General Principles of the NQF

1. Integration
It creates a part of the human resources development system which enables the creation of a unified approach to education and training.

2. Importance
It is suitable for the development of the national needs.

3. Credibility
Has an international and national value and acceptability.

4. Consistency
It works within a consistent framework of principles and certifications.

5. Flexibility
It enables several paths which lead to the same learning goals.

6. Standards
It expresses descriptions of a nationally accepted frame and internationally accepted outcomes.

7. Legitimacy
It provides a participation of all national stakeholders in the process of planning and coordination of the standards and qualifications.

8. Approach
It provides an easier approach to appropriate levels of education and training for all those who study in a way that supports progress.

9. Improvement
It makes sure that the qualifications frame allows people to move through the levels of the national qualifications via various types of learning and training.

10.   **Transferability**

It enables those who study to transfer qualification credits from one learning institution and/or employer to another.

11.   **Recognition of previous learning**

It enables acquiring credits for previous learning through a process of evaluation.

12.   **Guidance**

It provides guidance to those who study with specially trained people who meet the international standards for teachers and trainers.

QUALIFICATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURE

Skopje 2015

Qualifications development is a complex process that undergoes several phases until all qualifications are approved. This applies to developing new qualifications as well as to improving the existing ones by altering and supplementing them.

- **Phase 1: Basis for qualifications development**

The basis for qualifications development are the labour market demands which are connected to the relevant demands for skills.

A qualification is developed on the basis of approved occupational standards.

An occupational standard encompasses: a name and code of the occupational standard, level of complexity, expert competences and description of the occupational standard (a group of jobs, typical (key) jobs, knowledge and skills).

A group of jobs includes analysis, planning and organising of the job, preparation of the job and working place, operational and administrative work, commercial work, security and safety of quality, maintenance and repairs, communication, protection at work, health and the environment.

The occupational standard is prepared by a working group, formed by the VET (Vocational Education and Training) Center and adopted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on the basis of a previous opinion by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The working group for the preparation of standards consists of 7 members: 3 representatives of companies from the relevant occupation, 2 representatives from the vocational schools, 1 representative the Adult Education Center and 1 representative in the role of a coordinator from the Vocational Education and Training Center.

The occupational standards are prepared on the basis of an Occupational Standards Methodology.

- **Phase 2: Submitting an initiative for qualifications development**

The initiative for qualifications development should contain an explanation for the development of the new qualification, the labour market demand, the title of the qualification, the level, i.e. sublevel of the qualification and a recommendation for a code that refers to the ISCO (once it is appropriate), description of the qualification and a time frame for when the conducting of the qualification will begin.

A qualifications development initiative can be submitted by:

1. Sector Committees;
2. Institutions/legal entities or an employer;
3. Higher education institutions and

4. Other entities (professional entities, trade unions, international educational institutions)

A qualifications development initiative for cases 2, 3 and 4 is submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science (NQF Department), which is responsible for developing criteria and benchmarks for the organizations that can submit qualifications.

The Ministry of Education and Science (NQF Department) reviews the initiative and decides to which sector the qualification belongs. The initiative and the suggestion, in written form, are forwarded to the appropriate Sector Committee.

- **Phase 3: Acting upon the submitted initiative**

The initiative submitted by institutions, legal entities, employers, higher education institutions or other bodies is viewed by the appropriate Sector Committee on the basis of specified criteria in accordance with the Law on National Qualifications Framework and the Sector Committee can accept, deny or ask for an amendment to it.

In case the submitted initiative is denied, the Sector Committee notifies the proposer of the initiative in a written form about the reasons why the are denying the initiative for developing a new qualification.

In case an amendment to it is asked for, the Sector Committee notifies the proposer of the initiative in a written form with a request for amending the qualification as well as in which segment.

In case the initiative is accepted, the Sector Committee notifies the proposer of the initiative.

In case of a dispute, the NQF National Board decides.

- **Phase 4: Qualifications development**

The proposer of the initiative, on the basis of a positive opinion from the Sector Committee, submits a request to the VET Center for developing a qualification.

The qualification is prepared by a working group formed by the VET Center. The working group consists of 6 members as follows: 2 representatives from the employers, 2 representatives from the schools, 1 representative from the Adult Education Center and 1 representative from the VET Center in the role of a coordinator.

