



**Nationalagentur
Lebenslanges Lernen**
National Agency for
Lifelong Learning

National Coordination
Point for the National
Qualifications Framework

Manual for Including Formal Qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) - Criteria

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Foreword

This manual is a preliminary version about the use of the manual and application form during the pilot phase. It is the result of NQF development activities conducted in 2010. This manual aims to help organisations prepare their application for including qualifications in the NQF which are within their field of competence and is meant to serve as the basis when stating reasons for allocating qualifications to NQF levels. The pilot phase will be used to test the manual. Relevant experiences will be used to further develop the manual.

Preliminary remarks to clarify the context:

- This manual is not a legal text and is not formulated as such. The aim was to use a simple style and specify to the applicant organisations what contents they have to make available for valid and confidence-boosting classification in the NQF. In this context, the transparency of qualifications and their classification is in the foreground rather than their regulation within the Austrian education and training landscape.
- Regular bachelor, master and PhD studies are classified automatically, therefore universities, *Fachhochschule* (universities of applied sciences) programmes and courses at university colleges of education do not need to apply for the inclusion of these degree programmes. Discussions are still ongoing about how to treat qualifications obtained outside regular studies but in higher education institutions, therefore such qualifications are not covered in the pilot phase.
- The starting point of the entire approach is the EQF. This means that the criteria and explanations of the individual levels should always be read with a view to the EQF and interpreted independent of the economic branch and education sector.
- It is not the aim of the NQF to create a new educational hierarchy but rather be seen as a contribution to the EQF as a European transparency instrument.

At this point our cordial thanks go to IBW, ÖIBF (Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training), the National Coordination Point for the NQF, and all the members of the NQF steering group who actively took part in discussions.

On behalf of the NQF steering group

Theodor Siegl (BMUKK)

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1 Preamble

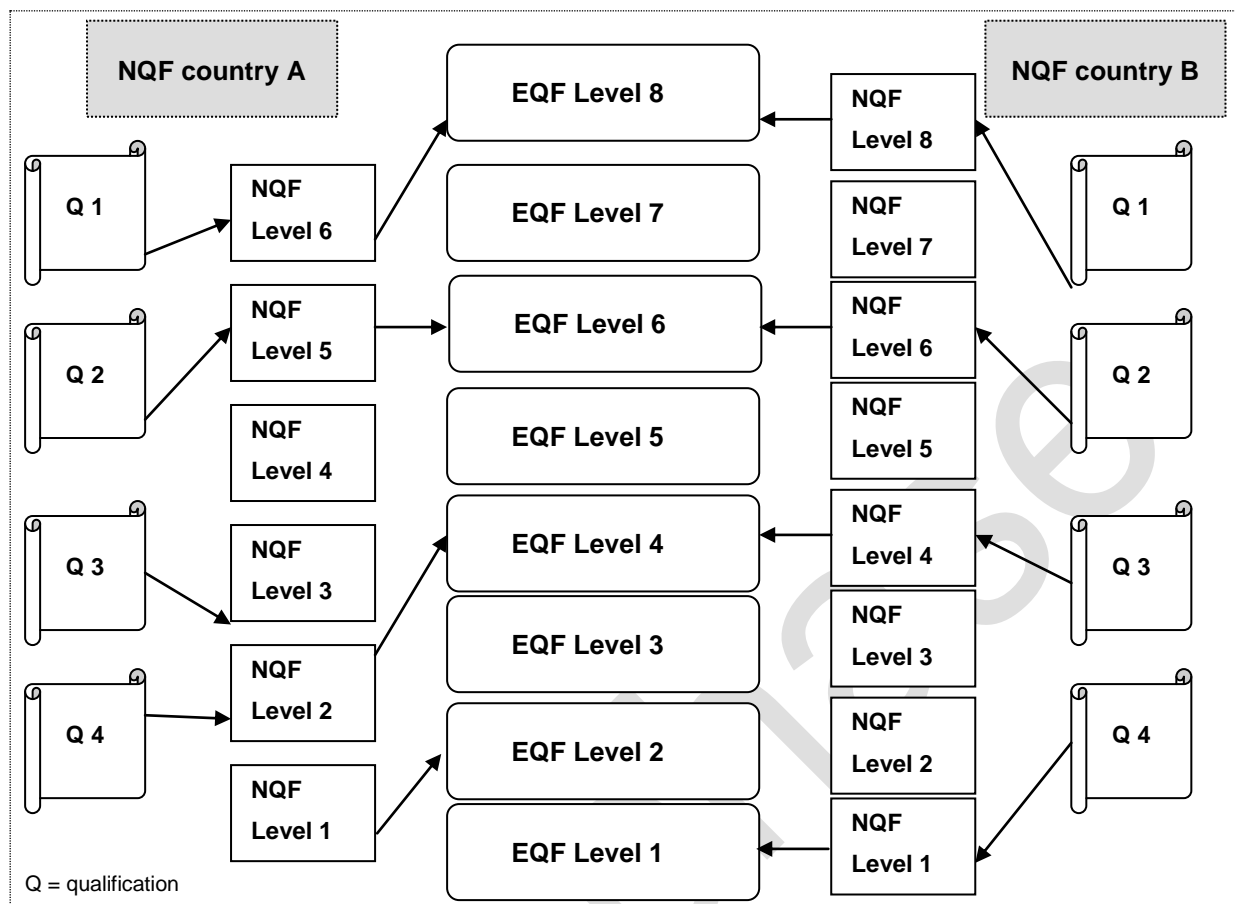
1.1 What are the European Qualifications Framework and the national qualifications framework?

In April 2008 the European Parliament and the Council adopted the Recommendation on the establishment of a **European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning*** (EQF*). The EQF's main **objective** is to make national qualifications* **transparent** all over Europe and in this way facilitate **mobility** between the education systems and on the labour market. For this purpose, qualifications are presented in a grid which comprises **eight levels***, with assignment to a level being based on **learning outcomes***. Learning outcomes are **knowledge***, **skills*** and **competence*** which learners can prove to have acquired at the end of a period of learning.

The EQF concept provides that national qualifications are not referenced directly to the EQF but first to a **national qualifications framework*** (NQF)*. Here every country can determine the structure of its NQF itself, i.e. the number of levels, the definition of descriptors*, the type and number of dimensions*. Due to the differences in national approaches it is only possible to compare qualifications by linking the NQF with the EQF levels. Therefore the EQF has the function of a **meta-framework** for the 'translation' of the NQF level (cf. fig. 1).

*) The terms marked with * when they first occur in this manual are explained in the glossary (→ 5.3).

Figure 1: The EQF as a meta-framework



The development of the **Austrian National Qualifications Framework** was officially launched with the adoption of the NQF position paper by the Council of Ministers in late 2009. This decision by the Council of Ministers had been preceded by an intensive discussion process among representatives of major institutions of the Austrian qualification landscape, which finally led to agreement on the following **structure** of the Austrian NQF (cf. fig. 2): the NQF will comprise **eight levels** overall, with qualifications assigned to **Levels 6 to 8** based on different sentences describing them. Whereas **qualifications of the Bologna architecture acquired at higher education (HE) institutions** (these are: bachelor, master and PhD) are classified according to the **Dublin descriptors***, assignment of **all the other qualifications** builds on the **EQF descriptors** (→ chapter 3). Levels 1 to 5, which are also characterised by the EQF descriptors, will comprise qualifications from all educational contexts.

Figure 2: Structure of the Austrian National Qualifications Framework

Level 8 – PhD	Level 8
Level 7 – Master	Level 7
Level 6 – Bachelor	Level 6
Level 5	
Level 4	
Level 3	
Level 2	
Level 1	

The NQF aims to present the Austrian qualification landscape in a **transparent** manner. It is important to note that **no rights** can be derived from the allocation to levels. The allocation to a certain level does not automatically provide access to the acquisition of a qualification at the next higher level (► 3.1). This means that the NQF has only a **guiding but not a regulating function**. In addition, the inclusion of qualifications is **voluntary** and is only conducted when a formal application has been filed (► chapter 4). Such an application can only be submitted for qualifications which can be acquired after **1 January 2011**, which means that the assessment procedure* (i.e. the examination) must be completed and the proof of qualification* (i.e. a certificate, diploma, etc.) issued after 1 January 2011. It is **not possible** to include any qualification for which no exam exists any longer after this key date or for which no proof of qualification can be issued any longer.

1.2 On what basis are qualifications assigned to the NQF?

Classification in the NQF builds on **three sets of criteria**:

1. **Requirements on qualifications** (→ chapter 2): The qualifications which are assigned to the NQF must meet a number of **formal requirements**. Only those which meet these requirements are 'fit for inclusion', i.e. they fulfil the classification criteria. These requirements concern the assessment procedure* (i.e. the final exam) and the proof of qualification* (i.e. the certificate, diploma, etc.).
2. **EQF descriptors and explanations** (→ chapter 3): The main basis for classifying qualifications are the **EQF descriptors**, which comprise statements that are formulated in a learning outcome-oriented way about knowledge, skills and competence for each level. To ensure these descriptors can be understood and applied more easily, **explanations** aim to specify the rather abstract descriptions in greater detail. In addition, the given **reference qualifications** from the Austrian qualification landscape aim to serve as 'anchors' which facilitate assignment.
3. **Descriptions of qualifications** (→ chapter 4): The application for assigning a qualification to the NQF comprises a detailed **description**, which is based on a format template that is valid for all qualifications. This description includes qualitative data (about the qualification, assessment procedure, etc.) and quantitative information (e.g. data and facts which underpin the validity of the exam or importance of the qualification for the labour market), which can be used as indicators for the reason for assignment.

The combination of all three sets of criteria forms the **basis for the classification**.

1.3 What are the target groups of this manual?

This NQF manual mainly addresses **applicant organisations*** in all educational contexts. A qualification can only be assigned to an NQF level if a relevant application has been submitted. In addition, the manual also aims to serve as major source of information about the NQF classification process for educational establishments and certifying institutions.

The manual will answer **two major questions** in the NQF classification process: on the one hand, there are the **requirements on qualifications** (→ chapter 2), and on the other hand also **how a qualification must be described** (→ chapter 3) so it can be assigned to the NQF.

2 Requirements on qualifications

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) focuses on **qualifications** only. The following chapter explains in depth what is understood by qualification (➔ 2.1), what **minimum requirements** have to be met so that educational qualifications or examinations fulfil the classification criteria (➔ 2.2), and what **steps** can be taken to make qualifications 'NQF-compatible' (➔ 2.3).

2.1 What is a qualification?

A **qualification** is defined as the formal result of an assessment and validation process* in the course of which a competent body* has found that the learning outcomes* of a person meet given standards*.¹

What does this definition **mean** now?

