



Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family



# REFERENCING

of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF)  
to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)  
and the Qualifications Framework of the  
European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA)

DOCUMENT FOR FURTHER CONSULTATION  
AND IMPLEMENTATION

2<sup>nd</sup> Revised Edition December 2010

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In this revised edition, all new material was prepared by Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive of the Malta Qualifications Council and the National Commission for Higher Education. The text on the Secondary School Certificate was written in collaboration with the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE).

*This document establishes the referencing of the Malta Qualifications Framework to the EQF and the QF/EHEA in accordance with the criteria and procedures agreed by the EQF Advisory Group and the Bologna Follow-Up Group.*

A document prepared by the Malta Qualifications Council.

It is available on the Malta Qualifications Council website: [www.mqc.gov.mt](http://www.mqc.gov.mt)

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# Preface

This document was originally prepared to reference the Malta Qualifications framework to the overarching EQF and QF-EHEA frameworks. This second revised edition carries the updated results of the referencing process in addition to a new chapter which illustrates the implementation of the referencing process in setting up an awards system for Malta. Part Five can be described as a tangible application of a referencing process that evolves an education system into higher levels of transparency, transferability, and

progression. MQC's mission to value all learning is truly reflected in part Five where credits become awards qualifying what a person 'knows' and 'is able to do'. We do hope that this second edition continues to build the blocks of a qualifications framework which, through reform and quality assurance can make Malta's system of education a point of reference at regional and international levels and attraction to an increasing number of learners from across the world.

# Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their appreciation towards the contributions of a number of key players and entities who shaped the results of the referencing process as reported here. Many thanks go to the current members of the Malta Qualifications Council (see page 2) and the Chairman and members of the first Council namely Mr Charles Mizzi (Chairman) and Mr Felix Borg, Dr Grace Grima, Mr John Jones and Mr Anthony De Giovanni (members) who helped shape the Malta Qualifications Framework and today's developments. We also thank the independent reviewers (local and international) for their constructive comments on a number of drafts of this report.

Professor Alfred Vella, Pro-Rector and Ms Jo-Anne Attard, Assistant Registrar of the University of Malta; Professor Maurice Grech, the Principal of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST);<sup>2</sup> Mr Reginald Abela, Executive Chairman of the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) and Dr Martina Caruana Director Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage; Dr Joanna Drake, Head of the European Commission Representation in Malta for offering her collaboration to launch this Report at the Representation's new premises; and the many representatives of private education and training providers and Designated Authorities too many to

mention by name who have all contributed during 2010 to the referencing process through their expertise and experience in qualifications.

Indirectly, the reports on the referencing process by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the Qualifications and Credit Authority and the Irish Qualifications Authority were a good source of guidance in establishing the methodology for referencing our Framework as well as the guidelines provided by the EQF Advisory Group.

Special thanks go to MQC staff members particularly the senior managers Ms Doris Mangion and Mr Richard Curmi for their insights and qualified experience, Ms Sylvana Caruana, Ms Beatrice Mizzi and Mr Alan Cauchi for their clerical support, Ms Valerie Attard Communications Manager for proof reading and Ms Carmen Dalli for her effective administration to make this publication possible.

Thanks to the Salesian Press, the second revised edition has been given again a professional touch in its design and layout.

A final word of thanks goes to the Minister of Education, Employment and the Family the Hon Dolores Cristina and her team for their continuous support to the Malta Qualifications

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# Message

September 2009



## **Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Employment and the Family**

The Referencing Report is an important tool that helps bridge the gaps between the various educational systems in Europe and build a culture of mutual trust and transparency. In essence the Report is a political expression of a Member State of the European Union eager to accomplish the Lisbon strategy and to synergise the Bologna and Copenhagen Processes towards a common European Education area.

I am very pleased that the Malta Qualifications Council has taken the initiative to reference the Malta Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA). This document is testimony of our strong commitment to link our long-standing system of qualifications to that of other Member States, promote mobility and ensure that all learning is valued on the labour market.

The process to reference our Framework of Qualifications to the Frameworks at European level has served as a catalyst for deeper and wider discussions on our qualifications at all levels. Our education institutions are deeply committed to the principles underlying the Bologna and Copenhagen processes. Similarly, social partners are supportive of measures that promote mobility, transparency, progression as well as the validation of informal and non-formal learning. Their contribution has been instrumental in making this Report possible and in establishing a closer *rapport* between education and industry. This Report also reflects the results of systematic consultations with key stakeholders as well as Malta's active participation in the Commission's activities, the EQF Advisory Group, ENQA and EQAVET as well as the conferences

and seminars convened by the Bologna Secretariat, CEDEFOP, ETF and the various EU Presidencies.

I personally consider Malta's *Referencing Report* as the beginning of a new collaboration with other Member States on issues related to the quality of our education and training and the labour market value of the qualifications awarded by the different training providers at any level of the Malta Qualifications Framework. Indeed I expect that from such interaction at national and international levels, the *Referencing Report* will be further enhanced and fine tuned by new insights, new ideas and the experience itself of having qualifications based on learning outcomes aligned to level descriptors and backed by established standards and criteria in quality assurance.

Malta's contribution to the EQF process has achieved a significant step through this Referencing Report. Sooner or later the results of this Report will lead key stakeholders in education and industry to establish mechanisms for a sustained dialogue between them in order to facilitate learning, to award the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences and to ensure that certified learning is backed by high standards in quality assurance and relevancy to employability.

# Summary

This document outlines the referencing process of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA) its application to a system of awards in education and training.<sup>3</sup> It provides a conceptual and institutional background that led to the setting up of a European Qualifications Framework and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area and how these two overarching Frameworks can be referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework which, like the EQF, is also based on an eight-level system.

Malta's NQF captures formal, informal and non-formal learning in a single comprehensive credit system that cuts across the MQF and level descriptors based on learning outcomes. This process follows the publication of Legal Notice 347 of 2005 which saw the birth of the Maltese Level Descriptors for a framework of qualifications.

The roots of the level descriptors of the MQF were the political, economic, cultural and social priorities of a Nation which since 2004, has been part of the European Union. What followed was an evolution of this process supported by the equally challenging developments of the EQF and the QF/EHEA namely the Copenhagen and Bologna processes backed by the Lisbon strategy.

The introduction of the document is followed by the methodological framework applied by MQC to the three qualifications frameworks and an overview of activities organised or led by MQC to satisfy the overarching criteria established by the EQF Advisory to formulate the referencing process.

Part One of the report sets out the European context that supported the political and educational magnitude of the Bologna, Lisbon and Copenhagen processes. Malta has been an active participant in the three processes and the Malta Qualifications Framework is a reflection of these initiatives. Emphasis is placed on the shift from learning inputs to learning outcomes and how programmes of studies that become part of the MQF will respect this paradigm.

It is the learner, not the Frameworks that is at the centre of Malta's referencing process.

In Part Two a more transparent and structured outline of the knowledge, skills and competences expected to provide the content of qualifications aligned to the MQF and referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA is outlined in more detail. Central in this tapestry of interacting forces on the learning process is the credit system that will enable training providers to match their qualifications to the level descriptors and the learners to gauge their capacity in progressing from one level of

<sup>3</sup> The Glossary of selected definitions is found in Annex 2.



qualification to another. The credit system is based on a uniform scheme in which, with the exception of Level 1 (40 credits) all other levels have 60 credits per one full-time year of study or training. One credit represents 25 hours of formal (contact hours), informal (self-study) and non-formal learning (backup training and learning experiences). The scope of this proposition is to inculcate a credit system as early as possible in the lifelong learning process.

Part Three contains the substance of the referencing process.<sup>4</sup> This is explained through a detailed cross-referencing to the EQF and the QF/EHEA based on the criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications to the EQF; an outline of the level-descriptors of the MQF compared to those of the EQF and the QF/EHEA with practical examples taken from already existing home-grown programmes based on learning outcomes in Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education institutions in Malta. In an attempt to map the progression from one level to another within the MQF the report provides a detailed table of learning outcomes ascending from Level 1 to Level 8 as referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA. This is explained in more detail for every level to facilitate a better understanding on the qualifications awarded in Malta.

Part Four goes beyond the referencing process to outline the added value that an MQF referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA has in terms of visibility of lifelong learning, attraction to qualifications and learning environments, mobility as well as competitiveness in a globalised society. The role of stakeholders in this process is emphasised to illustrate the need for an open system of qualifications (represented by a Qualifications Framework referenced to international standards) in which learners, the training providers, the quality assurance and accreditation agencies, employers, employees and multi-nationals find a user-friendly environment to grow in a lifelong learning culture.

In 2010 Part Five has been added to illustrate the implementation of the referencing process to an awards system as well as a policy for a Secondary School Certificate both referenced to the MQF. The detailed structure aims at assisting training providers design qualifications which can be pegged to the MQF using, credits, learning outcomes, workloads and quality assurance mechanisms.

The reviews of four national and four international independent experts concludes this report. This version takes into account their suggestions.



***The presentation at MQC of the Referencing Report to the Minister of Education, Employment and the Family, the Hon Ms Dolores Cristina at a Press Conference held on 15th July 2009***

4 The Methodological Framework of the Referencing Process is found in Annex 3

# Introduction

The publication of Legal Notice 347 of 2005 provided the foundation of Malta's Qualifications Framework and established the principle of level descriptors for nationally recognised qualifications. Between October 2005 and June 2007 regular consultations with all stakeholders led to the consolidation of an eight-level qualifications framework and level descriptors which capture both the national and the European dimensions and structures in education.

The launching in June 2007 of the Malta Qualifications Framework was the first step in a long process to build a quality system for qualifications as well as a culture that goes with it. This referencing process is the second important step in rationalising the Framework with principles, indicators and mechanisms that will make the Framework relevant and effective to our educational system. When we talk about level descriptors, learning outcomes, progression, transparency, recognition, and accountability we are referencing what we learn and how we learn it, to what one is capable of knowing or doing.

The scope of this referencing report is therefore threefold: (i) the first to ensure that qualifications are valuable and worthwhile learning experiences; (ii) the second that learning becomes borderless and frameless allowing learners the freedom to learn without bureaucratic, or superfluous constraints; (iii) the third is to build a culture of quality both in the provision and in the formation of a workforce capable of meeting the challenges of an increasingly sophisticated knowledge society and labour market.

A Framework of qualifications is a mechanism that promotes structured profiles of all learning experiences within formal, informal and non-formal contexts.<sup>5</sup> Learning becomes worthwhile and an added value to one's own career, professional or personal enrichment. Based on specific competence matrices and learning outcomes, the learner is constantly witnessing the building of a

number of qualifications leading to standards required in given sectors. If the objective is to become a lawyer, then learning experiences on taxation will link theory or knowledge, skills or applicability and competence or responsible autonomy with specific learning outcomes. A learner aspiring to become a professional tile layer will similarly experience learning blocks which are vertically connected (through progressive levels of difficulty) and horizontally related via knowledge, skills and competences. Learning outcomes express this vertical and horizontal connectivity that makes such experiences worthwhile.

Transparency in any learning process is a *sine qua non* to quality. When qualifications are spelt out through learning outcomes, then the learning process is freed from excessive bureaucracy and sometimes meaningless cultural diversities. To learn is to free your capacities to higher levels of acquisition. A qualifications framework locks learning in a quality regime that frees the learner from excessive entry criteria for lifelong learning but spells out those key competences necessary to succeed. On the other hand it will become much clearer that assessment will be entirely based on outcomes that reflect thought, practice and responsibility.

The third important objective of a referencing process is to ensure that learners become learners and not simply passive recipients of curricula, programmes of study or training courses. Building a culture of quality

<sup>5</sup> Agreeing on how many levels a qualifications Framework should have is like telling your architect how many rooms you need to live comfortably in a house you wish to build. The referencing process can be compared to the identification of the proper furniture and other utilities that should go in a kitchen but not in a bedroom, in a living room but not in a study, in a washroom but certainly not in the dining room.

that respects a referencing process is a major step in ensuring the provision of learning experiences and a relevant formation of a flexible workforce. In a labour market which is increasingly becoming insecure, demanding and unpredictable, knowledge, skills and competences must match this demand. Injecting quality and standards in learning is a prerequisite for the required competitiveness expressed in the Lisbon Strategy and in the Government's policy to achieve excellence in at least six key sectors namely: medicine, education, tourism, financial services, environment and information technology and one regional area, Gozo. People today must know how to learn (learning to learn) how to grasp opportunities and exploit these productively (entrepreneurship) and how to ensure that active citizenship and democratisation become the pillars of our Maltese quality of life.