The structure and content of the qualification is expressed by *the Qualification standard*, which according to Act 6 from the Law on National Qualifications Framework consists of:

1. *Title of qualification* – precise and full title of the qualification;
2. *Type of qualification* – qualification on the level of education or a vocational qualification;
3. *Level of qualification*, i.e. sublevel of the qualification;

4. ***Code of the qualification***
5. ***Description of the content of the qualification*** – brief description of the standard on which the qualification is based (occupational standard, educational standard), details about the educational program/qualification units, information about adopting the educational program or information from other sources;
6. ***Number of obligatory and elective subjects***
7. ***Description of the learning outcomes*** – brief description of the knowledge, skills and competences. Active verbs from Bloom's taxonomy are used in the descriptions of the results;
8. ***Credit value of the qualification***
9. ***Manner and assessment criteria*** – how the assessment will be done;
10. ***Who does the assessment***
11. ***Entry conditions (enrollment)*** – the conditions have been specified in the Laws on education (Law on Elementary Education, Law on Secondary, Law on Higher Education, Law on Vocational Education and Training, Law on Adult Education) but also the precondition for the qualification can be added (ex. completed level 2);
12. ***Institution where you can acquire the qualification*** – vocational school, organization, verified educational institution;
13. ***Type of public document*** *(diploma, certificate);*
14. ***Institution that issues the public document***
15. ***Status of the institution that issues the public document*** (public, private, chamber, NGO).

The work and activities from a certain occupational standard or a group of vocations and skills necessary to achieve them will influence the development of the learning outcomes.

Upon the qualification development, the VET center through the NQF Department at the MOS submits the developed qualification to the Sector Committee for further review.

- **Phase 5: Approving the qualification**

    Upon reviewing the qualification, the Sector Committee may accept or give back the qualification to the VET Center for further development.

A qualification is considered as accepted if the majority of the total number of members of the Sector Committee has accepted it and an expert opinion is prepared for the same.

The Sector Committee submits the accepted qualification and the expert opinion to the NQF National Board for approval.

On the basis of the explanation of the proposer and the expert opinion of the Sector Committee, the NQF National Board approves the qualification and

reaches a decision to assign the qualification to the National Qualifications Framework.

The qualification approved by the NQF National Board is entered into the National Qualifications Framework Registry. The approved qualification is assigned a code which consists of _____ numbers according to the type, title, level, volume, the qualification sector and the institution in which you can acquire the qualification which has _____ marks. For a sector (___ mark), subsector (___ mark), area (_____ mark), subarea (____mark), type (___mark) and qualification level (____ mark).

- **Phase 6: Reaccreditation of the qualification**

The validity of a qualification is 4 years. After these 4 years a reaccreditation of the same is done. The procedure for reaccreditation should begin nine months before the end of the validity of the approved qualification.

Qualification format

- **How do you write qualifications?**

Qualifications are written using separate units, modules or educational programs[1].
A unit is a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and appropriate assessment criteria and it has a specific title and level. The qualifications units must be unified.
A module is an independent learning unit which represents a completed unity or a part of an educational program.
An educational program is a sum of educational components based on learning outcomes that allow awarding of a specific qualification.

A qualification has:
> 1. Obligatory units
> 2. Elective units

The units have to be represented by several questions:
- *what is the unit about;*
- *for whom this unit is,*
- *how this unit is connected to the other units;*
- *how this unit fits into the structure of the qualification;*
- *how long it lasts and how many credits does it have;*

The unit consists of:
1. title
2. content
3. entry conditions
4. duration and credits
5. type of qualification
6. learning outcomes and
7. assessment

1. **Unit title**
The unit title should:
- be clear and understandable (for pupils, teachers, employers, trainers);
- emphasise the content of the unit (it should refer to the process, not the profession);
- clearly show the content of the unit;
- have relevance and should not refer to other information outside the unit;
- be a summary of the learning achievements and outcomes and
- be an active phrase.

2. **Unit content**
The unit content depends on the occupational standard and it has to interact with the labour market demands. It defines the scope of the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to realize the learning program in order to accomplish any assigned result. It also has to be clear and comprehensible to all.

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[1] The term educational program refers to an educational program for elementary, high school, vocational education and study program for higher education.

3. **Level**

A level is a series of consecutive learning steps expressed in relation to a sequence of general results, structured according to a sum of descriptions which are measurable indicators of the learning outcomes and they refer to the acquired knowledge, skills and competences.

3.1 **Level of achievement**

A level is:
- an indicator required from the participator in the learning process;
- the complexity and/or the rank of the achieved and
- the independence of the participant in the presentation of the achievement.

The indicators for each level are grouped in three categories:
1. knowledge and understanding
2. skill (application and action)
3. competences (independence and responsibility)

4. **Entry for acquiring a qualification**

Stipulated conditions that need to be met in order to gain entry for acquiring a specific qualification.

5. **Type of qualification**

It is necessary to state the type of qualification:
- qualification at a level of education (educational level) and
- vocational qualifications.

6. **Learning hours**

Each qualification has duration for it to be acquired and a number of credits.
Learning hours is:
- the time that the participant needs to pass with the teacher/trainer and
- the time which the participant is expected to spent on individual learning.