Not all education programmes (that is: courses, seminars, training, etc.) and the resulting examinations necessarily lead to a qualification as defined by the NQF. Such a qualification is deemed to exist if

- ① following an **assessment procedure** (= assessment and validation process)
- ② the **qualification provider*** (= competent body) or a **certifying institution*** authorised by it
- ③ issues **proof** in the form of a certificate, for example (= formal outcome),
- ④ certifies that graduates possess **knowledge, skills and competence** (= learning outcomes)
- ⑤ which the qualification provider has defined as **requirements** (= standards) for positive completion of this assessment procedure.

Examples:

The Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK = qualification provider) defines in a decree the learning outcomes (= standards) which candidates need to prove as part of the upper secondary school leaving examination (= assessment and validation process) of a vocational education and training (VET) college (= educational establishment) in order to be awarded the upper secondary certificate (= formal outcome, proof of qualification). This certificate is awarded by the school (= certifying institution). ➔ Figure 3a

The Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth (BMWFJ = qualification provider) defines in the examination regulation the learning outcomes (= standards) which candidates need to prove as part of the apprenticeship-leave examination (ALE = assessment and validation process) in every apprenticeship occupation. The apprenticeship office (= certifying institution) organises and conducts

¹) The Austrian definition of a qualification follows the definition according to the Recommendation on the EQF (➔ 5.2).

the ALE. Upon positive completion of the procedure, candidates are awarded the ALE certificate (= formal outcome, proof of qualification) which is issued by the apprenticeship office. → Figure 3b

A continuing vocational education and training (CVET) institution (= educational establishment) offers a course and defines the learning outcomes required to obtain the certificate. This makes the institution the qualification provider at the same time. At the end of the course it conducts the examination (= assessment and validation process) and issues the certificate (= formal outcome, proof of qualification) upon positive completion (= certifying institution). → Figure 3c

Figure 3a:

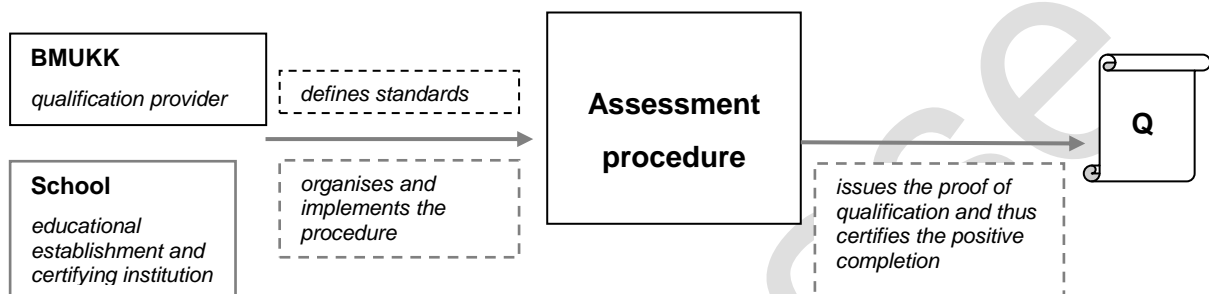


Figure 3b:

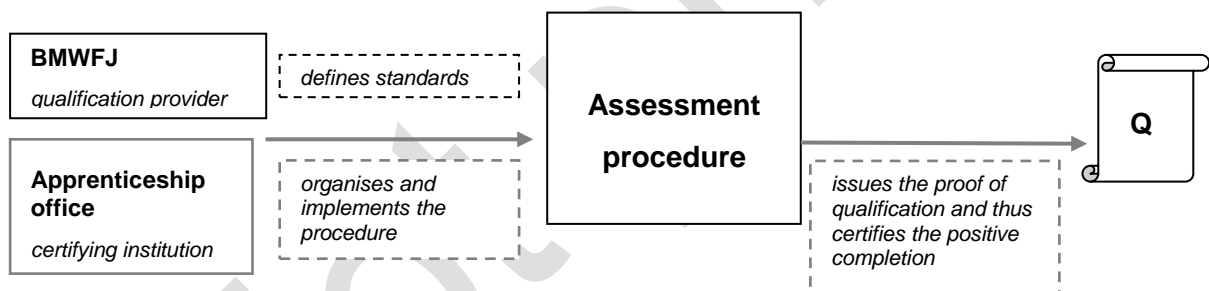
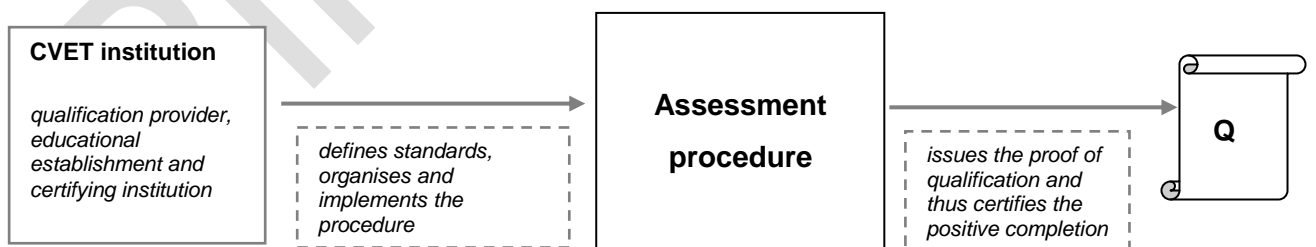


Figure 3c:



Q = qualification

This means that the **assessment procedure** and the **proof of qualification** form the **key aspects** of a qualification. Certain **minimum requirements** which differentiate qualifications from non-qualifications apply for these elements (→ 2.2).

The **content focus** of a qualification, however, is **no distinctive feature**, and therefore it is not decisive for assignment or non-assignment to the NQF: both general-education qualifications (such as the lower secondary school qualification) and VET qualifications (such as the certificate obtained by VET school graduates, the fork-lift truck driving licence, etc.) are assigned to the NQF.

The **place** of learning is not important either: the NQF includes qualifications from the school-based education sector as well as those from the field of CVET. The **learning context**, where the learning outcomes are acquired, is closely connected with the place of learning. For NQF classification it is not important if learning outcomes are acquired as part of an educational programme (such as a course or school-based education) or purely informally* (such as at the workplace, in self-study). The decisive feature for acquisition of the proof of qualification is positive completion of the assessment procedure.

The **scope** of a qualification is not a distinctive criterion either. Qualifications with a broadly defined educational objective (such as completion of a secondary academic school) are classified as well as qualifications with a rather narrow but specific profile (such as sommelier/sommelière).

2.2 What minimum requirements are connected with qualifications?

For educational certificates/examinations leading to qualifications within the meaning of the NQF it is necessary to comply with a range of **requirements** (→ checklist overleaf). If all of these requirements are met, the **qualification is NQF-compatible** and fulfils the basic classification criteria. If qualification providers want to apply for inclusion of this qualification in the NQF, they can take the required procedural steps (→ chapter 5). If educational certificates/examinations do not meet all these requirements, however, **they do not fulfil the classification criteria**. But if they want, qualification providers can take the relevant measures to meet the minimum requirements (→ 2.3) and therefore the prerequisites for inclusion in the NQF.

Which **requirements** are now decisive for inclusion?

The **checklist** overleaf and the following explanations aim to help determine the fulfilment of classification criteria of educational certificates/examinations. Here the requirements are clustered according to the two **key aspects of a qualification** (→ 2.1), which are the assessment procedure and the proof of qualification.

Checklist to determine fulfilment of NQF classification criteria

No.	Requirements	Yes	No
Assessment procedure			
R1*	A regulated assessment procedure is in place for the acquisition of the proof of qualification.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
R1	The assessment procedure leads to more than merely a certificate of attendance .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
R1	The assessment procedure is not exclusively based on the learner's self-assessment .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
R2	Information about the assessment procedure (requirements for candidates to complete the procedure, the course of the procedure, examiners, required standards, possibilities of inspection, of lodging appeals against the results, the repetition [of parts] of the procedure) is presented in a transparent manner and generally accessible .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
R3	The assessment procedure is documented in a comprehensible form by the institution which carries it out.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
R4	A transparent assessment scheme with information about the mode and presentation of results has been set up for the assessment procedure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
R5	It has been defined for the assessment procedure which knowledge, skills and competence the applicant for a qualification needs to demonstrate for positive completion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
R5	The standards required for acquiring the proof of qualification are laid down in a transparent and open manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
R6	The defined knowledge and skills as well as competence are not tailored to individual qualification applicants but need to be proven by all candidates.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
R7	The certifying institution is entitled to carry out the assessment procedure for acquisition of the qualification.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proof of qualification			
R8	Upon successful completion of the assessment procedure the learner is issued proof of qualification (such as a certificate or diploma).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
R9	The proof of qualification details the name of the qualification applicant , the title of the qualification and the date of issue .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
R10	The proof of qualification specifies the issuing institution . It is also signed by the competent person (such as principal, examiner).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*) R1 = Requirement 1; more information about each requirement is detailed on the following pages

Requirements connected with the assessment procedure

Requirement 1: Regulated assessment procedure

For acquisition of the proof of qualification, an **assessment procedure which is regulated** by the qualification provider must be in place. It is not important what form of procedure is applied as long as it is valid and understandable. It can be a written or oral exam, the preparation of a project or seminar work, a practical demonstration or a combination of different assessment elements. Participation in a course which is only completed with a certificate of attendance, however, is not considered an assessment procedure. Such a course will therefore not lead to a qualification within the meaning of the NQF. Similarly, assessment procedures which are only based on the learner's self-assessment are non-NQF-compatible. As well as the form, the time specified for the assessment procedure is also not relevant for distinguishing between qualification and non-qualification. There is neither a minimum nor a maximum duration for such procedures.

Requirement 2: Transparency of the procedure

To fulfil the criteria of quality assurance, the **assessment procedure** must be described in a **transparent form** and relevant information must be **freely accessible** (such as on the qualification provider's website). For formal programmes, a relevant legal basis must exist (such as a law, decree, ordinance, decision). CVET programmes need to be described in writing and in a freely accessible form. It is considered transparent if information about the entry requirements made on candidates, the course of the procedure (→ Requirement 1), examiners, the assessment scheme (→ Requirement 4), the required standards (→ Requirement 5), the possibilities of inspection (in case of written exams), the lodging of appeals, and the repetition of the procedure (or of parts of the procedure) is available.

Requirement 3: Documentation of the procedure

The institution which implements the assessment procedure must **document** the course and result of the assessment procedure **in a comprehensible form** for qualification applicants.