Why do we need a referencing process to meet these challenges?

A referencing process is an opportunity to discover other qualifications frameworks and level descriptors and how these can fit into over-arching frameworks such as the EQF. This exercise has helped MQC to contextualise an education system of a small country in the broader context of a European education paradigm.

For a qualification to be integrated in the Framework it was established that the learner must demonstrate that at the end of a learning process one has achieved the learning outcomes leading to a particular qualification. This must be assessed and certified by an MQC accredited awarding body. Thus, certificates of attendance to courses for which the learner is not assessed are not valued as a qualification and cannot be assigned one of the levels of the MQF.

The essential value of the European Qualifications Framework is that it will transform educational systems into a *Schengen* paradigm in which borderless mobility becomes an economic and political strength. In order to achieve this state-of-play *Frameworks* must be related, they have to be referenced to a meta-Framework (EQF), so that divergences and contrasts in educational programmes will be ironed out through a flexible learning outcomes approach. When all qualifications frameworks are referenced to the EQF, a new level of trust, accountability and quality assurance will emerge across all Member States of the European Union. Such referencing will certainly make European education more visible and attractive within the Union but more importantly beyond it too. Initiatives have already been taken (notably by the European Training Foundation in January 2009) to link the EQF to the qualifications framework of New Zealand, South Africa and Australia and the long-standing European ones such as those of Ireland, Scotland and England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Malta is also an active partner in a Commonwealth project which aims at establishing a Trans-National Qualifications Framework for Small States within the Commonwealth. Ministers of Education approved the TQF in their meeting in Kuala Lumpur in June 2009.

Referencing qualifications frameworks helps economies diversify their productivity and service provision and enables workers to seek new pastures without the unnecessary and cumbersome processes needed to recognise qualifications and to value prior learning.

This proposal is therefore a contribution towards a new qualification culture built on four key principles:

- **quality**
- **transparency**
- **transferability**
- **progression**

This referencing process facilitates the realisation of the key principles underlying today's and tomorrow's learning cultures. People should learn how to be qualified. Hence access to education is not enough anymore. Access must be complimented with attraction, flexibility and recognition of all a person knows and is capable of doing.

We hope that this report will serve to reach the widest possible consensus on a quality assurance culture for

as many home-grown and foreign qualifications as possible in Malta. Being one of the smallest member states of the European Union is an opportunity for a rapid growth in this sector and an equally fast attraction to education and training in Malta. An agreed referencing process will also accelerate the development of a quality assurance culture which will cut across all levels of education from pre-school to adult and lifelong learning.

Malta's educational system is in a process of reform, innovation and growth. Adding a referencing process to strengthen home-grown and foreign qualifications

is a timely initiative which will further enhance the new structures of our educational system. In doing so we must ensure that in rationalising the Malta Qualifications Framework and in linking it to the EQF and the QF/EHEA, we do it with one target in mind – to retain and attract more learners to education and training, value and reward all learning.

At the centre of this process is the learner, the incumbent of a learning process who will make or break Malta's economic growth as a Mediterranean Nation and an active member of one of the biggest markets in the world, the European Union.

### Malta's Referencing Process – 10 overarching principles

1	An eight-level system which captures the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area and which establishes parity of esteem between general education and vocational training across all MQF Levels	1
2	There is one credit system which cuts across the whole Framework of Qualifications and which is based on the understanding that 1 credit equals 25 hours of all forms of direct contact, self study and non-formal learning.	2
3	All programmes of study and training from pre-school to adult education are based on a learning outcomes approach, which is based on a three-fold system of knowledge (theory), skills (practical application) and competence (autonomy and responsibility).	3
4	Qualifications which are classified in the Malta Qualifications Framework reflect a 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.	4
5	The acquisition of key competences at Level 3 of the Malta Qualifications Framework is a prerequisite for further and higher education.	5
6	The School Leaving Certificate is an official record of compulsory education and will include all forms of formal, informal and non-formal learning.	6
7	MQF Levels 2 and 3 are represented by official Certificates detailing the knowledge, skills and competences acquired during formal learning and including (if applicable) other forms of informal and non-formal learning.	7
8	MQF Level 4 is represented by a Diploma which may either be a VET Diploma and a Matriculation Certificate; Level 5 by an Undergraduate Certificate and Diploma, a VET Higher Diploma and a Foundation Degree.	8
9	There is one area of Higher Education representing academic and research degrees as well as Vocational and Professional Degrees and Continues Professional Development (CPDs).	9
10	All official documents carrying an MQF/EQF or QF/EHEA referencing shall be determined following a stated agreement between the training/education public or private provider and the authorised quality assurance agency.	10

# The Methodological Framework of the Referencing Process

The following is an overview of the different stages in referencing Malta's National Qualifications Framework to that of the European Qualifications Framework. The process has been a learning experience and we envisage that such positive experiences will continue to clarify the referencing process which by no means do we acknowledge that with this document, it has come to an end. On the contrary, the end of the referencing process is the start of its implementation at all levels of education.

On the contrary, the steps that Malta has taken to reference such level descriptors can be termed as the initial phase of a longer process which will see the experiment of this report develop against tangible evidence of referencing the MQF to the EQF. In brief the steps taken in this process and which are evidenced in the long list of activities organised to lead to this report are the following:

- Establish a broader understanding of the level descriptors of the EQF and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA) in the context of the Maltese education culture and system;
- Develop a methodological framework in which both sets of descriptors can be matched and challenged at the eight level system of both frameworks;
- Establish the nature of progression between one level and another in the context of both frameworks and including the descriptors of the (QF/EHEA);
- Verify the level of difficulty established between one level and another of the three frameworks EQF, QF/EHEA and the MQF;
- Test the comparability between the two frameworks (EQF and MQF) at all levels and the MQF to the EQF and the QF/EHEA at Levels 5 to 8;
- Match the conceptual significance of each level descriptor at each of the eight levels of the EQF and MQF framework and the EQF, MQF and QF/EHEA;
- Call upon key players in the education and employment sectors to challenge the referencing process at all stages of its development.

The referencing process came at a time when Malta was introducing the Qualifications Framework based on an eight-level system. The MQF is now at the implementation stage. Legal Notice 347/2005 established the Malta Qualifications

Council (MQC) in October 2005 to steer the development of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). Later the Ministry of Education established that MQC would also act as the National Coordination Point for the MQF. MQC is responsible for defining the levels of qualifications and competences within the MQF. Such levels are based on generic not sector specific level descriptors which are flexible and can be applied to all qualifications.

For a qualification to be integrated in the Framework it was established that the learner must demonstrate that at the end of a learning process one has achieved the learning outcomes leading to a particular qualification. This must be assessed and certified by an MQC accredited awarding body. Thus, certificates of attendance to courses for which the learner is not assessed are not valued as a qualification and cannot be assigned one of the levels of the MQF.

This report analysed common features of qualifications such as levels with level descriptors, quality assurance systems, a description of learning outcomes, the division of learning into study units and credit systems.<sup>93</sup> These common features make the EQF a Trans-National Framework adopted on an international scale, and enhance transparency and promote transferability of qualifications at national levels through national qualifications frameworks. In adopting this methodology, particular attention was therefore given to the broader context of a level descriptor such as the assessment procedure, the workload, the quality assurance and the progression expected from one level of difficulty to another.

MQC followed a set of criteria which was agreed upon by the EQF Advisory group and which provide a methodological guideline for the referencing process. These ten indicators include aspects such as:

1. the responsibilities and the legal competence of the relevant bodies involved;
2. a demonstrated direct link with the EQF;
3. learning outcomes-based qualifications and the link to the validation of informal and non-formal learning and credit systems;
4. transparent inclusion of qualifications in one of the levels of the framework;
5. a quality assurance policy that corresponds to European principles;

6. the quality assurance body shall approve the referencing process;
7. the involvement of international experts in the referencing;
8. the publication of a report on the referencing process (this report);
9. a public listing at European level indicating those Member States which completed the process; and
10. the referencing process must be completed by the established EU timeframes.

This report showed how MQC is implementing this process, how most of the criteria fall within the remit of this public agency as the authority responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of the National Qualifications Framework.

In our methodology we focused on the roots of the level descriptors of the MQF as the political, economic, cultural and social priorities of a Nation which is now part of the European Union. Such level descriptors were read keeping in mind:

- the economic and social development of a small nation within the larger Union;
- the impact of the EQF and the QF-EHEA level descriptors on the culture and system of our education;
- the relevancy of the level descriptors of the MQF to the EQF and the QF-EHEA;
- the portability of such level descriptors to lifelong learning, the validation of informal and non-formal learning and greater transparency of qualifications within a changing labour market.

What followed was an evolution of this process supported by the equally challenging developments of the EQF and the QF/EHEA namely the Copenhagen and Bologna processes backed by the Lisbon strategy.

We adopted a methodology in which level descriptors were shown on two columns next to each other to facilitate comparison of both the level descriptors of the EQF and of the MQF. Such a comparison is based on the EQF learning outcomes paradigm of the Knowledge, Skills and Competences. The learning outcomes of the MQF introduces the term applying knowledge and understanding and distinguishes between types of skills such as those in communication, judgement and learning like the level descriptors of the QF/EHEA, and equates competences with autonomy and responsibility. The level descriptors of the MQF are also referenced to the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA). This aspect gives more transparency and value to qualifications accredited and quality assured by MQC.

The changing character of qualifications from national, to European and international, from theoretical to practical, from learning inputs to learning outcomes and the greater emphasis in investment in a highly-skilled labour force that meets current and future industry requirements necessitated stakeholders' involvement and MQC's participation in and organisation of national, European and international activities. This methodological approach is evident in the detailed table shown below. Such events in which MQC and stakeholders were involved were fundamental for MQC to keep up with developments in the field and to ensure that the referencing process reflects the needs and aspirations of our education and employment policies.

The local stakeholders' contributions were also a key element in the shaping of the Malta Qualifications Framework and its referencing to the EQF and the QF/EHEA. Involvement in the design of learning outcomes, qualifications, occupational standards and the MQF itself gave stakeholders a sense of ownership which facilitated the synergy between education and training and industry, thus creating mutual trust and new forms of transparency.

This Referencing Report and the process leading to it were also based on research leading to the publication of four policy documents published by MQC which make up the *Valuing All Learning* Series as well as discussions based on the proposed principles. The Volumes on the Malta Qualifications Framework focused on:

1. A National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning;<sup>94</sup>
2. Vocational Education and Training;<sup>95</sup>
3. The Quality Assurance Policy;<sup>96</sup> and
4. The Validation of Informal and Non-formal Learning.<sup>97</sup>

We hope that this document will first and foremost serve to further the reflections of the international community on the methodology, the standards and criteria used for referencing qualifications frameworks. This is a relatively new area of study and while we think that our walking has been steady and progressive, we still acknowledge that we are far from claiming scholarship in this field of policy design. Secondly we augur that this report will be useful for learners, training providers, policy makers and stakeholders in their attempt to familiarise themselves with the MQF, in the context of its referencing to the EQF and the QF/EHEA.

The conclusions of the referencing report were brought together as a result of the following activities held in Malta between 1st October 2005 and 15th July 2009 and subsequently consultations in Q3 and Q4 of 2009 and throughout 2010.

Date	News and Events	Entities / people involved
October 2005	Publication of Legal Notice 347	MQC
January – April 2006	Design of the first draft of the MQF	MQC
1st November 2006	Launching of the Consultation Process and the presentation of the brochure: A Qualifications Framework for Malta – A First Guide	Organised by MQC Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
29th November 2006	National Conference on the MQF entitled "From National to European: Linking Qualifications Frameworks Effectively"	Organised by MQC in collaboration with <i>Forum Malta fl-Ewropa</i> . Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
January – May 2007	Design and preparation of the first 3 policy documents in the <i>Valuing All Learning</i> series for consultation and the Key Competences document: Vol 1: A National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning; Vol 2: Guidelines for a VET system for Malta's NQF; Vol 3: A Quality Assurance Policy for VET Descriptors of Key Competences in the National Qualifications Framework: Levels 1 to 3 <sup>98</sup>	MQC in consultation with key stakeholders. Six working groups designed level descriptors of the eight key competences as the basis for the design of curricula, programmes and syllabi.
21st June 2007	National Conference to launch the MQF and the presentation of the brochure: A Qualifications Framework for Malta – A Second Guide	Organised by MQC Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
July – December 2007	Consultation with stakeholders on the new MQF	Led by MQC Participants included: public and private training providers,

University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.