Each educational program, module, educational subject or other learning unit has a specific number of credits added. With the credit we measure the load on the candidate who is learning considering the time needed for acquiring a qualification, i.e. accomplishing the learning outcomes in the learning process of a given level.

The total average time spent on acquiring a certain qualification is expressed in the ECTS[2] for the credits in the higher education, ECVET[3] for the credits in the vocational education and training and MGCE[4] for the credits in the elementary education, grammar school education and general knowledge subjects in the vocational education and training.

One ECTS credit encompasses 30 working hours in duration of 60 minutes necessary for acquiring certain learning outcomes.

One ECVET credit encompasses 25 working hours in duration of 45 minutes necessary for acquiring certain learning outcomes.

One MGCE credit encompasses 25 working hours in duration of 45 minutes necessary for acquiring certain learning outcomes.

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[2] ECTS –European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
[3] ECVET – European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
[4] MGCE – Macedonian General Education Credit System

7. **Learning outcomes**

The learning outcomes are statements about what the participant knows, understands and is able to do as a result of the formal, non-formal and informal learning process. They are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences (independence and responsibility).

The learning outcomes should:
- be broad statements that explain the result of the learning process;
- express what is expected of the student to know, and/or understand and/or be able to do;
- clearly show what is expected of the student to achieve, not the learning process or learning activities. While writing the learning outcomes attention should be paid as to how the questions and tasks are set.
- be written in third person and future tense;
- be no more than 4 learning outcomes;
- be achievable and assessable;
- have criteria which are connected to the level that needs to be achieved.

8. **Assessment**

Assessment is a process of evaluating the knowledge, skills and competences according to previously defined criteria and learning outcomes which include written, oral and practical tests, exams, projects and portfolios.

The assessment must:
- be observed;
- be measurable;
- provide qualitative information;
- be guided by the level descriptors;
- use appropriate language for the expected level.

8.1 **Assessment criteria**

Assessment criteria are statements that:
- define the achievements of the participant in the learning process;
- are connected to specific learning outcomes;
- are certain and consistent for all
- do not include guidance to assessment methods or assessment specifications.

What is the goal of an assessment?
1. To measure the individual achievements of the participants in the learning process;
2. To provide feedback information;
3. To monitor and maintain the standards;
4. To plan the learning;
5. To provide information for the employers and
6. To award a qualification.

8.2 **Assessment principles**
1. validity – it enables all participants to provide evidence for the results which can be measured;
2. security – the grades received during assessment conditions are consistent with all assessors and are attained through clearly defined standards of achievement;
3. conductibility and
4. fairness.

COOPERATION PROTOCOL FOR THE INTERESTED PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK PROCESS

Skopje, 2015

The Cooperation Protocol for the interested parties involved in the National Qualifications Framework Process (in further text: NQF[1]) is the basic cooperation protocol in the process of developing, maintaining and promoting the NQF.

This Protocol refers to the employers from the field of business and economy, the nonbusiness field, as well as the following institutions/organizations/associations (in further text: interested parties) involved in the developing, maintaining and promoting the NQF:

1. Ministry of Education and Science;
2. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;
3. Ministry of Economy;
4. Vocational Education and Training Center;
5. Adult Education Center;
6. Bureau for Development of Education;
7. State Examination Center;
8. State Education Inspectorate;
9. Board of Accreditation and Evaluation of Higher Education;
10. Universities (higher education institutions);
11. High schools;
12. National Agency for European Educational Programs and Mobility;
13. Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia;
14. Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Macedonia;
15. Union of Chamber of Commerce;
16. Chamber of Commerce of Northwestern Macedonia;
17. Crafts Association of the Republic of Macedonia;
18. Organization of Employers;
19. State Statistical Office;
20. Trade unions and
21. Other subjects involved in the NQF process.

I. COOPERATION PRINCIPLES

The interested parties involved in the NQF process have agreed to work together on accomplishing the goals of this Protocol in accordance with the following principles:

a) Equality of all interested parties;
b) Equal participation, balance and mutual benefit from the cooperation;
c) Maximal and effective usage of the existing organizational, sectoral and regional institutions, as well as expertise and other resources for education, training and learning in accordance with the Law on NQF in order to reach a long-term sustainability of the cooperation;

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[1] The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is an instrument for establishing a system of qualifications acquired in a specific country which provides a basis for acquiring qualifications, passability and quality of the qualifications.

d) Reduction and elimination of the unnecessary and costly repetition of the efforts for developing and providing education and training, especially in higher education and professional training;

e) Establishing and promoting centers for excellence as a main instrument for providing efficient and effective education, training and learning, as well as research on the development of the NQF factors;

f) Active involvement and participation of all kef benefactors in education, training and learning at the level of institutions/organizations/associations involved in the NQF process, including the institutions that conduct programs connected to education, training and learning;

g) The interested parties involved in the NQF process will undertake all possible steps in order to act together as a community during the gradual conducting of the coordination and standardization of their work in accordance with this Protocol. As an exception, two or more of the interested parties involved in the NQF process may improve with a different pace than the other interested parties involved in the NQF process.