Requirement 4: Assessment scheme

The assessment procedure must be based on a **transparent assessment scheme**. Qualification applicants must be informed openly about the mode of assessment (the mode in which the individual parts of the procedure are assessed) (e.g. a degree of achievement of given standards which can be seen in the definition of grades, the maximum number of points, the distribution of points, the formation of an average grade for individual parts of the procedure, etc.), they must be informed about who assesses (e.g. individual examiners, entire examination committee) and how the results of assessments are presented (e.g. grading scale, passed with distinction/passed).

Requirement 5: Standards

The **standards**, i.e. knowledge, skills and competence which qualification applicants need to prove as part of the assessment procedure, need to be **presented in a transparent and freely accessible form** (such as on the qualification provider's website). It is not important what form of presentation is chosen (such as separate presentation of knowledge, skills and competence or holistic formulations).

Requirement 6: General validity of the standards

The standards need to be applied in the same way for all candidates and may **not be defined individually**. They must not depend on the individual candidates' competence level but must be met by all qualification applicants for them to obtain the qualification. The standards do not need to be formally defined by law, they could also be included in guidelines of *Arbeitsmarktservice* (Public Employment Service Austria), the federal or provincial governments, for example.

Requirement 7: Right to implement the assessment procedure

The **certifying institution** must be **authorised** by the qualification provider to implement the assessment procedure for the acquisition of the qualification and to issue the proof of qualification. This right can either be regulated formally (such as in acts or ordinances), be based on an accreditation (such as a license agreement), or be the result of 'ownership of a qualification' (i.e. if a CVET institution defines a qualification and also carries out the relevant assessment procedure).

Requirements connected with the proof of qualification

Requirement 8: Proof of qualification

Following positive completion of the assessment procedure the learner must obtain **proof of qualification** in the form of a certificate or diploma. A certificate of attendance which only proves the learner's presence during the educational programme is not considered proof of qualification.

Requirement 9: Name, title, date

The proof of qualification must detail the **name of the qualification applicant***, the **title of the qualification** and the **date of issue**. The latter may not be before the key date 1 January 2011.

Requirement 10: Issuing body and signature

The **body issuing** the proof of qualification must be specified on the proof (address, stamp). Furthermore the proof must be issued in conformity with the law and **signed by the**

competent body (depending on circumstances this can be the examiner, the chairperson of the exam committee, the principal, etc.).

2.3 What steps must be taken to meet these minimum requirements?

If one of the mentioned requirements is not met, not all prerequisites for including the qualification in the NQF are fulfilled. This does **not** imply **any statement about the quality and relevance** of offers. It only means that the assessment procedure and proof of qualification in their current form do not comply with the NQF guidelines. As inclusion in the NQF is **not mandatory**, it is not necessary to take any steps to adapt the qualifications in order to meet requirements. In the future there will also be qualifications which are not assigned to any NQF level.

But what is connected with **inclusion in the NQF**?

If an application is filed for inclusion in the NQF (→ chapter 4), this makes the qualification **'more freely accessible'** and **'more widely visible'**. With inclusion in the NQF, the qualification is entered in the **NQF register***. This register details the title of the qualification, the name of the qualification provider, as well as a comprehensive description of the qualification. It is freely accessible on the website of the **National Coordination Point for the NQF in Austria (NCP)*** (→ 5.1).

This increased publicity and visibility however also leads to **enhanced transparency** and **comparability** with other qualifications. Qualification providers which apply for inclusion in the NQF need to supply information about the qualification's contents and status as well as about the assessment procedure. This information will give everyone interested, such as (foreign) learners/qualification applicants, (foreign) employers, (foreign) educational establishments, etc. insights into the qualification and a better understanding.

The **administrative efforts** connected with the qualification's description can be justified for qualification providers with the **widespread public attention** gained by inclusion in the NQF but also with the associated message that the acquisition of the proof of qualification is based on a **quality-assured procedure**. This means that the specification of the NQF level constitutes a **confidence-building signal** for the interested public.

Alternatively, if qualification providers want to make non-NQF-compatible qualifications fit for inclusion, these qualifications need to be **developed further** to meet the requirements they lack. Some prerequisites, such as those which are connected with the formal criteria of proofs of qualifications, can be fulfilled relatively easily. Others however, such as the definition of standards or the precise presentation of the assessment scheme, require more extensive work as well as relevant know-how. Only when all of these formal requirements are met is it possible to file an application for inclusion in the NQF.

3 EQF descriptors and explanations

The **EQF descriptors** (► 5.4), which are presented in table format, form the **main basis** for classifying qualifications in the NQF. These descriptors are oriented towards **learning outcomes**, which means towards what learners know and are able to do by the end of a learning period. As these descriptors are formulated independent of features such as training duration, place of learning, or form of learning, they can be applied equally to describe qualifications from the formal and the non-formal field.

Each of the **eight levels** that form the vertical structure of the table is characterised by different descriptors (cf. fig. 3). To structure the descriptions, the descriptors are assigned to **three dimensions**, which form the horizontal structure of the table (cf. fig. 3). These dimensions are based on the definitions specified in the EQF Recommendation (► 5.2):

- **Knowledge:** In the context of the EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.
- **Skills:** This dimension comprises cognitive skills (using logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical skills (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).
- **Competence:** In the context of the EQF, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

Figure 4: EQF descriptors

LEVELS ↓ <i>vertical structuring</i>	DIMENSIONS → <i>horizontal structuring</i>		
	Knowledge	Skills	Competence
Level 1 <i>Learning outcomes relevant to Level 1</i>	Basic general knowledge	Basic skill required to carry out simple tasks	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
Level 2 <i>Learning outcomes relevant to Level 2</i>	DESCRIPTORS which describe LEARNING OUTCOMES →		

The **EQF descriptors** form the basis for the transparent presentation and comparison of qualifications at the European level (► Preamble). To make sure they present the entire range of qualifications, the EQF descriptors are phrased in a rather **abstract** way and **do not contain any terms** from a specific **technical jargon**. The formulations have been chosen to enable a **distinction** between the levels and express the **increasing requirements** in every dimension from the lower to the upper levels. Here every level **includes** the statements of previous levels although, to avoid repetitions, these are not explicitly mentioned in the descriptions.

All three dimensions – knowledge, skills and competence – are **equally important** and need to be considered when characterising qualifications. The arrangement of the dimensions does not play a role when interpreting the descriptors (→ cf. also 3.1, “Best fit”*)).

To understand the descriptors it is necessary to grasp them in their **entirety**: Neither the statements in the individual table columns nor the statements in the lines can be viewed separately. They are only meaningful when the relations between them are considered. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to look at the **entire table** to understand the descriptions.

Not only the EQF but also the **NQF** is based on descriptors that are formulated in a learning outcome-oriented way. Whereas some European countries have developed their own descriptors for their NQFs, the Austrian NQF is based on the **EQF descriptors**. The decision in favour of using the EQF descriptors for the NQF is the outcome of an NQF consultation process which was conducted in the first half of 2008 and in which the majority of experts spoke out against developing Austria-specific descriptors. Instead, it was decided to ensure that the rather abstract EQF descriptors can be **applied** and **understood more easily** by using formulations that follow implicitly or explicitly from the analysis of Austrian qualification descriptions (such as curricula, training regulations, legal texts, etc.). This also aims to make **differences between levels more clearly visible**.

3.1 How should the descriptors and explanations be read?

On the following pages the **EQF descriptors** as well as the **Austrian explanations** are listed for each NQF level. Following a **summary** of the most important description elements, the **EQF descriptors in each dimension** are explained/specified in more detail. This is followed by a number of **reference qualifications** (→ 3.2) serving to further illustrate the requirements on each level.

As part of the application to assign a qualification to the NQF (→ chapter 4) it is necessary to state detailed reasons for the level which is applied for with **reference to EQF descriptors**. The **explanations** and the **reference qualifications** can both be used as supporting material.

What needs to be considered in the statement of reasons?

The following **considerations** and **assignment principles** need to be considered when drawing up the application:

Bases for assignment

The bases for assigning qualifications to an NQF level are the **legal bases** (i.e. laws, decrees, ordinances, etc.) which are applicable (by the key date DD.MM.20YY) in the formal area and the **descriptions of qualifications** in the non-formal area which are applicable (also by the same key date).

Requirements for the description of qualifications

To be able to relate the contents of a qualification to the learning outcome-oriented descriptors, the **qualifications** should also be **formulated with learning outcome-orientation**. But learning outcome-orientation has not yet been implemented fully in Austria. For many qualifications, explicit learning outcome descriptions do not yet exist. Nevertheless it is possible to assign these qualifications to the NQF. It is important to **view** these qualifications with **learning outcome-orientation**, i.e. to present the implicitly existing learning outcomes in the application for inclusion (→ chapter 4). In this way it is possible to create a relation to the EQF descriptors (using the explanations) and put forward reasons for the allocation to levels.

Qualifications as opposed to the individual educational biography

The NQF does **not present any individual educational biographies** but rather **qualifications**. The descriptors do not relate to the knowledge, skills and competence status of individuals but to learning outcomes which all learners need to prove at the end of a period of learning to acquire a specific qualification. In practice there will be some who reach the learning outcomes better or less well – but this fact is not relevant for the classification of the qualification.

The date when the qualification is observed

Those learning outcomes are decisive for the classification of a qualification in the NQF which need to be demonstrated when **furnishing the proof of qualification** (i.e. on the day [days] the assessment procedure [comprising several parts] is completed). What qualification holders know and are able to do after several years of practice is not relevant for the assignment to a level – what is essential is which learning outcomes they can prove at the time the certificate is awarded to them.

The best-fit principle

A key principle of assignment is the **best-fit principle**. 'Best fit' means that a qualification is assigned to the level whose descriptions fit the qualification best ('principle of predominance'). It can be assumed that not all descriptors which make up a level will always fit equally to a qualification. It can happen, for example, that at Level 4 'self-management' in the competence dimension characterises a specific qualification whereas 'supervising the routine work of others' applies to a lesser degree. In addition, in one dimension the descriptions of another NQF level may fit better for a qualification than for the other columns. An example: A qualification is defined by the descriptions in the skills and competence column of Level 5; in the knowledge column, the descriptors of Level 4 apply more. It is therefore important to always read the entire table of descriptors and then consider to which level a qualification fits best when looked at in its entirety ('best-fit principle'). This way of reading the descriptors helps **determine the 'focus'** of the respective qualification and subsequently facilitates the decision on where it is possible to allocate the qualification.

Similarly the best-fit principle must be applied to the **explanations** which specify the EQF descriptors in greater detail. Therefore it can happen that not all explanations of a level apply to a qualification. But the best possible correspondence should be sought when classified. In this process it is necessary to allow for a certain '**respectable generosity**' when applying the descriptors and explanations as well as leave **room for interpretation**.

