub-systems is still to be clarified.

Sectors are actively involved in developing the NVQS. The work on standards has advanced rapidly with 180 national occupational standards adopted, but only thirty qualifications have been developed and only one certificate has been issued so far. The VQA has developed guidance for qualification developers to work with experts from professional sectors and education. The translation process of occupational standards into units identifying learning outcomes and assessment criteria is not straightforward. The qualification development process has not been consolidated yet. Sectoral committees decide on occupational standards and qualifications are to be developed by so-called Voc-Test centers. These sectoral awarding bodies will also be responsible for (quality assuring) assessment and certification. In 2011 the first Voc-Test centers have been established but accreditation has delayed implementation.

The Council for Higher Education (CHE) is currently coordinating the qualification areas in higher education. This includes two-year post-secondary programs (MYO's) delivered by colleges. These short-cycle degrees serve mainly as access ports into the labour market. No more than 10% of students from these programs progress to a bachelor's degree. Most MYO students are students that applied for higher education but were not able to pass the national admission exam due to the limited capacity of higher education in Turkey. The two-year college programs include practice periods in enterprises. The MYO's are expected to be linked to occupational standards but no real qualification type has



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been developed yet. The quality of college programs is very diverse. Some 750,000 people are enrolled in colleges.

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has introduced curriculum reforms in secondary VET, introducing modular curricula which are partially derived from occupational standards. But there are no national qualifications in VET and students receive a school certificate that lacks the confidence of employers. The pilot introduction of nationally assessed and certificated qualifications is foreseen as part of the EU-funded project for quality assurance in VET.

The development of a NQF is closely linked to the improvement of skills, with a long-term objective of developing an internationally competitive workforce, supporting economic growth and enhancing employment.

The Assembly of the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) provides an institutional home for the discussions between all interested stakeholders and the main players. The Ministry of National Education, the Council for Higher Education, the Ministry of Labour and the social partners are represented in its executive board. The Ministry of Labour promotes the VQA. But the Ministry of National Education has not yet initiated the integration of its VET qualifications with the VQA's National Vocational Qualifications System. It plans to develop a tripartite organization as its own awarding body. The Council for Higher Education looks for cooperation with the VQA to link short cycle postsecondary education programs to national occupational standards but at undergraduate and graduate level there is not yet much cooperation. Representatives from economic sectors support the VQA but they may disengage if the progress is too slow or if they feel they are not treated fairly. There is a need for a bringing these institutions together, a role that has been relegated to the NQF Committee.

## Qualifications

Vocational school graduates receive school certificates rather than national VET qualifications.

Opportunities for progression to higher levels after secondary VET are very limited.



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The main challenge of a national Turkish qualifications framework is to link them existing different qualifications systems into one qualifications framework for lifelong learning.

## Drivers for NQF development

The following policy objectives should be addressed by developing an umbrella framework:

- to strengthen the relationship among education and training and employment,
- to develop national standards based on learning outcomes,
- to encourage quality assurance in training and education,
- to provide qualifications for vertical and horizontal transfers and develop national and international comparability platforms,
- to ensure access to learning, advances in learning and recognition and comparability of learning,
- to support lifelong learning.

## Scope

The Turkish qualifications framework for lifelong learning consists of three subsystems that are all under development: The National Vocational Qualifications System foresees the establishment of a quality-assured system of adult qualifications based on occupational standards with the Vocational Qualifications Authority as its regulator. The Ministry of National Education is planning to strengthen its own certifications systems by establishing national qualifications and where relevant linking them to occupational standards. The Turkish NQF for higher education aims to align Turkey with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area and wants to support quality assurance and relevance of the higher education provision. There is also a link with national occupational standards for college (MYO) qualifications.

The Turkish framework should integrate the different initiatives and promote mobility, progression and international recognition of Turkish qualifications abroad.



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## Timeline

1992

- ISKUR (the Turkish Employment Service) establishes an Occupational standards Commission.

1995-2000

- Through the World Bank's Employment & Training Project, 250 occupational standards are developed, but legislation to recognise national standards fails to be adopted.
- Parallel initiatives are launched by the Turkish Standards Institute, TESK (The Confederation of Turkish Tradesmen and Craftsmen), provincial authorities and Turkish Airlines.

2001-2005

- The EU funded SVET project introduces competence-based curricula in initial VET under the Ministry of National Education and Turkey joins the Bologna process.

2005-2006

- Work on a qualifications framework for higher education is initiated after the Bergen Bologna meeting.
- Turkey reacts actively on the EQF proposal.
- The SVET project develops policy documents for a National Vocational Qualifications System.
- The Vocational Qualifications Authority is established.

2007-2010

- The Vocational Qualifications Authority becomes operational and coordinates the development of 150 national occupational standards by 26 sectors, as well as a small number of vocational qualifications.



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- The Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper is published.
- In 2009, the education ministry should have started preparing an overarching NQF.
- In January 2010 a national qualifications framework for higher education is adopted.
- The Action Plan for Strengthening Relationship between Employment and Vocational Education is published. An NQF commission is established to develop a Turkish qualifications framework for lifelong learning, facilitated by the Vocational Qualifications Authority.
- An EU funded project strengthening the Vocational Qualifications Authority starts.

#### 2011-2012

- EU funded projects are launched with the Ministry of national Education to support lifelong learning and quality assurance in VET and to align higher education with the European Higher Education Area. These contribute to NQF developments.
- NQF levels are agreed in 2011.
- The adoption of the umbrella NQF is foreseen in 2012, followed by self-certification against
- European frameworks.





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## RESOURCES

- “Implementation arrangements for National Frameworks of Qualifications and the role of stakeholders and institutions”, 2011

[https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/08EA60DCD9C98168C125791A002FE9D9\\_NQF.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/08EA60DCD9C98168C125791A002FE9D9_NQF.pdf)

- Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks 2017
- <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/2222>
- Framework of Qualifications in the Europe and North America Region
- <http://www.enic-naric.net/framework-of-qualifications-in-the-europe-and-north-america-region-new.aspx>
- European Qualifications Framework (EQF) <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/it/node/1440>
- Qualifications Frameworks in the EHEA
- <http://www.ehea.info/cid102842/qualifications-frameworks-in-the-ehea-2009.html>
- National Qualifications Frameworks (EHEA)
- <http://www.ehea.info/cid102844/national-qualifications-frameworks-2009.html>
- UNESCO - International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)
- <http://uis.unesco.org/en/isced-mappings>
- European Training Foundation (ETF): Transnational Qualifications Frameworks
- [http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Transnational\\_qualifications\\_frameworks](http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Transnational_qualifications_frameworks)
- BRIDGE Handbook: Annex 2 - National Qualifications Frameworks
- <http://www.cimea.it/it/progetti-in-evidenza/bridge/bridge-project.aspx>
- EURYDICE Ongoing reforms and policy developments [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/general/14-ongoing-reforms-and-policy-developments\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/general/14-ongoing-reforms-and-policy-developments_en)