24th October 2007	National Conference entitled "Towards a National Learning Area for Vocational Qualifications"	Organised by MQC Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
29th November 2007	MQC signs the first protocol with the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) which confirmed all the levels of qualifications with the MQF	The Minister of Education, Youth and Employment, MQC and ITS
November 2007	Dr James Calleja becomes a member of the EQF Advisory Group	MQC is therefore involved in this group which discusses policy recommendations in a mutual learning setup.
January – February 2008	Design and preparation of the 4th policy document in the <i>Valuing All Learning</i> series for consultation: Vol 4: Frameworks for the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning in Malta	MQC
May 2008 – January 2009	A series of 12 EQF/MQF Information Seminars	Organised by MQC Participants included: specific target groups such as guidance and counselors; college coordinators and heads of schools; Human Resources Managers; employers and trade union activists; students' and parents associations' representatives; teachers and lecturers; and NGOs
27th June 2008	Launching of Vol 4, the Policy Document on the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning	Organised by MQC with the collaboration of the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.



June 2008 – June 2009	Participation in the ENQA-VET Thematic Groups on Making VET More Attractive and on Indicators and in Peer Learning Activities (PLA)	MQC
June 2008 – November 2009	Consultation meetings with key players on the referencing process and discussions on protocols	Led by MQC Participants included: the University of Malta, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), the Institute for Tourism Studies, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE), and the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC)
June – September 2008	Consultation Group on the design of the School Leaving Certificate to include learning outcomes and to value all learning	Led by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) with the collaboration of MQC.
September 2008	The publication of a report compiled by the <i>ETSE</i> Leonardo da Vinci Project entitled “Empowerment of Transparency in the Vocational Framework of Security Employees	The project was co-ordinated by Apsaugos Komanda Ltd (Lithuania) and MQC was one of the consortium partners.
25th September 2008	National Conference entitled: Validating Informal and Non-Formal Learning: What it means to Employers, Organisations and Learners	Organised by MQC with the collaboration of the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) and the Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD) Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers’ associations, students’ representatives, parents’ associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
September 2008 – April 2009	Preparation of the first draft of the Referencing Report	Exchange of information on the methodology of the referencing process: The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF); the Qualifications and Credit Authority (QCA) Draft 3 of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)
18th-19th November 2008	ENQA-VET Peer Learning Activity on the Recognition of Prior Learning	Organised by MQC with the support of the ENQA-VET Secretariat Participants included: representatives

of ENQA-VET members from across Europe and stakeholders from Malta.

5th December 2008

The Final Conference of the the *EQF-FRAME* Leonardo da Vinci Project. The Project's deliverables were formally launched. These include:  
1. the *EQF-FRAME* Flexible References and Methods of Evaluation  
2. The European Qualifications Framework and Tourism Studies  
3. Manual for Referencing Qualifications in Tourism Studies to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning

The *EQF-FRAME* Project was co-ordinated by MQC. The consortium was made of partners from Austria, Italy, Greece, Slovenia and Spain. Participants included: key stakeholders representing the tourism sector and others representing students and education.

10th December 2008

Third Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Designated Authorities Conference

MQRIC within MQC organised this Conference  
Participants included: Designated Authorities

April – June 2009

Reviews by national and international experts

The referencing process steering committee is composed of the board members of the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC), Dr James Calleja Chief Executive MQC, Ms Doris Mangion Senior Manager Standards and Qualifications MQC and the following 4 national and 4 international experts:  
1. Dr Suzanne Gatt, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, University of Malta  
2. Mr Felix Borg, General Manager Operations, Employment and Training Corporation  
3. Dr Jennifer Cassingena Harper, Commissioner, National Commission for Higher Education  
4. Mr Emmanuel Zahra, Director, Institute of Mechanical Engineering, Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology.  
5. Mr Tom Bain, former Assistant Director Scottish Qualifications Authority  
6. Dr James Keevy, Director, International Liaison, South African Qualifications Authority  
7. Mr Vincent McBride, Senior Specialist, Planning Monitoring Evaluation, European Training Foundation  
8. Dr Jim Murray, Chief Executive,

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

5th May 2009	Tourism Sector Skills Unit Meeting on the referencing process	Organised by MQC Participation of the Tourism Sector Skills Unit representing the industry, the Designated Authority - The Malta Tourism Authority and the Institute for Tourism Studies
5th May 2009	EQF/MQF and Referencing Information Seminar	Organised by Heritage Malta Participation of Heritage Malta executive and managerial staff
26th-27th May 2009	ENQA-VET PLA on the Impact of the Common Quality Assurance Framework	Organised by MQC with the support of the ENQA-VET Secretariat Participants included: representatives of ENQA-VET members from across Europe and stakeholders from Malta.
June – November 2009	Stakeholders Meetings on the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning for the Agribusiness and Printing Sectors	Organised by MQC Participants include stakeholders representing the Agribusiness and the Printing Sector.
3rd June 2009	Presentation of the second draft of the Referencing Report to the Council members of MQC	The Council members of MQC
4th June 2009	Colloquium on the validation of informal and non-formal learning	Led by MQC Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
22nd June 2009	EQF/MQF and Referencing Information session as part of the EQUILIFISE Project	Organised by (Institute for Financial Services) IFS-Malta with the collaboration of MQC <sup>99</sup> Participants included: people from the financial services sector
25th June 2009	Introductory Meeting on the validation of informal and non-formal learning and the aims of the pilot project (VINFL of 10 individuals coming for the Printing, Agribusiness and Care sectors)	Organised by MQC and FHRD Participants included HR Managers or SME representatives from the Printing, Agribusiness and Care Sectors

15th July 2009	Presentation of the third draft of the Referencing Report to the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport and key stakeholders	Led by MQC Minister responsible for education and key stakeholders
August 2009 – June 2010	Dissemination of and consultation on the Referencing Report	Led by MQC Participants will include: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
1st September 2009	Stakeholders Meeting on the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning for the Hair and Beauty Sector	Organised by MQC Participants included stakeholders representing the Hair and Beauty Sector.
10th-11th September 2009	The fourth draft of the Referencing Report to be discussed by the EQF Advisory Group	Organised by the European Commission Participants include the EQF Advisory Group
2nd October 2009	Gozo Regional Committee Seminar on the EQF, MQF and the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning	Organised by the Gozo Regional Committee in collaboration with MQC Participants included: NGO representatives and education and training providers
14th October 2009	Launching of the School Leaving Certificate by the Minister of Education	Organised by the Directorate of Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) in collaboration with MQC Participants will include: Principals of Colleges and Heads of Secondary Schools, Education and Training Providers and stakeholders representing the industry
22nd -23rd October 2009	Peer Learning Activity on the Involvement of Stakeholders in the NQF	MQC with the support of the European Commission, the members of the Recognition of Learning Outcomes Cluster, and the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry Participants will include: the members of the Recognition of Learning Outcomes Cluster; CEDEFOP, European Commission and European Training Foundation representatives (ETF); stakeholders from across Europe and Malta.

4th November 2009	Launching of the published Referencing Report for further consultation	Organised by MQC with the support of the European Commission Representation in Malta Participants include: public and private training providers, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
4th November 2009	Fourth Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Designated Authorities Conference	MQRIC within MQC organised this Conference Participants will include: Designated Authorities
15th December 2009	Final Conference on the Validation of Informal and Non-formal Learning	Organised by MQC Participants will include Designated Authorities, NGOs and the general public.

# Criteria for the Referencing Process

## An overview of the state-of-play after July 2009

**Table 1: EQF Indicators for Referencing - Malta's state-of-play**

### Criterion 1

**The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.**

Legal Notice 347/2005 established the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) which is responsible for the development and maintenance of the Malta Qualifications Framework; to promote and facilitate lifelong learning access, transfer and progression; and to foster the recognition abroad of professional and vocational certificates awarded in Malta<sup>91</sup>. This legal notice will be replaced and superseded by the Further and Higher Education Act which will give a regulatory mandate for MQC's in its role to maintain the Malta Qualifications Framework.

The Malta Qualifications Council is an entity entrusted by Government with the linkage between the various sectors of public and private education in vocational education and training. MQC acts as the broker between the making of a qualification, the delivery of the learning experience/s and the final certification process normally expressed in a transcript. Over the last few months MQC has acted as a promoter for the introduction of the Diploma Supplement for qualifications at MQF levels 5 to 8 and is working closely with VET institutions to introduce the Certificate Supplement for qualifications at levels 2 to 4 of the MQF<sup>92</sup>. Furthermore MQC level rates all qualifications in the Framework and aligns such qualifications to the MQF and assists all training providers (including HE institutions) to re-design the course descriptions based on learning outcomes. MQC works closely with other government agencies such as the Directorate for Standards and Quality in Education - DQSE (which regulates compulsory education), the National Commission for Higher Education - NCHE (which advises government on policies related to further and higher education) and the Directorate for Lifelong Learning which co-ordinates all adult education programmes. MQC also has special relationships with the Employment and Training Corporation, the University of Malta and the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology as well as with many other private training institutions, Government Agencies and Authorities and private and church schools. All such key players have had a central role in the design of the MQF and are currently supporting MQC in fulfilling the objectives of the Framework itself.

### Criterion 2

**There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework.**

One of the pre-requisites for the referencing of the MQF to the EQF is that there must be a clear link between both Frameworks, in terms of progression of the levels of difficulty demonstrated through the level descriptors. The link between the MQF and the EQF is demonstrated in Part 3 of the report. Each level of the MQF has been matched to that of the EQF from levels six to eight to the QF/EHEA. The matching process has shown that there is clear referencing between the three overarching frameworks and that such referencing will lead to the design of qualifications which can be easily referenced to the various levels of the framework. Particular attention has been given to how progression within one framework matches that in other frameworks and that such progression is reflected in the levels of difficulty between the levels in the framework. The meticulous analysis of each level to the two frameworks illustrates a transparent referencing procedure.

91 LN347/2005, Employment and Training Services Act, (CAP.343), Malta Qualifications Council Regulations, 2005, B4949.

92 Refer to Annex 8 for a specimen of the Diploma Supplement used by the University of Malta and a specimen of the Certificate Supplement.

### Criterion 3

**The national framework or qualifications system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.**

MQC has established standards on which education and training institutions agree upon when both parties sign Protocols and to which they are obliged to adhere to. These standards include aligning qualifications to one of the levels of the MQF, providing Learning Outcomes and credit-based qualifications, clear assessment procedures and eventually the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. Further and Higher Education institutions in Malta already work with a credit system. The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been in operation at the University of Malta for a number of years; vocational education is largely based on a cumulative credit system and mechanisms are in hand to introduce the ECVET system across all vocational education and training. The MQF also recommends a credit system that cuts across all the levels of the framework from the lowest to the highest and which includes compulsory and adult education. There is a wide support for such a system which would facilitate referencing and recognition processes. In June 2008, the Malta Qualifications Council presented its draft policy on the validation of informal and non-formal learning. Several projects at national and European levels (EQF –INLearning Project led by MQC) are underway to test the proposed system and ensure its alignment to the MQF at the earliest possible. The Ministry of Education is also committed to introduce a new School Leaving Certificate (SCL) in which formal, informal and non-formal accreditation of learning is recorded. The new SLC (awarded at the end of compulsory education – 16 years of age) will be launched by the Minister of Education in October 2009 and its full implementation is targeted for October 2010.

### Criterion 4

**The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.**

These standards are transparent and define the workload, method of assessment and internal and external Quality Assurance (a full list of the standards which all education and training providers must meet is available in table 8 of the Referencing Report). These are easily available from the website of the Malta Qualifications Council and discussed on a one-to-one basis during meetings with education and training institutions. Since 2005, MQC has published three policy documents (Valuing All Learning Volume I, II and III) highlighting the procedures to include qualifications in the MQF and has organized several activities to inform training providers and key players in the various educational sectors on how qualifications will be included in the MQF. These standards and procedures will apply to all formal qualifications of institutions which have been accredited to provide education and training. A Protocol is being signed between every education and training institution and MQC indicating the standards and procedures used to reference qualifications to the MQF.