The application for classification needs to include statements about how **the best-fit principle has been considered** (→ chapter 4). It should clarify which descriptors/explanations at which level apply to the qualification and which overall level the qualification can be assigned to.

Equivalence rather than equality

Qualifications which are assigned to a level are considered as **equivalent** – independent of their specific field of work or study – even if they differ in many aspects – such as in the duration of their acquisition, the place of learning, the education sector in which they are acquired, etc. – and are therefore **not equal**. The mentioned aspects do not play a role in the classification – the learning outcomes connected with these qualifications are decisive.

Principle of inclusion

The formulations of the descriptors as a rule follow the **principle of inclusion** (→ introduction to chapter 3). This means that the descriptions of lower levels are included in the upper levels although they are no longer explicitly mentioned. As far as specialist/occupation-specific knowledge and skills are concerned, however, this does not mean that qualifications of higher levels will in every case comprise the learning outcomes of lower levels in the same field of work or study.

No 'steps' in the acquisition of qualifications

Although the NQF has a hierarchical structure, this does not mean that the acquisition of qualifications must be step-by-step. A qualification which is assigned to a higher level does not necessarily require the acquisition of a qualification at a lower level. The relevant provisions are not regulated by the NQF. Therefore the NQF levels **should not be understood as 'steps'**. Every qualification must be considered separately. Even though a qualification is the prerequisite for acquiring another qualification – the acquisition of the Berufsreifeprüfung certificate, for example, is only open to apprenticeship or VET school graduates, among others –, it does not follow that the 'add-on qualification' must by all means be assigned to a higher level than the 'prerequisite qualification'. It is conceivable that both qualifications are assigned to the same level.

In addition, the assignment of a qualification to a level does **not mean any access right** is acquired to obtain a qualification at the next higher level. The NQF is only a **transparency instrument and not a regulatory instrument** (→ Preamble).

3.2 What are reference qualifications?

As well as the explanations, which aim to make the abstract EQF descriptors more easily understandable, **reference qualifications** from the formal education sector are specified for each level (with the exception of Levels 1 and 8)² on the following pages.

These reference qualifications have first of all been the result of the **implicit educational hierarchy** of the Austrian qualification landscape. The major categories of educational levels (compulsory schooling – apprenticeship/VET school – upper secondary certificate – post-secondary VET college – HE institution) have already served as an implicit qualifications framework so far in Austria (cf. Schneeberger et al. 2007, p. 1). The reference qualifications follow this implicit hierarchy. In addition, in the course of **discussions with experts** on the occasion of a number of pilot projects (→ 5.2) conducted before the NQF development, there was broad consensus on the level assignment of the given reference qualifications. The learning outcome-oriented analysis of **curricula and training plans** as well as **additional legal bases** has, not least, been decisive for assigning these reference qualifications while taking into account the considerations and classification principles specified under 3.1.

The reference qualifications aim to serve as '**qualification cornerstones**', an aid for orientation in the allocation of additional qualifications. They serve to illustrate the requirements connected with the levels so they are understood more easily.

²) The selected procedure to determine reference qualifications has to date not resulted in any reference qualifications (outside the Bologna architecture) for Levels 1 and 8.

Major classification principles at a glance:

- The **EQF descriptors** are the only basis for classifying qualifications in the NQF.
- The **explanations** aim to make the EQF descriptors more easily understandable. They can but need not be considered when stating reasons for classification as part of the application process.
- Both the EQF descriptors and the explanations are formulated **independent of the economic branch**. This aims to ensure that all qualifications can be described independent of their type and of the learning context in which they were acquired.
- It is always important to read the entire table of descriptors. Only in this way is it possible to determine the 'focus' of the descriptors which apply to a qualification. On the basis of this 'principle of predominance' it is possible to determine which level suits the qualification best (**best-fit principle**).
- All three dimensions of the NQF are **equally important**. It is therefore not relevant for classification if a qualification focuses more on knowledge or puts skills more into the foreground. The EQF descriptors are the only basis for classification.

Pilot phase

Explanations of the EQF descriptors at Level 1

Explanations

Holders of qualifications of Level 1 have an **elementary-level general education** and are familiar with **social norms and values** as well as **accepted and common ways of behaving**. This knowledge enables them to overcome **simple everyday challenges** under **given framework conditions** and with **relevant instructions**.

Explanations in detail

The EQF descriptors of Level 1 can be specified in greater detail using the following explanations:

EQF descriptors		Explanations
KNOWLEDGE	Basic general knowledge	<p>He/she has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ elementary-level general education, including fundamental knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic and use of modern information and communication technologies ▪ knowledge about social norms and values ▪ knowledge about the accepted and common ways of behaving in everyday situations ▪ an insight into the world of work and occupations, which enables him/her to make a decision on the educational and professional career ▪ the ability to acquire available knowledge independently ▪ knowledge which enables transfer to further school-based education or training at the upper secondary level
SKILLS	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ communicate properly using language, participate in discussions and share his/her views ▪ deal with simple everyday activities under given framework conditions with the use of literacy and numeracy skills ▪ look for different possible solutions to simple problems, select the appropriate solution and use this to carry out the task ▪ gather basic information about simple themes from common, including computer-aided sources, form a subject-related and value-oriented opinion and take up a corresponding stance ▪ develop his/her own position on issues which affect him/her using social norms and values as a basis ▪ take part in social events and find his/her own role within a community
COMPETENCE	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ deal with simple situations under given framework conditions and with corresponding assistance

Explanations of the EQF descriptors at Level 2

Explanations

Holders of qualifications at Level 2 have a **sound general education** and **elementary-level previous professional qualifications** in a specific field. This enables them to **carry out simple routine work** in their field of work or study **independently** under **given framework conditions** and using **given tools** as well as to cope with **standard challenges autonomously**.

Explanations in detail

The EQF descriptors of Level 2 can be specified in greater detail using the following explanations:

EQF descriptors		Explanations
KNOWLEDGE	Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	He/she has <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a sound general education ▪ knowledge of fundamental business connections ▪ basic knowledge of the structure of the labour market and how it works ▪ elementary-level previous professional qualifications in a specific field ▪ knowledge which enables transfer to further school-based or vocational education or training
SKILLS	Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ use given instruments, methods and procedures appropriately ▪ cope with simple routine tasks autonomously ▪ deal with simple standard challenges independently ▪ develop certain independent and logical thought ▪ actively take part in discussions on familiar themes and take up his/her own viewpoint ▪ understand and use information to fulfil his/her tasks from given sources ▪ present facts and circumstances from his/her experience orally and in writing using the correct standard language
COMPETENCE	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy	In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ act autonomously in simple situations ▪ cope with simple challenges under given framework conditions and with a certain amount of assistance ▪ successfully deal with new, more specific activities with corresponding support and guidance in order to develop the self-confidence required to take on more extensive tasks

Qualifications in Austria which correspond to EQF descriptors of Level 2 are **secondary home economics school (1-year course)** and **prevocational school qualifications**.

Explanations of the EQF descriptors at Level 3

Explanations

Holders of qualifications at Level 3 have a **well-founded general education** and **fundamental knowledge in their field of work or study** and are able to **carry out simple tasks independently provided the framework conditions remain unchanged**. In addition, they are able to **demonstrate solutions to everyday challenges** and implement them following prior consultation. Holders of Level 3 qualifications are also able to **adjust** their behaviour in **routine situations** of their field of work or study **independently** and **act at their own responsibility**.

Explanations in detail

The EQF descriptors of Level 3 can be specified in greater detail using the following explanations:

EQF descriptors		Explanations
KNOWLEDGE	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts in a field of work or study	<p>He/she has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a well-founded general education ▪ fundamental knowledge in his/her field of work or study (e.g. about facts and circumstances, principles, materials, processes, methods, connections, regulations and norms, etc.) to independently deal with simple tasks and challenges provided the framework conditions remain unchanged ▪ the ability of business-related thinking and critical consumer behaviour ▪ knowledge needed to directly carry out simple professional activities
SKILLS	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ select basic instruments, methods and procedures and use them appropriately ▪ independently cope with simple activities while the framework conditions remain unchanged ▪ demonstrate different approaches to solutions for everyday problems and use these to independently solve the problems after prior consultation ▪ develop independent and logical thought ▪ actively take part in simple discussions on familiar themes, present his/her own viewpoint and give reasons to substantiate this ▪ independently research relevant information to fulfil his/her tasks from given sources, critically assess this and use it after prior consultation ▪ present common contents in appropriate form (i.e. according to the situation and the target audience) and also technically-correct while using the correct language
COMPETENCE	<p>Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study</p> <p>Adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems</p>	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ act autonomously and at own responsibility in simple situations ▪ act autonomously and at own responsibility to cope with simple challenges under framework conditions which remain unchanged ▪ adapt his/her behaviour independently to the circumstances in common situations

A qualification in Austria which corresponds to the EQF descriptors of Level 3 is the **qualification obtained at secondary home economics school (2-year course)**.

Pilot phase

Explanations of the EQF descriptors at Level 4

Explanations

Holders of qualifications at Level 4 have an **in-depth general education** and **theoretical knowledge in their field of work or study** and they are able to **carry out routine tasks independently** and find **solutions to common challenges including under changing framework conditions**. In addition they have a **certain critical understanding**. Holders of Level 4 qualifications can carry out the tasks connected with the activities **at their own responsibility** and use the standard instruments, procedures and methods for the **sector/subject in compliance with standards and appropriate to the situation**.

Explanations in detail

The EQF descriptors of Level 4 can be specified in greater detail using the following explanations:

EQF descriptors		Explanations
KNOWLEDGE	Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	<p>He/she has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ an in-depth general education ▪ theoretical knowledge in his/her field of work or study (e.g. about facts and circumstances, principles, materials, processes, methods, connections, regulations and norms, etc.) to independently deal with common tasks and challenges, including with changing framework conditions ▪ fundamental company-related business and legal knowledge ▪ a university entrance qualification or knowledge needed to directly exercise a profession
SKILLS	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ select common instruments, methods and procedures and use them appropriately ▪ independently cope with standard tasks, including under changing conditions ▪ analyse everyday problems taking into account theoretical knowledge, demonstrate different approaches to solutions and solve these problems independently ▪ develop certain creative and networked thinking ▪ actively take part in discussions in standard situations with familiar themes, present his/her own viewpoint and give reasons to substantiate this ▪ independently research relevant information to fulfil his/her tasks from largely given sources, critically assess this and use it ▪ present information in appropriate form (i.e. according to the situation and the target audience) and also technically correct while using the correct language and using common communication techniques/technologies

COMPETENCE	<p>Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change</p> <p>Supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities</p>	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ handle routine situations independently and behave appropriately according to the circumstances ▪ work in a team and instruct/supervise others in common tasks
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Qualifications in Austria which correspond to the EQF descriptors of Level 4 are the **VET school certificate** (such as the certificate of the VET school for machine construction, the business school certificate, the certificate of the school of hotel and catering industries, etc.) and the **apprenticeship diploma** (such as the certificate in the apprenticeships office clerk or joiner, etc.).