II. PROTOCOL GOALS

The interested parties involved in the NQF process have agreed to cooperate in the developing, maintaining and promoting of the NQF and the education, training and learning in accordance with this Protocol in order to accomplish the following goals:

a) To develop and implement a mutual system for regular collecting of data and information on the current state of the labour market, the future demands and offers and the priority areas for conducting the education, training and learning and sharing them via the interested parties involved in the NQF process;

b) To establish mechanisms and institutional agreements which enable the interested parties involved in the NQF process to combine their resources so that they can effectively and efficiently create a professional, technical, research and management personnel which will plan and manage the development process, in general and in all the sectors;

c) To promote and coordinate the preparation and conducting of policies, strategies and forms of education, training and learning connected with the NQF;

d) To develop and conduct policies and strategies which promote the participation and contribution of the private sector, the citizen associations and other key benefactors in the development, maintenance and approval of the NQF;

e) To promote and coordinate the preparation and conducting of policies, strategies and programs for the promotion and application of the NQF and

f) To work on reducing and eliminating the obstacles in order for the citizens to have a better and freer approach to the opportunities for a quality education, training and learning.

III. COOPERATION IN THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY

The interested parties have agreed that the cooperation can be more efficiently alleviated and disseminated by developing and formulating a coherent, conductible and coordinated policy in terms of:

a) Enlarging the supply and approach to education, training and learning, including gender equality;

b) Increasing the equal approach, improving the quality and supplying relevance to education, training and learning;

c) Rationalizing the conditions for enrollment in institutions for education, training and learning;

d) Verifying, i.e. accrediting the curricula/study programs, i.e. special programs for education of adults;

e) Verifying the institutions which realize the curricula/study programs, i.e. special programs for education of adults;

f) Encouraging a common development and preparation of teaching materials;

g) Verifying qualifications;

h) Achieving a partner approach to financing the education, training and learning among the authorities, the users and the employers;

i) Promoting academic freedom and creating a favorable environment with an appropriate incentive on the basis of accomplishments in order for the competent people to effectively apply and use their knowledge and skills for the benefit of the interested parties involved in the NQF process.

IV. COOPERATION IN THE TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1. The interested parties involved in the NQF process have agreed that the technical and vocational education and training supply personnel that is at an appropriate level for various sectors and professions for the economy and for its effective development.

2. The interested parties involved in the NQF process have agreed that the technical and expert education and training provide knowledge, skills and competences which also strengthen and support the application of professional and higher knowledge and skills. This is why it is important to enlarge the possibilities and improve the standards for technical and vocational education and training.

3. The interested parties involved in the NQF process have agreed that even though the education and training at a technical and vocational level will in the future be, in a larger part, an obligation of each educational institution, the cooperation and mutual help are desirable and possible and will be conducted, among others, in the following areas:

> ➤ Education of teachers

a) Designing and developing a curriculum and programs which ensure high quality and relevant education for teachers;

b) Common development, provision and exchange of materials for education of teachers;

c) Exchange of experiences, ideas and information in order to widen the knowledge and skills for the creators of the curricula and programs for the education of teachers and executives in education;

d) Developing a national assessment and accreditation system;

e) Shared development of continuous education for teachers in order to improve knowledge, pedagogical skills and effective managing of schools;

f) Encouragement and support for creating associations which will enable an exchange of opinions, ideas, experiences and work experiences.

➤ Technical and vocational education and training

a) Designing and developing a curriculum and programs which ensure high quality and relevant education;

b) Shared development, provision and exchange of materials for vocational technical as well as vocational education and training;

c) Exchange of experiences, ideas and information in order to widen the knowledge and skills of the vocational teachers and trainers;

d) Developing a national assessment and accreditation system;

e) Encouragement and support for creating professional associations which will enable an exchange of opinions, ideas and experiences;

f) Development and support for the inclusion of the development of entrepreneurship in the vocational education and training.

Establishing centers for specializing in vocational education and training where common programs will be developed and offered, particularly in specialized areas such as are development and provision of vocational education and training through methods of distance learning. These areas will be confirming and coordinating the interested parties involved in the NQF process from time to time.

The cooperation of the interested parties involved in the NQF process is carried out by the Sector Committees and the National Board through the coordination of the Ministry of Education and Science.