### Criterion 5

**The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications framework or system and are consistent with relevant European principles and guidelines (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).**

The Malta Qualifications Council is the body responsible for the National Qualifications Framework and hence it also assumes the responsibility to quality assure those qualifications that fall within the Framework and which correspond to the level-descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. It is MQC's responsibility to quality assure vocational training and learning experiences which fall within

informal and non-formal education as well as continuous professional development qualifications. The quality assurance policy has been published in 2007 (Vol III of the Valuing All Learning series – A Quality Assurance Policy for VET) and the referencing of qualifications to the MQF is channeled through a quality assurance policy in which credits, learning outcomes, QA internal and external policies, quality infrastructure and staff profiles are all verified. Two other public institutions harmonise this process and ensure quality standards in compulsory education, higher and adult education respectively namely the Directorate for Standards and Quality in Education (DQSE) and the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE). In 2009, a Further and Higher Education Act will bring all these initiatives under one coherent regime which would be applied across all education and training activities in Malta provided by public or private accredited institutions.

## Criterion 6

**The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.**

The Further and Higher Education Act which will be published in 2009 will establish the criteria on which accrediting bodies will be established in Malta. It is expected that a Quality Assurance Agency will be responsible for all further and higher education qualifications and that such agency will tap the already existing resources available within the National Commission for Higher Education and the Malta Qualifications Council. Once this process is set in motion, one cannot exclude the setting up of private Quality Assurance Agencies in Malta. MQC will ensure that all public and private Quality Assurance Agencies will endorse the referencing process. To-date the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (for compulsory education) has supported the referencing process and will shortly be signing a Protocol on the new School Leaving Certificate which reflects the level descriptors of Level 1 of the MQF.

## Criterion 7

**The referencing process shall involve international experts.**

Experts for Member States were called upon to peer review Malta's referencing process at all levels of the MQF. These experts were selected on the basis of experience and expertise in undertaking similar processes in their country of origin. The international experts are Mr Tom Bain Former Assistant Director of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Dr James Keevy, Director, International Liaison, South African Qualifications Authority, Mr Vincent McBride, Senior Specialist Planning Monitoring Evaluation European Training Foundation and Dr Jim Murray, Executive Chairman National Qualifications Authority Ireland. Their reviews were discussed by MQC's working group and recommendations were inserted in the second and third drafts of the Referencing Report. Electronic communication facilitated the review process and synopsis of their reports has been carried out in the final draft of the Referencing Report. National experts were also consulted to ensure focus and contextualization. Persons selected to undertake the review were individuals who worked closely with MQC or who held senior managerial positions within public institutions covering vocational and higher education, employment, research and innovation. The persons selected were: Mr Felix Borg, General Manager Malta Employment and Training Corporation, Dr Jennifer Cassingena Harper, Commissioner National Commission for Higher Education, Dr Suzanne Gatt, Senior Lecturer Faculty of Education University of Malta and Mr Emmanuel Zahra, Director, Institute of Mechanical Engineering (MCAST). All local reviewers acted in their personal capacity and not as representatives of their institutions. Their reports have also been published as part of the Referencing Report. This was decided as part of the transparency policy that MQC adopts.



## Criterion 8

**The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point and shall address separately each of the criteria.**

A series of information meetings on the European Qualifications Framework which took place in 2008 and early 2009 facilitated in no small measure the process of consultation on the referencing report. Employers, Human Resources Managers, trade unions, students and parents associations, counselling psychologists, career counsellors, private and public training providers, higher education representatives, public and private agencies that provide training in art, drama, music, sports and crafts, the Church authorities and others were among those who participated in such meetings. It is the objective of the Referencing Report to define the underlying principles behind the referencing process, its development and implementation, and the impact it will have on stakeholders. The report will be published in November 2009 and launched at a national seminar which will be addressed by national and international experts and by the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. It will be presented to all key stakeholders for further information and consultation. Although the document is in its final stages of development, MQC will update its referencing process as more and more stakeholders air their views on how Malta's qualifications continue to be referenced to the National and the European Framework. The report has been designed in such a way as to facilitate its reading. The report will be published in hard and soft copy form and a copy will also be placed on the MQC website. An abridged form will also be published for quick review and brochures and posters will also be printed to give the process more visibility across the various sectors of our education and training arena.

## Criterion 9

**The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.**

Malta was among the first two Member States (along with Ireland) that presented the Referencing Report to the EQF Advisory Group on the 10th of September 2009. The Report had very positive feedback from Member States particularly for Malta's innovative aspect of referencing the Malta Qualifications Framework to the EQF and the QF-EHEA.

The Council of Europe, the European Training Foundation and CEDEFOP were particularly supportive of this methodology which, in this initial phase of development requires more experiential evidence of its applicability. Different States will have diverse methodologies in referencing their national qualifications frameworks to the EQF but the EQF Advisory Group applauded Malta and Ireland for taking the initiative to design the structure of a relatively new type of report. It is expected that there will be a Register at EU Level listing the Member States which have completed the referencing process.

The Malta Qualifications Council informed the European Commission in August 2009 that it has completed its report and that it intends to present it in September 2009 following official endorsement by local key stakeholders and the Ministry of Education. It is also expected that the Commission will provide a virtual link to the report when the final published version will be sent to it in October 2009.

## Criterion 10

**Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and EUROPASS documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level.**

Level-rating of courses provided by public education and training institutions has been agreed upon between public and private education and training institutions and MQC. This is being formalised in Protocols which bind these institutions to indicate the level of the MQF and EQF on all new transcripts and certificates awarded by such institutions. This procedure is first being conducted with public institutions and will be followed with private education and training providers who shall also follow the same process as the public institutions. All institutions have agreed to level-rate all qualifications, ensure that qualifications respond to a learning outcomes approach, to a credit system which is in line with EU tools (such as the ECTS and ECVET) and that quality of education is based on the principles and processes of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Higher Education and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) for Vocational Education and Training. MQC's Protocols will indicate clearly how such clear references on all certificates and diplomas will be shown and how such information will also be included in transcripts and the Certificate and Diploma Supplements.

This process has already started with all public providers as well as with a number of key private providers. It will be finalised by 2012 as recommended by the European Commission.

During 2010, several conferences, seminars and consultation meetings were held to discuss the results of the referencing process and to build-up a more robust implementation road map across the whole spectrum of the MQF.

The following is a select list of meetings held during 2010 with various stakeholders. These are the details of the meetings and the main outcomes in relation to the implementation of the referencing process.

1.  
**The 4th Conference of the Designated Authorities -  
“The Essential Framework and its impact on the  
Recognition of Qualifications”**

*Hosted by Malta Qualifications Council and held at  
Dar I-Ewropa (Europe House) – Valletta on the 4th  
November 2009*

Speakers :

Dr James Calleja: Chief Executive Officer also in his capacity as the Mutual Recognition Coordinator  
Mr Joseph Abela Fitzpatrick: Chairman Malta Qualifications Council

Mrs Doris Mangion: Senior Manager Standards and Qualifications

Mr Jens Bjornavold: Expert CEDEFOP

Mr Sean O'Reilly: Manager, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Mrs Helga Ellul: President of the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise & Industry

### **Participated**

Representatives from Trade Unions

Representatives from Employers Organizations

Desk Officers of the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre

The key outcomes of this conference in relation to the referencing process were the following:

- The need for transparency in relation to qualifications of a professional nature
- Structures that provide a platform for cooperation and dialogue between designated/competent authorities and qualifications agencies
- Cooperation that strengthens coherence of qualifications systems
- Research and training initiatives to reinforce the learning outcomes' orientation

National Qualifications Frameworks were seen as instruments to:

- Support Lifelong Learning
- Facilitate the recognition of a broader range of learning
- Establish a number of levels (though this is a very technical issue). It is not the number of levels that count but the national system of education and the national situations and cultures of education.

The success of such processes are based on the involvement and dialogue of stake holders in order to develop NQFs. There are important lessons to be learned in this field particularly in ensuring that qualifications frameworks meet the needs of learners and economic growth. Adequate quality assurance processes for each qualifications framework is also essential. Although there are many different Awards, yet all awards can be classified and aligned to the levels of a Qualifications Framework. Designated authorities can assist Qualifications Authorities to make such a process more effective, transparent and technically correct.

Stakeholders stand to benefit from such an instrument. Some of the benefits of national frameworks are: the recognition of all learning; transparency of learning outcomes; the building of trust across the education and training system. The EQF acts as a neutral reference point to facilitate the dialogue between national frameworks or systems of qualifications. It also supports mobility and lifelong learning. The responsibility of stakeholders is to meet European responsibilities by fulfilling national responsibilities – transparent implementation, accurate levelling of qualifications to the NQF and strong quality assurance procedures.

On the other hand, the duty of the social partners is to play a key role in education, training and employment. Through social dialogue employers:

- Influence educational curricula,
- adopt joint programmes,
- promote lifelong learning,
- develop occupational sectoral standards,
- provide training for vulnerable groups
- help avoid social inclusion.

Employers also recognise the importance of Learning Outcomes based on curricula from an early stage at school and the means to higher levels of education that match the demand of business. The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have specific needs; they are the back bone of our economy. More needs to be done on occupational standards but we also need to validate what is already there, in our enterprises.

A question was raised on “Who can assess?” Speakers agreed that certainly not teachers, but people in that particular sector who make use of the machines and tools, and who determine the proper standards and the level of competences. Common initiatives in the areas of education will ensure employability. Investing in people is the best form of social welfare, wherein training will always be the more beneficial option in the long-term for both employers and employees alike.

## 2.

### **Notes on the Study Visit by a Greek Delegation from a leading Trade Union**

8-9 April 2010

Malta Qualifications Council

Participants:

Mr Michalis Kouroutos, Secretary of Education of GSEE  
Mr Nikos Fotopoulos, Research Associate of KANEP/  
GSEE

Ms Elena Bakatselou, Research Associate of KANEP/  
GSEE

Study Visit coordinated by

Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive MQC

Ms Valerie Attard, Communications Manager MQC

The objective of this study visit was to explore the processes used in Malta in setting up the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and in finalising the *Referencing Report* of the MQF to the EQF and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. The study visit was part of the Malta Qualifications Council consultation process to test the MQF at national and international levels. The CEO of the MQC was invited by the Ministry of Education of Greece in February 2010 as key speaker during the launching of the National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning of Greece.

The study visit to Malta consisted in a number of presentations as listed below followed by discussions on how institutions and systems respond to a new structure such as a national qualifications framework. The following is the list of presentations provided namely on:-

- The Implementation of the Malta Qualifications Framework - Ms Doris Mangion;
- The Validation Process of Informal and Non-Formal Learning – Mr Richard Curmi ;
- How to communicate the MQF to stakeholders – Ms Valerie Attard ;
- The relationship between the MQF and the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) Office – Ms Josephine Sultana;
- The Impact of the Qualifications Framework on the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) - Mr Joe Cutajar.

Meeting were also scheduled with Professor Grace Grima, Director General, Quality and Standards in Education, Ministry of Employment, Youth and the Family; Ms Veronica Grech, University Registrar and MQC Council Member, University of Malta.

On day two a consultation meeting was held at the Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry in Valletta

Speakers:

Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive, Malta Qualifications Council

Ing Ray Muscat, Malta, Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry

Ms Jeanelle Catania, Executive, Policy and Business Development, Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry

Mr Michael Parnis, General Workers Union

Mr William Portelli, Confederation of Malta Trade Union (CMTU)

Mr Arthur Rossi, Confederation of Malta Trade Union (CMTU)

The importance of Lifelong learning for Maltese employees in the traditional sectors was emphasised.

Later a meeting at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), Main Campus, Paola with Professor Maurice Grech Principal and Mr Donald

Friggieri, Consultant was held. The meeting was characterised by a discussion on the role of a public vocational college plays on Malta's economic growth, employment and attraction of investment.

The key conclusion of this consultation meeting was that Malta has the capacity to offer foreign guests the techniques necessary to set up a qualifications framework which responds to the education culture of a given society and the European Qualifications Framework. In each of the governmental and non-governmental organisations visited, the qualifications framework of Malta is now well placed in the system of qualifications and structures of courses and programmes of studies. Furthermore, these initiatives have served to ensure that the European tools concerning credits, quality assurance, recognition, transparency and the validation of informal and non-formal learning are applied as a means to attract and retain learners in a lifelong learning process.