Explanations of the EQF descriptors at Level 5

Explanations

Holders of qualifications at Level 5 have **comprehensive theoretical knowledge about the fundamentals in their field of work or study** and are able to **conceive projects autonomously** and also find the **solution for different problems** including in **unpredictable contexts**. In addition they are able to **put forward their own creative contributions** and **think critically**. Holders of Level 5 qualifications are able to carry out the tasks connected with their activities **at their own responsibility**. In addition, they are able to **lead working teams** and **take responsibility** for timely and results-oriented implementation.

Explanations in detail

The EQF descriptors of Level 5 can be specified in greater detail using the following explanations:

EQF descriptors		Explanations
KNOWLEDGE	Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	<p>He/she has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ extensive theoretical knowledge in his/her field of work or study (e.g. about facts and circumstances, principles, materials, processes, methods, connections, regulations and norms, etc.) to independently deal with tasks and challenges, including in unpredictable situations ▪ awareness of what effects using this knowledge has on the field of work or study ▪ in-depth company-related business and legal knowledge for taking on managerial tasks and/or heading a company ▪ knowledge needed to directly exercise a high-level profession
SKILLS	A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ independently cope with tasks including in unpredictable contexts ▪ assess the implications of such tasks and draw conclusions here for how to proceed subsequently ▪ analyse challenging and multi-layered problems using logical, abstract and networked thinking and solve these autonomously while complying with the respective applicable norms, regulations and rules ▪ use his/her own creative contributions to solve problems ▪ understand connections between ecological, economic and social mechanisms, establish interconnections and use the knowledge gained here in common and also unpredictable situations ▪ form an opinion on new facts and circumstances, explain his/her own viewpoint and present this using the standard specialist terminology in a way which is suitable for the target audience and the particular situation ▪ independently research information from different sources and disciplines, gather the essential content, critically assess, select and present this in a manner suitable for the target audience

COMPETENCE	<p>Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change</p> <p>Review and develop performance of self and others</p>	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ independently coordinate and manage projects ▪ act independently and flexibly in different situations, including unpredictable ones ▪ reflect on his/her own behaviour and draw conclusions on how to act in the future ▪ critically and responsibly deal with the actions of other people, give feedback and contribute to the development of their potential
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Qualifications in Austria which correspond to the EQF descriptors of Level 5 are the **Reifeprüfung certificate and VET diploma of VET colleges** (such as the college of construction engineering, business college, college of tourism, etc.) and the certificate of the **secondary training college for nursery school teachers**.

Explanations of the EQF descriptors at Level 6

Explanations

Holders of qualifications at Level 6 have **in-depth theoretical knowledge in their field of work or study** and can therefore **carry out** tasks at a **very high professional level independently and with full responsibility**. In addition, they are able to **tackle extensive challenges in changing contexts** and **develop new, innovative approaches to solutions**. Holders of Level 6 qualifications are additionally able to **lead projects, functional areas or companies, manage staff** and **take on responsibility for decision-making**.

Explanations in detail

The EQF descriptors of Level 6 can be specified in greater detail using the following explanations:

EQF descriptors		Explanations
KNOWLEDGE	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	<p>He/she has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ in-depth theoretical knowledge in his/her field of work or study (e.g. about facts and circumstances, principles, materials, processes, methods, connections, regulations and norms, etc.) to independently deal with extensive tasks and challenges ▪ knowledge about the theoretical bases of his/her field of work or study from different perspectives ▪ the knowledge required to lead extensive projects, functional areas or companies
SKILLS	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ carry out tasks at a very high professional level ▪ deal with extensive challenges independently and with full responsibility and develop innovative solutions when doing so ▪ independently elaborate concepts to carry out various tasks while taking into consideration subject-specific, economic and legal framework conditions ▪ act in an anticipatory way and respond flexibly to new/changing circumstances ▪ communicate with different actors (employees, [potential] customers, suppliers, authorities, etc.) in a way which is suitable for the target audience and the particular situation ▪ research information from different media and disciplines, critically assess this and select it to develop innovative approaches to solutions

COMPETENCE	<p>Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts</p> <p>Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups</p>	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ act entrepreneurially and take on managerial tasks ▪ lead complex and extensive projects, functional areas and/or companies independently and with full responsibility ▪ critically and responsibly deal with the actions of individual employees and also entire project and working teams, give feedback and contribute to the development of their potential with targeted support measures
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A qualification in Austria which corresponds to the EQF descriptors of Level 6 is the **master craftsperson qualification** (such as the master craftsperson certificate in motor vehicle engineering, the master craftsperson qualification of tailors of ladies' clothing, etc.).

Explanations of the EQF descriptors at Level 7

Explanations

Holders of qualifications at Level 7 have **expert knowledge in their field of work or study** as well as **knowledge about other disciplines**, which they are able to apply for the **strategic alignment and management of complex projects, functional areas or companies**. By **independently gathering and critical reflecting on new information and findings** they are able to contribute to **innovations** in their field of work or study. In addition, holders of Level 7 qualifications are able to **supervise the implementation of strategic decisions** and **take on responsibility** for this.

Explanations in detail

The EQF descriptors of Level 7 can be specified in greater detail using the following **explanations**:

EQF descriptors		Explanations
KNOWLEDGE	<p>Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research</p> <p>Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields</p>	<p>He/she has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ expert knowledge in his/her field of work or study (e.g. about facts and circumstances, principles, materials, processes, methods, connections, regulations and norms, etc.) to independently deal with complex tasks and challenges ▪ knowledge from different disciplines required to deal with tasks and challenges in his/her field of work or study ▪ the ability to incorporate newly acquired knowledge in the further development of his/her field of work or study
SKILLS	<p>Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields</p>	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ gather knowledge and findings from different disciplines, critically reflect on them and incorporate them in his/her own activities ▪ discover new findings from practical work and from the theoretical approach and use them for innovations (e.g. in the area of procedures, processes, materials, products, etc.) ▪ develop the strategy of complex projects, functional areas and/or companies ▪ examine the performances and results of projects, functional areas and/or companies, assess them, draw conclusions from them and make necessary amendments ▪ communicate views to relevant actors, act as a moderator and state reasons for decisions

COMPETENCE	<p>Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches</p> <p>Take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams</p>	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lead complex projects, functional areas and/or companies independently and take on responsibility for decision-making ▪ monitor the implementation of the strategy, intervene to take control and, if necessary, draw consequences for content and staff
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Qualifications in Austria which correspond to the EQF descriptors at Level 7 are the **qualifying examinations for master builders**, for **engineering offices (consulting engineers)** and the **civil engineers' qualification**.

Explanations of the EQF descriptors at Level 8

Explanations

Holders of qualifications at Level 8 have **top-level expert knowledge in their field of work or study** as well as **comprehensive knowledge about other disciplines**, which they are able to apply for the **strategic alignment and management of complex projects, functional areas or companies**. Based on their **practical work and epistemological approach** they are able to **generate new findings and use them for innovations** and the **progress of their field of work or study**. In addition, holders of Level 8 qualifications are also able to make **new knowledge** accessible and in this way **contribute to the further development of learners**.

Explanations in detail

The EQF descriptors of Level 8 can be specified in greater detail using the following explanations:

EQF descriptors		Explanations
KNOWLEDGE	Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields	<p>He/she has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ top-level expert knowledge in his/her field of work or study (e.g. about facts and circumstances, principles, materials, processes, methods, connections, regulations and norms, etc.) to independently deal with complex tasks and challenges ▪ comprehensive knowledge from different disciplines required to deal with tasks and challenges in his/her field of work or study ▪ the ability to incorporate newly acquired knowledge in the further development of his/her field of work or study and to contribute to the creation of new knowledge and new subdisciplines
SKILLS	The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ discover new findings from practical work and from the epistemological approach and use them for innovations (e.g. in the area of procedures, processes, materials, products, etc.) ▪ generate new knowledge and new findings while using various research methods ▪ process new results and findings, make them available, discuss them with relevant actors and advocate them
COMPETENCE	Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research	<p>In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ make new knowledge and new findings accessible and in this way contribute to the further development of learners/employees ▪ contribute to further development with newly generated knowledge and with new findings