### 3.

#### **MQC participates in GWU Conference Workers Memorial Building, Valletta, 7th November 2009**

The Youth Section of the General Workers' Union organised a half-day seminar on the *Recognition of Qualifications* on Saturday 7th November at the Workers Memorial Building. The seminar was addressed by the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport the Hon. Dolores Cristina, the Opposition Spokesman for Education the Hon. Evarist Bartolo, the CEO of the National Commission for Higher Education Mr Jacques Sciberras and the CEO of MQC Dr James Calleja. In her address, the Hon. Cristina stressed upon the importance of quality in the recognition of qualifications and announced the setting up of a Malta Quality Assurance and Qualifications Authority to ensure that all institutions and programmes respond to nationally established processes and criteria of quality assurance across all public and private Further and Higher Education institutions.

The Hon. Bartolo delved into the need to ensure that quality assurance in Malta cuts across all institutions so that learners are guaranteed recognised and quality assured qualifications. He emphasised that although quality assurance is not an easy process, government

should do its utmost to monitor the provision of further and higher education by private institutions especially of institutions which may provide qualifications which are not up to the standards established by public institutions. Both Mr Jacques Sciberras and Dr James Calleja spoke about the processes that lead to quality assurance and recognition respectively. They gave a detailed account of the role of the NCHE and the MQC respectively and how these two institutions are collaborating together with the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education to filter all qualifications before any award of a licence to open tuition centres.

The seminar was also addressed by the Secretary General of the General Workers Union Mr Tony Zarb who spoke about the need to safeguard young people from falling victims of unrecognised qualifications and learning processes particularly within the private sector. A discussion followed after each presentation in which young people asked questions about the processes needed to ensure quality and standards in all qualifications.

#### 4 Information Forum

Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (MCCEI), 25th November 2009

This information forum was organised by the Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (MCCEI) at their premises in Valletta. Ms Maria Bartolo Galea, Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) was invited to deliver a presentation on the ETC, Prof. Maurice Grech gave a presentation on the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and Ms Doris Mangion, Senior Manager Standards and Qualifications delivered a presentation on MQC Council. Ms Mangion's presentation centred on the National Qualifications Framework.

The audience consisted of Education Committee members, Human Resource Committee members and representatives from the Malta College of Art, Science and Technology and the Employment and Training Corporation.

The main outcomes of the seminar in relation to the Referencing Report were:-

- The need to bring education and employment

closer together through joint activities;

- To recognise informal learning through a process leading to a formal qualification;
- To attract more learners to education and training by providing direct hands-on working experiences in industry;
- To ensure that in the design of qualifications employers play a consultative role and later contribute to the training itself.

#### 5 TTNET Malta Information Meeting

The EQF and the MQF – Tools for Transparency – Institute of Tourism Studies, 1 December 2009

TTNetmalta held an information meeting in connection with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) following the official launching of the Report entitled *Referencing of the MQF to the EQF and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA)*. The information meeting was organised in line with TTNet's mission to provide continuing professional development opportunities to trainers and teachers engaged in providing vocational education and training.

Ms Doris Mangion, Senior Manager Standards and Qualifications, MQC represented MQC at this meeting by delivering a two-hour presentation on the function and services of MQC and the Referencing of the NQF with the EQF and the QF/EHEA. The session was followed with a number of questions from the floor. The audience was made up of vocational teachers and trainers, training consultants, personnel working in public and private training institutions and in the Human Resources area.

The main outcomes of this seminar were the following:

- Qualifications frameworks are excellent tools for teachers to design awards based on a student-centred approach
- A learning-outcomes approach to qualifications is a good indicator of acquired knowledge, skills and competence
- Teacher training institutions must be in the forefront in promoting a learning-outcomes approach to qualifications; training should start in these institutions.

## 6

### **VINFL National Conference**

15th December 2009

This conference addressed the link between the MQF and the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

One of the objectives of MQC is to establish a national system for the documentation and validation of informal and non-formal learning. The Council aims to introduce a national system whereby all knowledge, skills and competences are recognised. This will ensure that people are re-introduced to learning. In order to accomplish this, the Council has embarked on a number of projects with different sectors of stakeholders to establish a system which will allow all individuals the right to document all their informal and non-formal learning and thus have their learning validated.

The priority areas for establishing such a system include the establishment of sector skills units, the setting up of occupational standards and the development of methods and tools for the assessment and recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

One of the aims of establishing and developing such criteria, is to ensure that employers have the correct skills to support their business success and development, training institutions devise programmes that are demand-driven and individuals possess competences for employability. MQC therefore aspires to establish a strong foundation, where the contribution of all available educational influence is acknowledged and through the acquisition, renewal and upgrading of knowledge, skills and competences the individual's self-fulfilment is enhanced. In a nutshell, this explains the title of the conference – *retooling for the future*.

The Conference speakers hailed from a wide spectrum and incorporate representatives from the public and private spheres. The opening session included an address from the Hon. Dr. Lawrence Gonzi Prime Minister of Malta, as well as an introduction by the Chairman of the Council Mr Joseph Abela Fitzpatrick and of the Chief Executive of the Council Dr James Calleja. The set-up of the conference incorporated two roundtable discussions to allow as much interaction and discussion as possible. The first roundtable discussion incorporated social partners' viewpoints and those of

voluntary organisations. Amongst the speakers were representatives from the Malta Council of Economic and Social Development (MCESD), the Malta Employers Association (MEA), the National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD), the Catholic Action Youth Movement (ZAK), the Confederation of Malta Trade Unions (CMTU), Malta Federation of Professional Associations (MFPA) and a number of Unions. The second roundtable discussion brought together a number of private and public stakeholders.

The over two hundred conference participants came from various walks of life and included participants from the educational sector, public and private training providers, local council representatives, NGO's, student representatives and voluntary organisation representatives. The conference also aimed to foster an opportunity for networking on issues related to the application of the validation process in the context of the referencing process.

## 7

### **Consultation at MQC with the Hon. Evarist Bartolo Opposition Spokesman for Education**

21st December 2009

The Hon Member of the House of Representatives was presented with a copy of the *Referencing Report* and was briefed about the services and functions of MQC and the MQRIC office. Also present in this meeting were Mr Joseph Abela Fitzpatrick, Chairman MQC, Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive, MQC, Ms Doris Mangion and Mr Richard Curmi, Senior Managers MQC and Ms Carmen Dalli and Ms Valerie Attard, Managers MQC.

Dr James Calleja briefed the Hon. Bartolo about the setting up of the Sector Skills Councils. He also mentioned the implementation of the *Referencing Report*. Mr Richard Curmi briefed the Hon. Bartolo about the National VINFL Conference and the work carried out so far in connection with the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning.

The main outcomes from this meeting were:

- the importance of linking a national framework of qualifications with accreditation, quality assurance and licensing processes for further and higher education including vocational training;
- the need to set up structures that increase transparency, transferability and mobility among

- learners, workers and teachers;
- the need to invest heavily in key competences in compulsory education;
- the importance of governance of MQF.

## 8

### Information Session

#### The Malta Qualifications Framework

##### Its Relevance to Employers – 12th February 2010

The Malta Employers' Association organised an information session about the recent developments regarding the Malta Qualifications Framework. Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive and Mr Richard Curmi Senior Manager were invited to talk about the referencing process and how qualifications can be classified in the MQF. The session ended with a discussion and questions from the floor. Around 50 participants attended this conference which was held at the Hotel Phoenicia in Floriana.

The main outcomes were the following:

- the need for structured dialogues with employers on qualifications;
- the setting up of structures to validate informal and non-formal learning across as many sectors as possible;
- the importance of flexible learning pathways for all;
- the need for permeability between vocational education and training and higher education.

## 9

### A Learning Outcomes Approach to implement the EQF

Date - 7th July 2010

Venue - Bastion Suite, San Gorg Corinthia

NCP – Seminar 1

#### Speakers

Dr James Calleja, CEO, Malta Qualifications Council (MQC)

Mr Vincent McBride, European Training Foundation, Member of EQF Advisory Group

Ms Doris Mangion, Senior Manager, Malta Qualifications Council (MQC)

#### Participants

60 participants attended this seminar. These included

Directors and Human Resources Managers from various Public Institutions.

The main outcomes of the seminar were the following:-

- The Bologna process harmonised qualifications. MQC is now working on a transparent structure without excessive bureaucracy and on a Level Rating Process of all qualifications to the MQF.
- The Qualifications Framework is a neutral a neutral tool and not linked to any institution
- It is important that all countries respond to the impact of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) on recruitment and the job implications through the setting up of a national qualifications framework
- The European Union has little competence in Education and Training. The EU is limited in what it can do in Member States Education and Training systems. The EQF is a common reference point. It links our education and training systems closer together. It makes it easier to show what their qualifications and learning might mean. It is a translation device.
- The EQF follows on from around the world for several decades. There are several other qualifications frameworks all over the world and a number of partners outside the EU who are also developing National Qualifications Frameworks.
- There are a number of key ideas within a Framework. Each Framework has several levels and each level is described in terms of Learning Outcomes. Each Framework contains a series of different education types. Qualification Frameworks give the opportunity to include Private Sector Qualifications. For the most part private training does not have recognition so the training gives the opportunity for recognition of such qualifications.
- The Public Sector hasn't been very good at recognising private qualifications. The Maritime Sector has been very good at this but there are a lot of other industries particularly new industries in which recognition is still lacking. Frameworks open up this system and link the public and private sectors. The idea that there are no dead ends in qualifications.
- The Framework encapsulates Higher Education and Vocational Education qualifications. The number of levels varies greatly in a Framework. Such as the Scottish Qualifications Framework.
- Learning Outcomes have been around for 40 years but in the last 20 years they have been gaining importance.

- Education is often described in terms of length of study or an institution e.g. a college course or a University course. Another way is according to delivery e.g. this is a modular course or a dissertation course. This has a good track record but over the past 20-30 years this has changed. We are now in a context of Lifelong learning. So this model is reaching its limits. The idea of Learning Outcomes is to find another way of Valuing All Learning. Judgements will be made on the quality of learning based on Knowledge, Skills and Competence. This gives more flexibility in recognising learning.
- As you go up the framework the knowledge goes deeper and becomes more specialised. When we talk about skills it is the ability to do things. Also skills are really the ability to think and reason.
- Reference was made to the policies, reforms and the Maltese Educational System. One of the reforms was that of the School Leaving Certificate. The School Leaving Certificate will now include various categories to give it a holistic approach. This will include attendance, formal education, personal qualities, non-formal education and informal education.
- The level-rating process in Malta can be categorised into 2 groups. The foreign qualifications offered in Malta and the local qualifications. The difference between the level rating processes of foreign and local qualifications was outlined. The MQC Protocol system (leading to a Register of Regulated Qualifications) is a formal agreement between the 2 parties. The protocols are reviewed annually except for the larger entities such as the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), the University of Malta (UOM) and the Directorate for Lifelong learning within the Education Department where they are reviewed every two years.
- Reference was also made to the link between the MQF and Quality Assurance Mechanisms. These include both internal and external mechanisms. Internal mechanisms focus on course content, lecturing, exam papers, assessment, teacher training and feedback. External mechanisms focus on the Malta Qualifications Framework's regulatory function.

10

## **A Learning-Outcomes Approach to implement the EQF**

National Coordination Point

NCP - Seminar 2

3rd September 2010

Target Group – Officials from state Higher Education and Vocational Education Institutions

Speakers:

Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive, Malta Qualifications Council

Mr Loukas Zahilas, Senior Expert, Qualifications and Learning Outcomes, CEDEFOP

Ms Doris Mangion, Senior Manager, Malta Qualifications Council

Participants

Over 50 participants from the field of state vocational and higher education attended this seminar. The participants came from various public institutes including the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), THE University of Malta (UOM) and the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS).

Main outcomes:

- There is a link between the development of NQFs and the structural challenges in society. Our society is aging. The workforce is becoming older and the majority of people will be people above the age of 50. We therefore need more knowledge and skills intensive occupations. We also need better educated European citizens amongst youth and women. These are the structural challenges.
- The working age population will decline as from 2013. There will also be a decline in the European population and especially in the working population. This is an indication of the need for change. The demand for high qualifications is also rising. Lower qualifications will not be so much in demand.
- Our view on qualifications has developed considerably over the past few years. Qualifications are at the centre of the policy agenda and our understanding and use has changed significantly. We are gradually moving to a more developed view of the elements that make up a qualification.
- Qualifications can also be viewed as currencies. Qualifications are carriers of information for individuals, employers and education and training



institutions. Qualifications can signal the level and value of specific learning experiences and learning outcomes.

- There is a need to address inflated qualifications. Not only may the value of formal qualifications be inflated (higher qualifications are required for jobs at a lower level of knowledge, skills and competence) the value of alternative forms of learning may be systematically overlooked.
- Shift to Learning Outcomes – More and more countries use learning outcomes for qualifications frameworks, standards, curricula and assessment. There is a broad agreement how Learning Outcomes can increase transparency and strengthen accountability. Learning Outcomes also introduce a common language enabling comparison of qualifications.
- The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) has acted as a catalyst for National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) developments in Europe. Malta, France, UK and Ireland have already set up the National Qualifications Framework and three of them have also already completed the referencing process.
- CEDEFOP overviews these developments and publishes an overview of the developments of each country twice a year.
- Most NQF's in Europe are presented as communication frameworks. Communication frameworks increase the transparency of the existing qualifications systems – they do not suggest changing them.
- Over the next few years we will have more home-grown qualifications so this will be a problem at both a European and at National level.
- During 2010 MQC has signed over 21 protocols with both private and public training institutions. This process will transform the MQF into a transparency tool and an effective reference point for learners.
- There exists a divide between the academic value against the vocational results. This dates back to historical reasons. Those who opted for vocational training often lacked the key competences. What we need is that no one leaves compulsory education without having achieved at least a Level 3 in all key competences. This minimum requirement should be irrespective of whether you aim to opt for higher education or vocational education. The issue of parity of esteem is at the core of this important measure. This applies for everyone including gifted

children, normal children or children who need help.

- By 2012 we must all have our Framework of Qualifications and the referencing of these qualifications. This also brings with it a culture change. Malta is still in this process of change despite the Framework being launched in 2006. The story will really start in 2012.
- One of the challenges of the future is to recognise all forms of learning. One has to take into account the difficulties. No one can generalise as the European Society carries traditions and cultures which bring many centuries of history together. To push the European Vision one needs more trust by means of more quality assurance. This is a long way and it is impossible to be successful if the process does not have all actors on board. Parents, teachers, trainers and of course the individuals are key players.

## 11

### **A learning outcomes approach to implement the EQF**

**National Coordination Point**

**Date - 10th September 2010**

**NCP - Seminar 3**

**Speakers:**

Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive, Malta Qualifications Council

Ms Doris Mangion, Senior Manager, Malta Qualifications Council

**Foreign Guest Speaker**

Mr Sean O'Reilly, Project Officer, National Qualifications Authority, Ireland

**Participants**

Over 50 participants attended this seminar. These participants came from a number of private and public training institutions.

The main outcomes were the following:-

- Reference was made to industry driven qualifications – the birth of a qualification should be in industry.
- We need increased currency of a single qualification. There is no one fixed learning form. The bridge between informal learning and non-formal learning.
- The importance that the MQC needs to act as a platform for stakeholders. The contribution of industry is extremely important. The intimacy

between colleges and industry is also paramount to success. Qualifications belong to everyone and not just the Ministry or educational institutions.

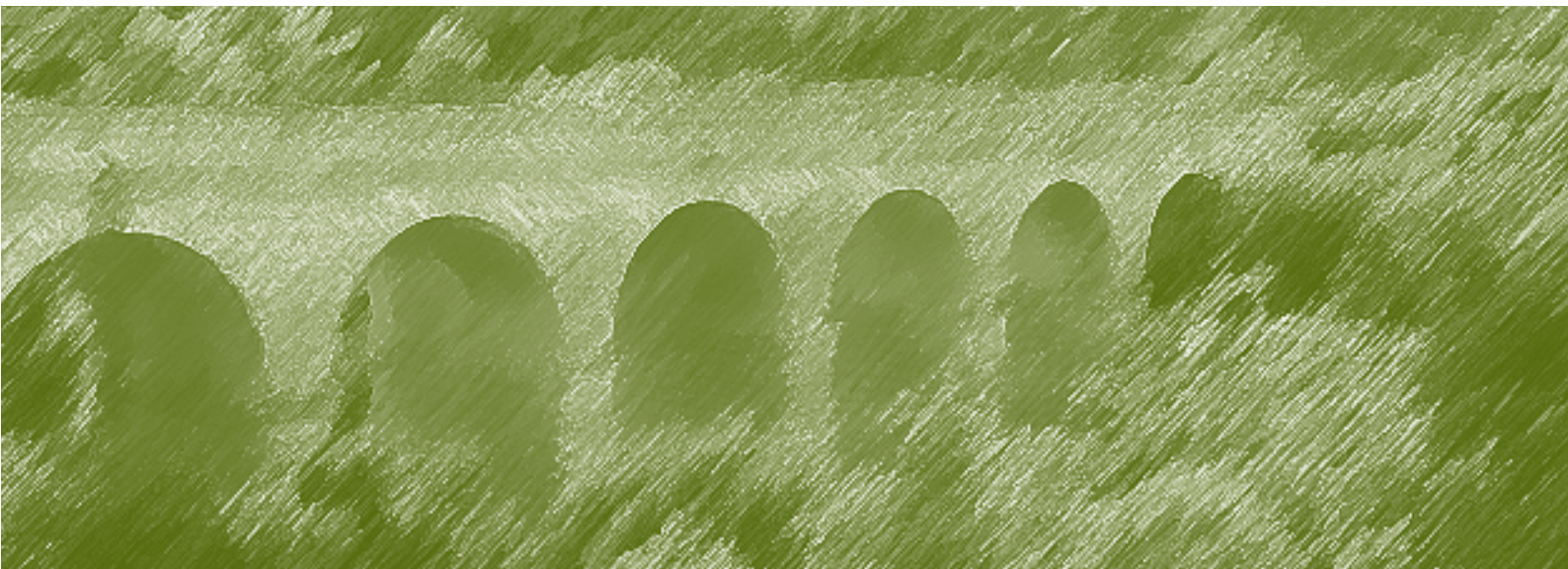
- The Framework of qualifications should be a catalyst for reform. If we have a new School Leaving Certificate this means that more employers will understand the skills and competences that an employee has obtained even outside the school-environment.
- The Recognition of qualifications can take months, this is because we lack transparency. This is why frameworks of qualifications are being developed. At a national level there will be level-rating processes of the content and the assessment processes.
- The Irish case study was used to illustrate the development that NQF brought to a system of education which is now more linked to employment and employability. What is being sought is parity of esteem and to have the individual's knowledge, skills and competences recognised. This is about benefits for the individual. The Irish Qualifications Framework is the entity that allowed this to happen. The Irish Qualifications Framework has ten levels. Every education and training system is unique and meets the needs of a country in various ways. For Ireland it was very important that they had a single framework.
- Mention was made of the Recognition of Prior Learning. In many ways this is seen as the Holy Grail. If we have an efficient system in terms of Recognition of Prior Learning this will be the key to all. However it is far from easy to implement. It

is still very much a work in progress. There are also issues of a wider acceptance of Recognition of Prior Learning. We still have procedures and historical issues in place where there are policies which prevent this. There are still anomalies in the system. It is actually quite difficult to deliver. It can be actually very resource intensive. It needs a lot of guidance.

- Policies related to access, transfer and progression specifically must be made more visible. Providers must tell prospective learners exactly what they need to achieve at the end of the learning process. Providers must also tell prospective learners broadly how they will be assessed. The mention of 'awards' rather than 'qualifications' is seen as a better approach.
- Learning Outcomes is the essential element of all of this. The framework needs to continue to move and to change. Communication is vital. The individual award holder does not need to know the details but they need to know enough to navigate the system. The learner needs to know what they can gain from the system and even employers need to know what they can gain from the system.
- The publication of the MQC document Classifying Qualifications – An Awards system referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework will provide guidelines on how a qualification must have a clear set of learning outcomes. A qualification is represented by a learning outcome. Learning outcomes must represent occupational standards. We need to recognise all learning for the individual who has put in time and effort to learn.







**PART ONE**

# The European Education Platform



The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a response to the process of globalisation and the impact of the Lisbon Agenda on education and training. One of the challenges of globalisation is the cross-border cooperation between education systems to provide comparable qualifications for the mobility of learners, teachers and workers.

### 1. The Development of the European Qualifications Framework

Furthermore education frameworks in Australia, South Africa and New Zealand proved to be a useful tool that stimulates national reform and international co-operation to foster mobility. The interest in the EQF from countries outside the EU which are European Higher Education Area (EHEA) participants promotes the integration of education policy at a European and international level.<sup>6</sup>

Education is a key factor leading to Europe's economic prosperity, to make Europe 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustaining economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.'<sup>7</sup> The Lisbon targets: economic growth; productivity; employment; human capital; future-oriented investment and fiscal sustainability are all directly linked with education and training.

Although the EQF was formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 23rd April 2008 it was a process which kick started in 2004. An EQF expert group was set up, and there were a series of consultations and the eventual setting up of the EQF Advisory Group in which Malta is represented by the Malta Qualifications Council. The primary objectives of the EQF are to promote lifelong learning, transparency, transferability and mobility. It differs from the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in that the EQF includes

all learning characterised by eight levels of difficulty whereas the EHEA is restricted to Higher Education with the first, second and third cycle of the Bologna process. Both Frameworks promote transparency and comparability of qualifications, mobility and the transfer of credits as well as lifelong learning from different perspectives.

Experts representing the European Commission, national authorities and social partners are members of the EQF Advisory Group. This group aims at discussing issues pertaining to the implementation of the EQF, the design and maintenance of the NQF and the referencing between NQFs and the EQF. Currently there are two sub-groups of the EQF Advisory Group, one focuses on quality assurance and the other on the criteria for referencing the NQFs to the EQF.

Similarly the Recognition of Learning Outcomes Cluster is made up of 38 members who are academics, representatives of national governments and authorities; representatives of stakeholders such as employers' and workers' unions; and European experts representing CEDEFOP, the European Commission, and the European Training Foundation. This cluster's main objectives are the sharing of experience and the monitoring of national policy developments and enforcement of EU legislation by the national authorities. This is a forum where legislation and policy definition is discussed and contributes to policy development at a European Level through the European

<sup>6</sup> Jens Bjornavold CEDEFOP Brussels, and Arjen Deij ETF, Turin status description as of 18th December 2008.

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, 2000, Lisbon Target.

Commission. A number of peer learning activities are Organised annually on specific topics which contribute to the design, development and implementation of the national qualifications framework. Following the Education Council of 12th May 2009 which adopted conclusions and endorsed the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (Education and Training 2020)<sup>8</sup> the role of the cluster shifted as a support group to the EQF Advisory Group which will assist in the implementation of the NQFs.

## 1.1 The Bologna Process

Before the 1990s when qualifications were established within a national institution the need for transparent and portable qualifications was not felt.<sup>9</sup> The Bologna process dates back to 1998 as a political commitment between the Education Ministers of France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom who met in Sorbonne and agreed on mutual cooperation in Higher Education.

In 1999, 29 European Ministers responsible for Higher Education met in Bologna and signed the Bologna Declaration<sup>10</sup> to lay the basis for establishing a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. Malta was among the foundation signatories of the Bologna declaration which identified the following primary objectives:

- Adopting a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;
- Adopting a system of two main cycles (undergraduate/graduate);
- Establishing a system of credits (such as ECTS);
- Promoting mobility by overcoming obstacles;
- Promoting European co-operation in quality assurance; and
- Promoting a European dimension in Higher Education.

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Framework adopted in Bergen in 2005 concerns all countries of the Bologna Process, currently 46, whereas the EQF for lifelong learning concerns the countries of the European Union, the European Economic Area and party to relevant EU programs in education, currently 32. Its objectives are to embrace

higher education qualifications at the national level and facilitate transparency, recognition and mobility among higher education degree holders. They concluded the Dublin level descriptors which include knowledge and understanding, applying knowledge and understanding, making judgements, communication skills, and learning skills. A level descriptor is determined by the level of difficulty and the degree of specialisation.