Pilot phase

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8
KNOWLEDGE He/she has	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> elementary-level general education, including fundamental knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic and use of modern information and communication technologies knowledge about social norms and values knowledge about the accepted and common ways of behaving in everyday situations an insight into the world of work and occupations, which enables him/her to make a decision on the educational and professional career the ability to acquire available knowledge independently which enables transfer to further school-based education or training at the upper secondary level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a sound general education knowledge of fundamental business connections basic knowledge of the structure of the labour market and how it works elementary-level previous professional qualifications in a specific field knowledge which enables transfer to further school-based or vocational education or training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a well-founded general education the ability of business-related thinking and critical consumer behaviour fundamental knowledge in his/her field of work or study (e.g. about facts and circumstances, principles, materials, processes, methods, connections, regulations and norms, etc.) to independently deal with common tasks and challenges, including with changing framework conditions fundamental company-related business and legal knowledge a university entrance qualification or knowledge needed to directly exercise a profession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an in-depth general education theoretical knowledge in his/her field of work or study (e.g. about facts and circumstances, principles, materials, processes, methods, connections, regulations and norms, etc.) to independently deal with tasks and challenges, including in unpredictable situations awareness of what effects using this knowledge has on the field of work or study in-depth company-related business and legal knowledge for taking on managerial tasks and/or heading a company knowledge needed to directly exercise a high-level profession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extensive theoretical knowledge in his/her field of work or study (e.g. about facts and circumstances, principles, materials, processes, methods, connections, regulations and norms, etc.) to independently deal with tasks and challenges, including in unpredictable situations awareness of what effects using this knowledge has on the field of work or study in-depth company-related business and legal knowledge for taking on managerial tasks and/or heading a company knowledge needed to directly exercise a high-level profession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in-depth theoretical knowledge in his/her field of work or study (e.g. about facts and circumstances, principles, materials, processes, methods, connections, regulations and norms, etc.) to independently deal with extensive tasks and challenges knowledge about the theoretical bases of his/her field of work or study from different perspectives the knowledge required to lead extensive projects, functional areas or companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expert knowledge in his/her field of work or study (e.g. about facts and circumstances, principles, materials, processes, methods, connections, regulations and norms, etc.) to independently deal with complex tasks and challenges knowledge from different disciplines required to deal with tasks and challenges in his/her field of work or study the ability to incorporate newly acquired knowledge in the further development of his/her field of work or study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> top-level expert knowledge in his/her field of work or study (e.g. about facts and circumstances, principles, materials, processes, methods, connections, regulations and norms, etc.) to independently deal with complex tasks and challenges comprehensive knowledge from different disciplines required to deal with tasks and challenges in his/her field of work or study the ability to incorporate newly acquired knowledge in the further development of his/her field of work or study and to contribute to the creation of new knowledge and new subdisciplines
SKILLS In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicate properly using language, participate in discussions and share his/her views deal with simple everyday activities under given framework conditions with the use of literacy and numeracy skills look for different possible solutions to simple problems, select the appropriate solution and use this to carry out the task gather basic information about simple themes from common, including computer-aided sources, form a subject-related and value-oriented opinion and take up a corresponding stance develop his/her own position on issues which affect him/her using social norms and values as a basis take part in social events and find his/her own role within a community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use given instruments, methods and procedures appropriately cope with simple routine tasks autonomously deal with simple standard challenges independently develop certain independent and logical thought actively take part in discussions on familiar themes and take up his/her own viewpoint understand and use information to fulfil his/her tasks from given sources present facts and circumstances from his/her experience orally and in writing using the correct standard language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> select basic instruments, methods and procedures and use them appropriately independently cope with simple activities while the framework conditions remain unchanged demonstrate different approaches to solutions for everyday problems and use these to independently solve the problems after prior consultation develop independent and logical thought actively take part in simple discussions on familiar themes, present his/her own viewpoint and give reasons to substantiate this independently research relevant information to fulfil his/her tasks from given sources, critically assess this and use it after prior consultation present common contents in appropriate form (i.e. according to the situation and the target audience) and also technically correct while using the correct language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> select common instruments, methods and procedures and use them appropriately independently cope with standard tasks, including under changing conditions analyse everyday problems taking into account theoretical knowledge, demonstrate different approaches to solutions and solve these problems independently develop certain creative and networked thinking actively take part in discussions in standard situations with familiar themes, present his/her own viewpoint and give reasons to substantiate this independently research relevant information to fulfil his/her tasks from largely given sources, critically assess this and use it present information in appropriate form (i.e. according to the situation and the target audience) and also technically correct while using the correct language and using common communication techniques/technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> independently cope with tasks including in unpredictable contexts assess the effects of these tasks and draw conclusions here for how to proceed subsequently analyse challenging and multi-layered problems using logical, abstract and networked thinking and solve these autonomously while complying with the respective applicable norms, regulations and rules use his/her own creative contributions to solve problems understand connections between ecological, economic and social mechanisms, establish interconnections and use the knowledge gained here in common and also unpredictable situations form an opinion on new facts and circumstances, explain his/her own viewpoint and present this using the standard specialist terminology in a way which is suitable for the target audience and the particular situation independently research information from different sources and disciplines, gather the essential content, critically assess, select and present this in a manner suitable for the target audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> carry out tasks at a very high professional level deal with extensive challenges independently and with full responsibility and develop innovative solutions when doing so independently elaborate concepts to carry out various tasks while taking into consideration subject-specific, economic and legal framework conditions act in an anticipatory way and respond flexibly to new/changing circumstances communicate with different actors (employees, [potential] customers, suppliers, authorities, etc.) in a way which is suitable for the target audience and the particular situation research information from different media and disciplines, critically assess this and select it to develop innovative approaches to solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gather knowledge and findings from different disciplines, critically reflect on them and incorporate them in his/her own activities discover new findings from practical work and from the theoretical approach and use them for innovations (e.g. in the area of procedures, processes, materials, products, etc.) develop the strategy of complex projects, functional areas and/or companies examine the performances and results of projects, functional areas and/or companies, assess them, draw conclusions from them and make necessary amendments communicate views to relevant actors, act as a moderator and state reasons for decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discover new findings from practical work and from the epistemological approach and use them for innovations (e.g. in the area of procedures, processes, materials, products, etc.) generate new knowledge and new findings while using various research methods process new results and findings, make them available, discuss them with relevant actors and advocate them

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8
COMPETENCE In his/her field of work or study he/she is able to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> deal with simple situations under given framework conditions and with corresponding assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> act autonomously in simple situations cope with simple challenges under given framework conditions and with a certain amount of assistance successfully deal with new, more specific activities with corresponding support and guidance in order to develop the self-confidence required to take on more extensive tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> act autonomously and with own responsibility in simple situations act autonomously and with own responsibility to cope with simple challenges under framework conditions which remain unchanged adapt his/her behaviour independently to the circumstances in common situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> handle routine situations independently and behave appropriately according to the circumstances work in a team and instruct/supervise others in common tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> independently coordinate and manage projects act independently and flexibly in different situations, including unpredictable ones reflect on his/her own behaviour and draw conclusions on how to act in the future critically and responsibly deal with the actions of other people, give feedback and contribute to the development of their potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> act entrepreneurially and take on managerial tasks lead extensive projects, functional areas and/or companies independently and with full responsibility critically and responsibly deal with the actions of individual employees and also entire project and working teams, give feedback and contribute to the development of their potential with targeted support measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lead complex projects, functional areas and/or companies independently and take on responsibility for decision-making monitor the implementation of the strategy, intervene to take control and, if necessary, draw consequences for content and staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make new knowledge and new findings accessible and in this way contribute to the further development of learners/employees contribute to further development with newly generated knowledge and with new findings

Figure 5: Overview of the Austrian explanations of EQF descriptors

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8
Knowledge, skills, competence	<p>Holders of qualifications of Level 1 have an elementary-level general education and are familiar with social norms and values as well as accepted and common ways of behaving. This knowledge enables them to overcome simple everyday challenges under given framework conditions and with relevant instructions.</p>	<p>Holders of qualifications at Level 2 have a sound general education and elementary-level previous professional qualifications in a specific field. This enables them to carry out simple routine work in their field of work or study independently under given framework conditions and using given tools as well as to cope with standard challenges autonomously.</p>	<p>Holders of qualifications at Level 3 have a well-founded general education and fundamental knowledge in their field of work or study and are able to carry out simple tasks independently provided the framework conditions remain unchanged. In addition, they are able to demonstrate solutions to everyday challenges and implement them following prior consultation. Holders of Level 3 qualifications are also able to adjust their behaviour in routine situations of their field of work or study independently and act at their own responsibility.</p>	<p>Holders of qualifications at Level 4 have an in-depth general education and theoretical knowledge in their field of work or study and they are able to carry out routine tasks independently and find solutions to common challenges including under changing framework conditions. In addition they have a certain critical understanding. Holders of Level 4 qualifications can carry out the tasks connected with the activities at their own responsibility and use the standard instruments, procedures and methods for the sector/subject in compliance with standards and appropriate to the situation.</p>	<p>Holders of qualifications at Level 5 have comprehensive theoretical knowledge about the fundamentals in their field of work or study and are able to conceive projects autonomously and also find the solution for different problems including in unpredictable contexts. In addition they are able to put forward their own creative contributions and think critically. Holders of Level 5 qualifications are able to carry out the tasks connected with their activities at their own responsibility. In addition, they are able to lead working teams and take responsibility for timely and results-oriented implementation.</p>	<p>Holders of qualifications at Level 6 have in-depth theoretical knowledge in their field of work or study and can therefore carry out tasks at a very high professional level independently and with full responsibility. In addition, they are able to tackle extensive challenges in changing contexts and develop new, innovative approaches to solutions. Holders of Level 6 qualifications are additionally able to lead projects, functional areas and/or companies, manage staff and take on responsibility for decision-making.</p>	<p>Holders of qualifications at Level 7 have expert knowledge in their field of work or study as well as knowledge about other disciplines, which they are able to apply for the strategic alignment and management of complex projects, functional areas or companies. By independently gathering and critical reflecting on new information and findings they are able to contribute to innovations in their field of work or study. In addition, holders of Level 7 qualifications are able to supervise the implementation of strategic decisions and take on responsibility for this.</p>	<p>Holders of qualifications at Level 8 have top-level expert knowledge in their field of work or study as well as comprehensive knowledge about other disciplines, which they are able to apply for the strategic alignment and management of complex projects, functional areas or companies. Based on their practical work and epistemological approach they are able to generate new findings and use them for innovations and the progress of their field of work or study. In addition, holders of Level 8 qualifications are also able to make new knowledge accessible and in this way contribute to the further development of learners.</p>

Figure 6: Overview of the Austrian explanations of EQF descriptors - synopsis

4 Description of qualifications

A wide range of **information** needs to be enclosed in the application for including a qualification in the NQF. To present this information there is a **format template standardised throughout Austria** (→ p. 38ff), which is made available by the National Coordination Point (NCP, → 5.1) as an e-form.

Who needs to make this information available?

The **applicant organisation** files the application with the NCP (→ 5.1). In the field of **formal education**, the application is filed by the **ministry** which bears ultimate responsibility for the qualification. The applicant organisation is responsible for examining the qualification for NQF conformity. By signing the application, the representative of the applicant organisation confirms the completeness and correctness of the details provided in the application.

What information needs to be made available in the application?

The format template (→ p. 38ff) comprises **five major areas of information**:

1. Details about the qualification provider

This information block is about the **qualification provider**, i.e. the institution defining the standards which need to be proven by the candidates as part of the assessment procedure in order to acquire the qualification.

2. Details about the qualification

The second information block focuses on the **qualification** and comprises, among other elements, the presentation of a detailed qualification profile. To use synergies with other qualification descriptions, this section uses categories which also appear in the Europass Certificate Supplement (cf. <http://www.europass.at/zeugnisinfo/>) (e.g. activity area, rights connected with the qualification, etc.).

3. Details about the assessment procedure

The third information block is about the **assessment procedure**, the course of which needs to be described in detail.

4. Statement of reasons for classification

The fourth information block is about the statement of reasons for **classifying in the NQF**. In this central section details have to be provided about the applied for NQF level and comprehensive reasons given here.

5. Statistical data

On a voluntary basis – and if relevant information is available – it is possible to enclose **data** in the application which specify the direct costs for acquiring the qualification. Furthermore it is possible to provide details about the average age of qualification applicants and the number of people who acquire the qualification every year. These data are not published in the NQF register but are used only to check the plausibility of the application.

In the **annex section** it is possible to enclose documents in the application which support the presented information.

1. Details about the qualification provider

Name of institution:	← Please specify the type of institution, e.g. ministry, CET establishment, professional organisation, etc.
Type of institution:	
Legal form:	← Enter the legal form of your institution here, e.g. public corporation, limited liability company, association, etc.
Represented by (name and function):	
Address:	
Telephone number: Fax number:	
E-mail:	
Quality management system or procedure of external quality assurance (if applicable/relevant):	← If your institution uses a quality management system or a procedure of external quality assurance, please give more precise details here.