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was introduced in 1989 as a pilot scheme within the Erasmus programme to compare and read qualifications easily.<sup>11</sup> With the introduction of the Erasmus programme which facilitates students' and workers' mobility a new concept was introduced, i.e. the accumulation and transfer of credit. It was agreed that learners should achieve 60 credits per year, and for each credit one must dedicate 25 working hours on all educational activities. There will be an annual total of 1500 hours composed of contact hours, seminars, conferences, tutorials, reading, research, written and oral tests, and examinations. Thus, the total number of learning hours includes contact hours, self study and assessment. Work-based learning of students following HE is also assessed in terms of learning outcomes and is given credit accordingly.<sup>12</sup>

Harmonisation of credit led to a standard grading system, so that credits all over Europe would have the same value. Learners across Europe who obtain passing grades are divided into five subgroups: the best 10% are awarded an A-grade, the next 25% a B-grade, the following 30% a C-grade, the following 25% a D-grade and the final 10% an E-grade.<sup>13</sup>

The Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) is made up of the Bologna participating countries as well as the social partners. The aim of the BFUG is to implement the decisions taken by ministers in ministerial meetings held every 2 years and to prepare for the following ministerial meetings. The BFUG meet twice a year in EU countries holding the Presidency.

The BFUG is split into subgroups which are responsible for the following areas: data collection, stocktaking, employability, European Higher Education Area in a global setting, lifelong learning, mobility, qualifications

8 DG EAC website: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/news1383\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/news1383_en.htm)

9 Sjur Bergan, (2007), Qualifications – Introduction to a Concept, Council of Europe Higher Education Series No.6, Council of Europe, p25.

10 Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education, The Bologna Declaration of 19th June 1999, <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

11 Directorate General for Education and Culture, ECTS Users' Guide, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and the Diploma Supplement, Brussels, 17th August 2004 [http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/ECTS\\_DS\\_Users\\_guide\\_en.1094119167134.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/ECTS_DS_Users_guide_en.1094119167134.pdf), p3.

12 Ibid., p7.

13 Ibid., p13.



frameworks, and social dimension.<sup>14</sup> The progress of the BFUG is registered in HE through:

- The implementation of the 3-cycle system;
- Quality Assurance;
- The recognition of degrees and study periods; and
- Incorporating research within HE.

The primary objective of the BFUG is to ensure and facilitate the comparability and the link between NQFs and the EHEA Framework, sustained by a relationship based on co-operation.

In 2005, following the Berlin *Communiqué*, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) together with the European Students' Union (ESU), the European Universities' Association (EUA) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) were mandated to design the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance Report (ESG).<sup>15</sup> These internal and external quality assurance standards provide consistency of quality assurance procedures, which enhance mutual trust. The ESG is a tool which guides what and how should higher education institutions provide and assure that courses are founded on the principles of quality.

The ESG is based on the following three key standards:<sup>16</sup>

1. internal Quality Assurance at provider level;
2. external Quality Assurance at provider level with the involvement of external reviewers; and
3. the external Quality Assurance agencies at system level.

The first standard is about an agreed, shared and published debate within all staff members and students of the institution concerned. The information should be publicly available so as to be as transparent as possible. The students need to be aware about the importance of their role in submitting feedback, that they are instrumental for improvement and that the information that they submit forms part of a bigger plan.

Assessment must be learning outcomes-based, consistent and published so that students should know what is expected of them. Quality Assurance should involve teaching staff in approving, monitoring and reviewing programmes. This self-evaluation is then

reviewed by objective external reviewers which ensure follow-up and periodic reviews.

The third standard is about the role of external Quality Assurance agencies which have an officially independent status and accountability. The external verifier reviews, evaluates and assesses internal quality assurance procedures and assures teachers are qualified and competent. The value of external quality assurance lies in the fact that the verifier has the role of ensuring that follow-up recommendations are implemented. Their strategy and plan should be sustained by adequate resources in order to be effective. So far there are not enough agencies listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). External quality assurance mechanisms strengthen the credibility of the internal process and gives accountability to the institution. There is a consensus between HE and VET policy-makers and institutions that there is a need for a culture of quality assurance which will be the driver of the three key standards. The 2007 (London), 2009 (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve) and Budapest/Vienna (2010) Ministerial meetings led the launching of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) based on achieving greater mobility, transparency, international openness and employability through reformed higher education qualifications based on a learning outcomes approach. A further important feature has been quality assurance across the whole spectrum of higher education.

The Vocational Education and Training pathway also has a quality assurance regime. This is now supported by the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) which was formally launched on 20th May 2009.

## 1.2 The Copenhagen Process

The Copenhagen process focuses on the VET sector and emerged from the objectives of the Lisbon Agenda where in 2002 the Council Resolution set to promote enhanced European cooperation in VET. The Common Quality Assurance Framework developed 10 Indicators which emphasise the role of Quality Assurance in motivating learners to study in VET. The emphasis on Quality Assurance and the following targets aim to set standards for qualifications that meet today's and tomorrow's labour market requirements.

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/about/how\\_it\\_works.htm](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/about/how_it_works.htm)

<sup>15</sup> European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, (Helsinki 2005), The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) Report.

<sup>16</sup> Marzia Foroni, "Bologna and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance – building a Euro-Med Network for transparency and transferability," presentation during the Euro-Med Seminar for Bologna Experts on 23rd June 2009.

**Table 2: The 10 Indicators of the EQAVET**

Overarching Indicators for Quality Assurance	
1	Relevance of Quality Assurance systems for VET
2	Investment of Training of Teachers and Trainers
Indicators supporting quality objectives for VET policies	
3	Participation rate in VET programmes
4	Completion rate in VET programmes
5	Placement rate in VET programmes
6	Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace
Context Information	
7	Unemployment rate according to individual criteria <sup>17</sup>
8	Prevalence of vulnerable groups
9	Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
10	Schemes used to promote better access to VET

There are no mobility instruments for VET students to study in Europe such as in the case of the Erasmus programme which enables students to accumulate and transfer credits from one European Higher Education Institution to another, where the minimum period of cross-border study is three months. However, this is the task which the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is set to accomplish. ECVET was launched with the EQARF on 20th May 2009.

The LLP caters for VET through the Leonardo Programme which is made up of three categories, one of which is targeted to VET students. The Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) scheme gives the opportunity for VET students to experience Trans-National apprenticeship for a minimum of three weeks and a maximum of one year. The competences gained during this work-based learning are then recognised in the home country. Unlike the Erasmus programme where there is a Charter which ensures an entity's benefit from the grant for a period of six years, for the Leonardo grants there is no such continuity and the VET institution has to apply for grants on an annual basis.

The other two categories of the Leonardo Programme are People in the Labour Market (PLM) and the Vocational Education and Training Professionals (VETPRO). The objective of both grants is to facilitate lifelong learning and to maintain Quality Assurance as per the 10 Indicators of the CQAF.

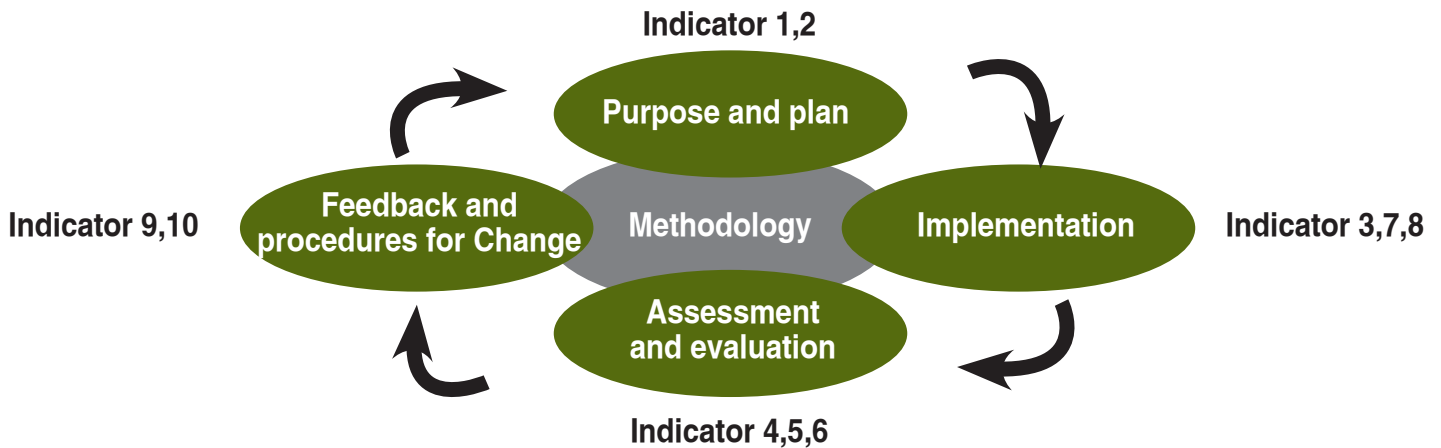
The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) is an improved version of the CQAF and takes into consideration developments in the following European tools:<sup>18</sup>

- The implementation of the EQF;
- The design and implementation of the NQFs;
- The quality of the certification of learning outcomes qualifications;
- ECVET;
- The design and implementation of Common European Principles for the validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning; and
- The need to provide demand-driven qualifications and address skills needs.

<sup>17</sup> According to ILO and OECD the unemployed are individuals between 15 and 74 years without work, actively seeking employment and ready to start work.

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, (2008), Legislative Resolution of 18 December 2008 on the proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training, COM (2008) 179, p3.

Figure 1: The EQARF<sup>19</sup>



The European Network for Quality Assurance in VET (ENQA-VET) has the mandate to establish dialogue between Member States' qualifications authorities, education policy makers, VET institutions and stakeholders to share experience through peer learning activities, thematic groups, research studies and conferences. The ENQA-VET members aim to maintain and promote quality at VET provider level, enhance the visibility of VET and attract students and lifelong learning adults to quality VET. As counter-part to the ENQA (European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), ENQA-VET should enhance mobility of students by creating the structures needed to facilitate and promote mobility of students. VET students should have the opportunity to benefit from the accumulation and transfer of credits, a system which has been sustained by ERASMUS grants in HE.

The latest revision of the Copenhagen Process is the Bruges Communiqué (2010) a declaration by Ministers of Education and Training on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training. The Communiqué lists 22 and 37 short-term deliverable for EU Members states and EU agencies respectively between 2011-14. The emphasis in the Belgian Communiqué is raising the quality of VET, increasing mobility and ensuring that education and training leads to employability. A further emphasise is on the creation of credit system (ECVET) which encourages permeability between vocational training and higher education.

### 1.3 The Objectives of the EQF

The EQF is a neutral translation mechanism for qualifications and national Frameworks based on an 8 level meta-Framework.<sup>20</sup> It acts as a guideline for

the Member States and for other European and non-European countries on which to model their national qualifications framework. The EQF is not a one-fits-all Framework; it must be interpreted according to national priorities agreed upon between policy-makers, training providers and key stakeholders including industry.

It is an integrated Framework which includes compulsory education, VET and HE. One of the aims of the EQF is to bridge the gap between VET and HE. Permeability between VET and HE enhances lifelong learning. The EQF builds on the successful policy goals of EHEA, such as the consistency in the design of qualifications and takes it further.

The EQF recognises flexible learning pathways as it includes all forms of learning, formal, informal and non-formal with the focus being on the individual learner with no age restrictions. The ascending levels of difficulty of the EQF provide a benchmark for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. This factor encourages early school leavers to re-train themselves in societies where formal education is predominant. Validation values all learning, motivates the low skilled and promotes an inclusive society.

The key prerequisites for National Qualifications Frameworks include learning outcomes-based qualifications and reference levels. Before enrolling learners have a clear picture what the course is all about and to what occupational standards it leads to, therefore learning outcomes-referenced qualifications are a tool for career guidance. Learners in the work place are encouraged to update the previously acquired learning outcomes and develop new skills that keep pace with change.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>20</sup> Bjornavold J; Deij A, (2009) The Purpose and the main features of the European Qualifications Framework in an international context. Paper presented in the European Qualifications Frameworks Linking to a Globalised World Conference, Brussels 29th -30th January 2009, p5.