2. Details about the qualification

Title of qualification:	← Here you should name the activity fields (branches of industry, fields, areas of responsibility, etc.) which are available to holders of qualifications.
Legal basis (if applicable):	
Activity fields:	← If training should precede the acquisition of proof of qualification, its duration (in weeks/months/years) must be indicated.
Duration of training (if required):	← The formal access requirements which learners must meet in order to take the assessment procedure to acquire the qualification must be specified here (e.g. age, professional experience, etc.)
Access requirements for learners to take the assessment procedure:	← Here previous qualifications which may be necessary can be indicated if these are relevant for the applied-for level.
Access requirements for the qualification if relevant for classification:	
Rights connected with the qualification:	
<p><i>Please present the profile of your qualification. Provide details about the key learning outcomes which qualification holders have and give references to sources on which your description is based.</i></p>	
<p>← The qualification profile should reveal the key learning outcomes which qualification holders have. In addition the sources (e.g. legal bases, laws, etc.) which form the basis of this description must also be indicated.</p> <p>Length: max. 300 words</p>	

3. Details about the assessment procedure

Legal basis (if applicable):	Describe what type of assessment procedure(s) you use (e.g. written, oral, practical demonstration, multiple choice, etc.) and how the individual procedure elements proceed specifically.
Course of the assessment procedure:	Provide details about who carries out the assessment procedure and which formal or subject-related requirements the examiners have to fulfil (e.g. formal qualification, practical periods, etc.).
Details about examiners:	Indicate which assessment scheme you use (e.g. points distribution, grading scale, etc.).
Assessment scheme:	Provide details about whether and, if so, in what way exam candidates have the opportunity to inspect exam results.
Inspection of exam results:	Indicate whether exam candidates have opportunities to appeal against exam assessments and, if so, what these opportunities are.
Possibility of appeal:	Specify if candidates can repeat any exam parts they did not pass successfully or the entire exam and specify which regulations apply in this context.
Repetition of exam parts:	Indicate which standards need to be met to acquire the qualification. Length: max. 300 words
<i>Please give precise details about which standards, i.e. knowledge, skills and competence, the exam candidates must prove in order to obtain the proof of their assessment.</i>	Please specify which measures you take to safeguard the quality of the assessment procedure. Length: max. 300 words
<i>Indicate which specific steps you take to ensure the quality of the overall process and the reliability of the results. For this purpose you can, for example, describe your procedures concerning the updating of exam questions and methods, your measures to objectify exam situations, etc.</i>	

4. Statement of reasons for classification in the NQF

<p>NQF level applied for:</p>	<p>Indicate the NQF level to which, in your opinion, the qualification in this application should be allocated to.</p>
<p><i>Give reasons for the NQF level you applied for (if appropriate, applying the best-fit principle) and in this process refer to the EQF descriptors of the three dimensions knowledge, skills and competence. You may find the explanations helpful.</i></p>	<p>Give detailed reasons for the applied-for NQF level. The basis for this should be the applicable qualification descriptions (e.g. legal bases) which need to be related to the EQF descriptors.</p> <p>Length: max. 300 words</p>
<p><i>In what relation is the qualification with other qualifications of the same field of work or study? What reasons can be stated for the NQF classification you applied for with reference to these qualifications and their NQF level?</i></p>	<p>To help substantiate your reasons you can indicate the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information about the relation between the qualification in question and other certificates from the same field of work or study (e.g. the reference qualifications or other, already assigned qualifications) - international comparisons (e.g. bilateral or multilateral agreements for mutual recognition of the qualification, European comparative projects, etc.) - statistical details which can be used as indicators <p>All of this information should enable a well-founded decision about NQF allocation.</p> <p>Length: max. 400 words, excluding statistics.</p>
<p><i>Are there any comparable qualifications in other countries? Are there any bilateral or multilateral agreements about the mutual recognition of these qualifications? Have any experiences been made in European projects about the comparability of these qualifications?</i></p>	
<p><i>Give information to substantiate why your qualification is suitable for the applied-for NQF level. In this process you can explain, for example, the statistical data about direct entry into the labour market, rates of self-employed, job ads, unemployment rates, incomes, graduate surveys, etc.</i></p>	

5. Statistical data*

Costs for participants to acquire the qualification:	Please indicate the direct costs which arise for participants when acquiring the qualification (e.g. course costs, material costs, exam costs, etc.).
Number of people who acquire this qualification a year:	Please indicate how many people acquire this qualification on average per year in your institution. If it is a new qualification, please indicate the expected average number of people.
Age of people who acquire this qualification a year:	Indicate how old on average the people are who acquire this qualification in your institution. If it is a new qualification, please indicate the age of the target group the qualification is primarily aimed at.

* not mandatory fields

Annexes:

- Legal basis
- Curriculum
- Form for proof of qualification

.....

Name of competent ministry

Documents can be enclosed in the application to support the presented information. Please describe the attached annexes briefly.

.....

Signature of ministry, name, function

The application must contain the name of the submitting ministry and also be signed by its legal representative.

Contact point in ministry for this application:

Telephone number: Fax number:

E-mail:

Here the person who was mainly responsible for filing the application must be named with the corresponding contact data.

Place, date

Stamp

The application must be stamped and provided with the date of submission when sent to the NCP.

5 Service section

5.1 Points of contact

National Coordination Point for the NQF in Austria (NCP)
c/o National Agency for Lifelong Learning at OeAD
Udo Bachmayer and Karl Andrew Müllner

Ebendorferstraße 7
A-1010 Vienna

Tel: +43/1/534 08 - 0
Fax: +43/1/534 08 - 699
E-mail: nqr@oead.at
www.lebenslanges-lernen.at/nqr

5.2 Further links, publications and projects

Links:

The European Qualifications Framework (European Commission website):
http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm

Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (April 2008). <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:EN:PDF>

Leaflet about the EQF: http://ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/general/eqf/leaflet_en.pdf

Brochure about the EQF: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/brochexp_en.pdf

EQF Note 1: Explaining the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/brochexp_de.pdf

EQF Note 2: Added Value of National Qualifications Frameworks in Implementing the EQF:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/note2_en.pdf

EQF Newsletter (April 2010): http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/news1_en.pdf

EQF Newsletter (July 2010): http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/news2_en.pdf

“Bildung ohne Sackgassen” [“Education without blind alleys”]

The development of a national qualifications framework in Austria:

http://www.bmukk.gv.at/europa/eubildung/nqr/nationaler_qualifikationsrah.xml

BMUKK (2007): Entwicklung eines Nationalen Qualifikationsrahmens für Österreich – Vertiefende Analysen [Development of a national qualifications framework for Austria – Detailed analyses]. Commissioned by BMUKK.

http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/15833/nqr_analyse_08.pdf

Europass Austria: <http://www.europass.at>

Pilot projects:

Construction sector: Tritscher-Archan, Sabine (2008): NQR in der Praxis: Am Beispiel des Baubereichs [The NQF in practice. By the example of the construction sector]. ibw series of publications no. 141. Vienna.

Electrical sector: Tritscher-Archan, Sabine (2009): NQR in der Praxis. Am Beispiel des Elektrobereichs [NQF in practice. By the example of the electrical sector]. ibw research report no. 147. Vienna.

Healthcare sector: Schögl, Peter (2009): Lernergebnisorientierte Lernniveaus in den nichtärztlichen Gesundheitsberufen – eine ex ante Prüfung auf Machbarkeit und Funktionalität [Learning outcome-oriented learning levels in healthcare professions excluding doctors - an ex-ante test of feasibility and functionality]. In: Markowitsch, Jörg (ed.): Der Nationale Qualifikationsrahmen in Österreich. Beiträge zur Entwicklung [The National Qualifications Framework in Austria. Contributions to development]. Studies in Lifelong Learning 3. Lit-Verlag. p. 227-240.

Business and administrative sector: Tritscher-Archan, Sabine and Loisch, Ursula (2010): NQR in der Praxis am Beispiel von Qualifikationen aus dem kaufmännisch-administrativen Bereich [NQF in practice by the example of qualifications in the business and administrative sector]. Vienna. (To be published Dec. 2010)

Tourism: Luomi-Messerer, Karin and Lengauer, Sonja (2009): Der Nationale Qualifikationsrahmen im Bereich Tourismus. Ergebnisse eines Pilotprojekts [The National Qualifications Framework in the tourism sector. Results of a pilot project]. In: Markowitsch, Jörg (ed.): Der Nationale Qualifikationsrahmen in Österreich. Beiträge zur Entwicklung [The National Qualifications Framework in Austria. Contributions to development]. Studies in Lifelong Learning 3. Lit-Verlag. p. 205-225.

5.3 Glossary

TERMS/ABBREVIATIONS	EXPLANATION
Applicant organisation	means the organisation which bears responsibility for a qualification and files an application for assigning it to an NQF level
Accreditation	means the formal recognition of a body's expert and organisational competence to carry out a specific service as described within the scope of accreditation; accreditation is a confidence-building measure which allows public authorities, the business sphere and society to assess whether auditing, inspection or certification bodies (conformity assessment bodies) are able to carry out certain tasks with the required high level of reliability
The best-fit principle	principle of predominance; principle of assigning a qualification ↗ to a level ↗ which overall fits best; in this connection, the qualification ↗ does not need to meet this level ↗ in all three dimensions ↗ or the criteria need not be met to an equal extent
Assessment and validation process	assessment procedure ↗ or examination and implementation of validation ↗
Educational institution	institution which offers education and training programmes (such as courses, seminars, classes, training, etc.) (for example schools, CVET institutions)
Descriptor(s)	description element(s); in the European Qualifications Framework ↗ the levels ↗ are described based on learning outcome-oriented ↗ descriptors which comprise statements about the characteristics of qualifications ↗
Dublin descriptors	description elements to characterise higher education (HE) qualifications ↗ of the Bologna architecture (these are: bachelor, master, PhD)
Dimensions	in the EQF ↗: categorisation of learning outcomes into knowledge ↗, skills ↗ and competence ↗
European Qualifications Framework	grid comprising eight levels to describe qualification levels based on learning outcomes ↗; meta-framework to which qualification classification systems (such as national qualifications frameworks ↗) are related to enhance comparability
EQF	European Qualifications Framework ↗
EQR	<i>Europäischer Qualifikationsrahmen</i> , German term for European Qualifications Framework ↗
EQF descriptors	description elements ↗ on which the European Qualifications Framework ↗ is based

TERMS / ABBREVIATIONS	EXPLANATION
Skills	the ability to apply knowledge ↗ and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems; in the context of the EQF ↗, skills are described as cognitive (logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)
Assessment procedure	colloquially referred to as examination, the process to review standards ↗ defined by a competent body ↗ as the prerequisite for the acquisition of the qualification ↗; can be based on different methods (such as written exam, expert interview, project work, practical demonstration, etc.)
Formal education	leads to qualifications ↗ which are based on a legal document (such as a law, ordinance, decree, etc.)
Input orientation	description of learning based on factors such as the duration of learning, the places of learning, the funding of learning, the qualification of teaching staff, curricula contents, etc.
Knowledge	the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning; knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study; in the context of the EQF ↗, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual
Competence	competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and/or personal development; in the context of the EQF ↗, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy
Learning outcome orientation	description of learning based on the outcomes of learning processes, that is: what a learner knows, understands and is able to do
Learning outcomes	statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process; they are defined as knowledge ↗, skills ↗, and competence ↗
National Coordination Point for the NQF in Austria	administrative body for the NQF ↗; supports the NQF steering group ↗
National qualifications framework	system of describing and structuring national qualifications; the Austrian NQF comprises eight levels ↗, which are described based on learning outcomes ↗
Non-formal education	leads to qualifications ↗ which are not based on a legal document (such as a law, ordinance, decree, etc.)

TERMS / ABBREVIATIONS	EXPLANATION
Levels of EQF / NQF	vertical hierarchy of the EQF ↗ / NQF ↗; the levels determine the hierarchical structure for the classification of qualifications ↗; qualifications ↗ which are assigned to a level are considered equivalent in relation to their specific field of work or study even if they differ in terms of duration of acquisition (such as two years, four years), learning context (formal education ↗, non-formal education ↗) or in their focus (such as general education qualification, VET)
NCP	National Coordination Point for the NQF in Austria ↗
NQF	National Qualifications Framework ↗
NQR	<i>Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen</i> , German term for National Qualifications Framework ↗
NQF register	directory of all qualifications ↗ assigned to the NQF ↗
NQF steering group	advisory body; comprises representatives of all ministries, social partners, other representatives from business and the labour market as well as of the provinces
Qualification	the formal outcome of an assessment and validation process ↗ which is obtained when a competent body ↗ determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes ↗ to given standards ↗
Qualification provider	institution defining the standards ↗ which need to be proven as part of an assessment procedure ↗ to acquire the qualification ↗
Qualification holder	person who has completed the assessment procedure ↗ successfully and therefore acquired the proof of qualification ↗
Proof of qualification	document which confirms positive completion of the assessment procedure ↗; it can bear the title 'certificate' or 'diploma', for example
Body with competence for qualifications	public authority (in the formal education sector ↗) or a body authorised by the NQF steering group ↗ (in the non-formal education sector ↗) which is granted the fundamental (legal) or sectoral competence that gives it responsibility for classifying qualifications in the NQF ↗ on behalf of the NQF steering group ↗
Qualification applicant	participant in an assessment procedure ↗; candidate for a qualification
Standards	learning outcomes ↗ which the qualification applicant ↗ must prove in order to obtain the proof of qualification ↗; proof must be furnished as part of an assessment procedure ↗
Validation	confirmation that the qualification holder ↗ has proven the standards ↗ which were defined as the prerequisite for the acquisition of the qualification ↗

TERMS / ABBREVIATIONS	EXPLANATION
Certifying institution	institution which carries out assessment procedures ↗ and issues proof of qualifications ↗
Certification	issuing of proof of qualification ↗
Inclusion (assignment)	entry of a qualification ↗ in the NQF register ↗
Inclusion (classification) procedure	procedure for entry of a qualification ↗ in the NQF register ↗
Competent body	qualification provider ↗

5.4 Descriptors to describe the levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

German language version

Jedes der acht Niveaus wird durch eine Reihe von Deskriptoren definiert, die die Lernergebnisse beschreiben, die für die Erlangung der diesem Niveau entsprechenden Qualifikationen in allen Qualifikationssystemen erforderlich sind.			
	Kenntnisse	Fertigkeiten	Kompetenz
	<i>Im Zusammenhang mit dem EQR werden Kenntnisse als Theorie- und/oder Faktenwissen beschrieben</i>	<i>Im Zusammenhang mit dem EQR werden Fertigkeiten als kognitive Fertigkeiten (unter Einsatz logischen, intuitiven und kreativen Denkens) und praktische Fertigkeiten (Geschicklichkeit und Verwendung von Methoden, Materialien, Werkzeugen und Instrumenten) beschrieben</i>	<i>Im Zusammenhang mit dem EQR wird Kompetenz im Sinne der Übernahme von Verantwortung und Selbstständigkeit beschrieben</i>
Niveau 1 Zur Erreichung von Niveau 1 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	grundlegendes Allgemeinwissen	grundlegende Fertigkeit, die zur Ausführung einfacher Aufgaben erforderlich sind	Arbeiten oder Lernen unter direkter Anleitung in einem vorstrukturierten Kontext
Niveau 2 Zur Erreichung von Niveau 2 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	grundlegendes Faktenwissen in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich	grundlegende kognitive und praktische Fertigkeiten, die zur Nutzung relevanter Informationen erforderlich sind, um Aufgaben auszuführen und Routineprobleme unter Verwendung einfacher Regeln und Werkzeuge zu lösen	Arbeiten oder Lernen unter Anleitung mit einem gewissen Maß an Selbstständigkeit
Niveau 3 Zur Erreichung von Niveau 3 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	Kenntnisse von Fakten, Grundsätzen, Verfahren und allgemeinen Begriffen in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich	eine Reihe kognitiver und praktischer Fertigkeiten zur Erledigung von Aufgaben und zur Lösung von Problemen, wobei grundlegende Methoden, Werkzeuge, Materialien und Informationen ausgewählt und angewandt werden	Verantwortung für die Erledigung von Arbeits- oder Lernaufgaben übernehmen bei der Lösung von Problemen das eigene Verhalten an die jeweiligen Umstände anpassen
Niveau 4 Zur Erreichung von Niveau 4 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	breites Spektrum an Theorie- und Faktenwissen in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich	eine Reihe kognitiver und praktischer Fertigkeiten, die erforderlich sind, um Lösungen für spezielle Probleme in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich zu finden	selbstständiges Tätigwerden innerhalb der Handlungsparameter von Arbeits- oder Lernkontexten, die in der Regel bekannt sind, sich jedoch ändern können Beaufsichtigung der Routinearbeit anderer Personen, wobei eine gewisse Verantwortung für die Bewertung und Verbesserung der Arbeits- oder Lernaktivitäten übernommen wird

Niveau 5 Zur Erreichung von Niveau 5 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	umfassendes, spezialisiertes Theorie- und Faktenwissen in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich sowie Bewusstsein für die Grenzen dieser Kenntnisse	umfassende kognitive und praktische Fertigkeiten die erforderlich sind, um kreative Lösungen für abstrakte Probleme zu erarbeiten	Leiten und Beaufsichtigen in Arbeits- oder Lernkontexten, in denen nicht vorhersehbare Änderungen auftreten Überprüfung und Entwicklung der eigenen Leistung und der Leistung anderer Personen
Niveau 6 Zur Erreichung von Niveau 6 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	fortgeschrittene Kenntnisse in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich unter Einsatz eines kritischen Verständnisses von Theorien und Grundsätzen	fortgeschrittene Fertigkeiten, die die Beherrschung des Faches sowie Innovationsfähigkeit erkennen lassen, und zur Lösung komplexer und nicht vorhersehbarer Probleme in einem spezialisierten Arbeits- oder Lernbereich nötig sind	Leitung komplexer fachlicher oder beruflicher Tätigkeiten oder Projekte und Übernahme von Entscheidungsverantwortung in nicht vorhersagbaren Arbeits- oder Lernkontexten Übernahme der Verantwortung für die berufliche Entwicklung von Einzelpersonen und Gruppen
Niveau 7 Zur Erreichung von Niveau 7 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	hoch spezialisiertes Wissen, das zum Teil an neueste Erkenntnisse in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich anknüpft, als Grundlage für innovative Denkansätze und/oder Forschung kritisches Bewusstsein für Wissensfragen in einem Bereich und an der Schnittstelle zwischen verschiedenen Bereichen	spezialisierte Problemlösungsfertigkeiten im Bereich Forschung und/oder Innovation, um neue Kenntnisse zu gewinnen und neue Verfahren zu entwickeln sowie um Wissen aus verschiedenen Bereichen zu integrieren	Leitung und Gestaltung komplexer, unvorhersehbarer Arbeits- oder Lernkontexte, die neue strategische Ansätze erfordern Übernahme von Verantwortung für Beiträge zum Fachwissen und zur Berufspraxis und/oder für die Überprüfung der strategischen Leistung von Teams
Niveau 8 Zur Erreichung von Niveau 8 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	Spitzenkenntnisse in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich und an der Schnittstelle zwischen verschiedenen Bereichen	die am weitesten entwickelten und spezialisierten Fertigkeiten und Methoden, einschließlich Synthese und Evaluierung, zur Lösung zentraler Fragestellungen in den Bereichen Forschung und/oder Innovation und zur Erweiterung oder Neudefinition vorhandener Kenntnisse oder beruflicher Praxis	fachliche Autorität, Innovationsfähigkeit, Selbstständigkeit, wissenschaftliche und berufliche Integrität und nachhaltiges Engagement bei der Entwicklung neuer Ideen oder Verfahren in führenden Arbeits- oder Lernkontexten, einschließlich der Forschung

Source: Empfehlung des Europäischen Parlamentes und des Rates zur Einrichtung des Europäischen Qualifikationsrahmens für lebenslanges Lernen
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:DE:PDF>

English language version

Each of the 8 levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications			
	Knowledge	Skills	Competence
	<i>In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual</i>	<i>In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)</i>	<i>In the context of EQF, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy</i>
Level 1 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 1 are	basic general knowledge	basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
Level 2 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 2 are	basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	work or study under supervision with some autonomy
Level 3 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 3 are	knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems
Level 4 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 4 are	factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	a range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities
Level 5 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 5 are	comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change review and develop performance of self and others

<p>Level 6</p> <p>The learning outcomes relevant to Level 6 are</p>	<p>advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles</p>	<p>advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study</p>	<p>manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts</p> <p>take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups</p>
<p>Level 7</p> <p>The learning outcomes relevant to Level 7 are</p>	<p>highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research</p> <p>critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields</p>	<p>specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields</p>	<p>manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches</p> <p>take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams</p>
<p>Level 8</p> <p>The learning outcomes relevant to Level 8 are</p>	<p>knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields</p>	<p>the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice</p>	<p>demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research</p>

Source: Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, 23 April 2008; <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:EN:PDF>