The EQF also promotes the harmonisation of the level of difficulty of qualifications. Such harmonisation results in mutual trust at national, European and International level which facilitates clear and consistent relationships between qualifications frameworks. Transparent qualifications are mechanisms for cross-sector and Trans-National compatibility. They are tools for lifelong learning that facilitate mobility of learners and workers in a globalised labour market. Although mobility increased in recent years, it is expected to gain a boost after 2012, following the Europe-wide referencing of NQFs to the EQF.

#### 1.4 The Shift from Learning Inputs to Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process.<sup>21</sup> The shift of emphasis is from learning inputs such as taught subjects and hours of instruction to what learners achieve and how. The focus on the user of education - the individual is the key factor which makes this shift an innovative reform process.<sup>22</sup> This can be established by an assessment procedure. For a qualification to be given a level and to form part of a Framework of qualifications it has to be assessed by an accredited body. The EQF recommendation defines qualifications as: A 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.<sup>23</sup>

Unlike the learning inputs system, learning outcomes are not designed solely by policy makers, but these are shaped by the stakeholders' contribution depending on the qualification(s) reviewed. Stakeholders such as social partners, education and training providers, sectoral representatives, learners and civil society are now the key actors who define learning outcomes tailor made for industry's needs.<sup>24</sup>

This shift is considered "as an opportunity to tailor education and training to individual needs, improve links to the labour market and improve the way non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes are recognised."<sup>25</sup>

The role of learning outcomes in education and training plays an integral part of a lifelong learning strategy to promote:

- National reform;
- Recognition of informal and non-formal learning;
- Award, accumulation and transfer of credit;
- Quality Assurance;
- Flexible learning pathways;
- Key competences; and
- Credibility for training institutions and employers

ECTS, EQF and ECVET based on learning outcomes are the tools for education reform at a national level. The impact of learning outcomes on compulsory education across Europe manifests itself as a modernised schooling system that provides a holistic experience, rather than a 'subject-dominated approach'.<sup>26</sup> Greater importance is placed on the acquisition of key competences as studies show that individuals who lack these are low-skilled, lack opportunities for progression and have a higher risk of falling in the poverty trap.<sup>27</sup> The recognition of informal and non-formal learning motivates such individuals to value their learning and seek retraining leading to access and progression and better chances of employability.

"The Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" is a project co-financed by the European Commission to facilitate the Bologna Process. The rationale behind this project is to assist universities to shift their systems to a learning outcomes approach. It shows that approaches to teaching, learning and assessment

21 European Commission, (Brussels 2006), Proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council for the Establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, COM (2006) 479 final, p10.  
 22 CEDEFOP, (Luxembourg 2009), The Shift to Learning Outcomes: Policies and Practices in Europe.  
 23 European Commission, (Brussels 2006), Proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council for the Establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, COM (2006) 479 final, p16.  
 24 CEDEFOP, (Luxembourg 2008), The Shift to Learning Outcomes: Conceptual, political and practical developments in Europe, p10.  
 25 Aviana Bulgarelli, (Luxembourg 2008), Foreword in CEDEFOP, The Shift to Learning Outcomes: Conceptual, political and practical developments in Europe, p1.  
 26 Ibid., p33.  
 27 European Commission, (Brussels 2007), Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation. Draft 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the "Education & Training 2010 work programme", 12.11.2007, COM(2007) 703 final, p2.

**Table 3: The Tuning Project Generic Learning Outcomes<sup>29</sup>**

Instrumental competences	Interpersonal Competences	Systematic Competences
<i>Capacity for analysis and synthesis</i>	<i>Critical and self-critical abilities</i>	<i>Capacity to apply knowledge in practice</i>
Capacity for organisation and planning	Teamwork	Research skills
Basic general knowledge	Interpersonal skills	Capacity to learn
Oral and written communication	Ability to communicate with experts in other fields	Creativity
Grounding in professional knowledge	Ability to work in an interdisciplinary team	Capacity to adapt to new situations
Knowledge of a second language	Appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism	Leadership
Computing skills	Ability to work in international context	Understanding other cultures
Information management skills	Ethical commitment	Ability to work autonomously
Problem solving		Project design and management
Decision making		Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit
		Concern for quality
		Will to succeed

have an impact on workload.

It identifies the following four step approach for determining student workload:<sup>28</sup>

1. Introducing modules/course units;
2. Estimating student workload;
3. Checking the estimated workload through student evaluations; and
4. Adjustment of workload and/or educational activities

Table 2 prepared by the Tuning Project to illustrate the connection between instrumental, interpersonal and systematic competences in the context of Higher Education.

Learning outcomes are widely used in VET, but it remains the biggest challenge for HE where adoption of learning outcomes is slow.<sup>30</sup> The challenge is for learning outcomes to be clearly understood, interpreted

The EQF recommendation defines a qualification as a 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.

<sup>28</sup> Directorate General for Education and Culture, (Brussels 2004), ECTS Users' Guide, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and the Diploma Supplement, [http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/ECTS\\_DS\\_Users\\_guide\\_en.1094119167134.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/ECTS_DS_Users_guide_en.1094119167134.pdf), p9.

<sup>29</sup> CEDEFOP, (Luxembourg 2008), The Shift to Learning Outcomes: Conceptual, political and practical developments in Europe, p27.

Many policy makers and researchers argue that skills needs assessment should be the product of Governments, employers or individuals; others argue that individuals and firms should identify skills gaps.

and implemented by all education providers in Europe and beyond.

### 1.5 Qualifications Frameworks identify Skills Needs

One of the main trusts of the referencing process is the application of a learning outcomes approach to describing qualifications. In Malta the learning outcomes approach is gradually becoming the dominant factor in describing qualifications and in ensuring that the referencing of such qualifications to the level descriptors of the qualifications framework is transparent, coherent and understandable. A major characteristic of learning outcomes-based qualifications is the requirement that qualifications are demand-driven. At the end of a learning process the learner should have acquired those learning outcomes that would enable him or her to sustain their position within a changing labour market.

A Council Resolution on new skills for new jobs emphasizes the need for investing in human capital to enhance employability, to forecast skills needs and addresses and minimizes skills gaps by matching qualifications with industry's needs.<sup>31</sup> Such political decisions have an impact on the National, European and International competitiveness and economy, especially

in times of economic crisis when investment in re-training and up-skilling is considered as a "long-term" sustainable solution. Even in Malta some companies operating on a four-day week are utilising the fifth day for training, an initiative which is supported by the national government. It should be noted that such a public-private partnership should be encouraged on an ongoing basis, not only as a measure in time of crisis.

Many policy makers and researchers argue that skills-needs-assessment should be the product of Governments, employers or individuals; others argue that individuals and firms should identify skills gaps. The United States and Ireland emphasise that the government and training providers are in the best position to do so.<sup>32</sup> In Malta there is consensus for a partnership between education and training providers and industry in identifying and forecasting the skills needed in fifteen to twenty years time.<sup>33</sup> The forecasting results should be reflected in learning outcomes-based qualifications. Thus, learning outcomes must be future-oriented and must be the result of such dialogue between the training providers and stakeholders. A product of such synergy will be the outcomes of two ESF projects co-ordinated by MQC. The *VQPACK* deals with the visibility of demand-driven VET qualifications and *SKILLS+* deals with the design, publication and promotion of occupational standards. The level descriptors and the design of occupational standards address one of the flexicurity measures mentioned in the National Reform Programme for Malta 2008-2010 i.e. "Launch occupational standards of competence and define the basis for their accreditation with a view to validating all forms of learning including non-formal and informal learning." Through these projects MQC implements and abides by Indicator 9 of the EQARF about mechanisms to adapt vocational education and training to changing demands in the labour market.

*VQPACK* supports the following 2009-2011 CEDEFOP recommendation:<sup>34</sup>

1. European VET policies, trends in skills and learning, VET's impact and visibility;
2. Informing European VET policies;
3. Interpreting European trends in and challenges for skills, competences and learning;

30 Bologna Process Coordination Group for Qualifications Framework, Report on Qualifications Frameworks to be submitted by the BFUG in early 2009 third draft September 15, 2008.

31 European Commission, Official Journal of the European Union, Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 on the new skills for new jobs (2007/C 290/01), p2.

32 A Future Skills Needs conference held in 2008 in Ireland discussed who should assess the skills needs, CEDEFOP, 21st January 2008, IE\_CI 01/2008 Future Skills Needs conference.doc

33 The Skills for the Future Conference, Organised by the National Commission for Higher Education was held in Malta on 19th September 2008.

34 CEDEFOP, (Luxembourg 2008), CEDEFOP's Medium-term priorities: Enhancing European cooperation in vocational education through evidence and expertise: continuity, focus and flexibility.

4. Assessing VET's benefits;
5. Raising the profile of VET;

CEDEFOP's network "Skillsnet" has embarked on developing a European skills needs forecasting system to guide policy makers in introducing initiatives that motivate the up-skilling of the labour market in identified sectors.<sup>35</sup> Skillsnet promotes a standard data gathering system which enhances comparability of national results.<sup>36</sup> Policymakers can not limit their projections to the needs of their national economy without considering globalisation and the free movement of goods, services, capital and people within the EU's internal market and beyond.

Macro-economic projections should take into account various factors such as political action, technological changes and demographic trends. The social inclusion of people with disability and migrants should not be underestimated, and these vulnerable groups can contribute to the deficiencies of an aging society.<sup>37</sup>

Identifying skills needs means also giving priority to certain economic sectors over others, such as the vision of creating a Smart Society in Malta. Different lifelong learning strategies are designed according to the particular target group, including all the labour force's education levels: from the unemployed and the low-skilled, to learners engaged in higher education. The Maltese Government has thus introduced incentives for learners to follow courses in ICT. For example the *My Potential* scheme encourages learners to study ICT at private training institutions and if they are successful, the tuition fees will be refunded through tax refunds. The demand for ICT trained personnel is continuously increasing and the market is expected to increase even more with the coming of Smart Communications in Malta, a major Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). This incentive encouraged learners to register for part-time courses while they work. Such a measure boosted the progression to lifelong learning. Other initiatives connected to the creation of a smart society are the provision of e-services, monetary incentives for people

buying their first computer, free or subsidised internet subscriptions, and a multitude of computer courses at local towns and villages. Although these measures necessitate a greater commitment in investment in education, training and apprenticeships, a smart society is an important element of the infrastructure which businesses consider before locating FDI.

When a sector is given priority over other sectors this may result in a negative impact on other equally important sectors which also form part of the business cycle. Therefore economists, policy makers, industry and the market should find the right balance when making forecasts of skills needs based on a just sustainable education system. The smart city does not only need IT specialists, there needs to be the supporting technical and administrative infrastructure.

Several countries are targeting the unemployed and the low-skilled with the reintroduction or expansion of apprenticeship schemes.<sup>38</sup> The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) offers the Level 1 Basic Employment Training Course in Key Competences, apprenticeship schemes and traineeship schemes. New trainee programmes are constantly being introduced according to the employers' demands. These include the training for new niches on the market such as call centre operatives, pharmaceutical plant operatives, and fire and health and safety instructors.<sup>39</sup> Training is given its due importance through the Training Aid Programme through a European Social Fund (ESF) Project co-funded by the European Union. This programme provides financial assistance to companies and self-employed who want to invest in human capital.<sup>40</sup> The British Government will dedicate an additional GBP10 million for a new national apprenticeship scheme for 16 to 18 year olds to fill existing skills gaps.<sup>41</sup> The OECD considers access to finance and skills development as key measures to deal with the impact of the financial and economic crisis on the global economy.<sup>42</sup> Qualifications and apprenticeships should be future-oriented geared towards a knowledge-based technological economy and service sector workplace environment.

35 [http://www.CEDEFOP.europa.eu/etv/Projects\\_Networks/skillsnet/](http://www.CEDEFOP.europa.eu/etv/Projects_Networks/skillsnet/)

36 CEDEFOP, (Luxembourg 2008), Future Skills Needs in Europe: Medium Term Forecast, Synthesis Report, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p4.

37 OECD, (2008), Higher Education in 2030, Vol 1, Demography, Executive Summary <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/28/15/41788606.pdf>

38 CEDEFOP, (Luxembourg 2007), Zooming in on 2010: reassessing vocational education and training, p15.

39 Cutajar J., ETC, The Impact of the NQF on ETC Training Services for the inactive and those in employment, presentation for an MQC organised EQF Information Seminar for Guidance Teachers and Councillors on 3rd December 2008

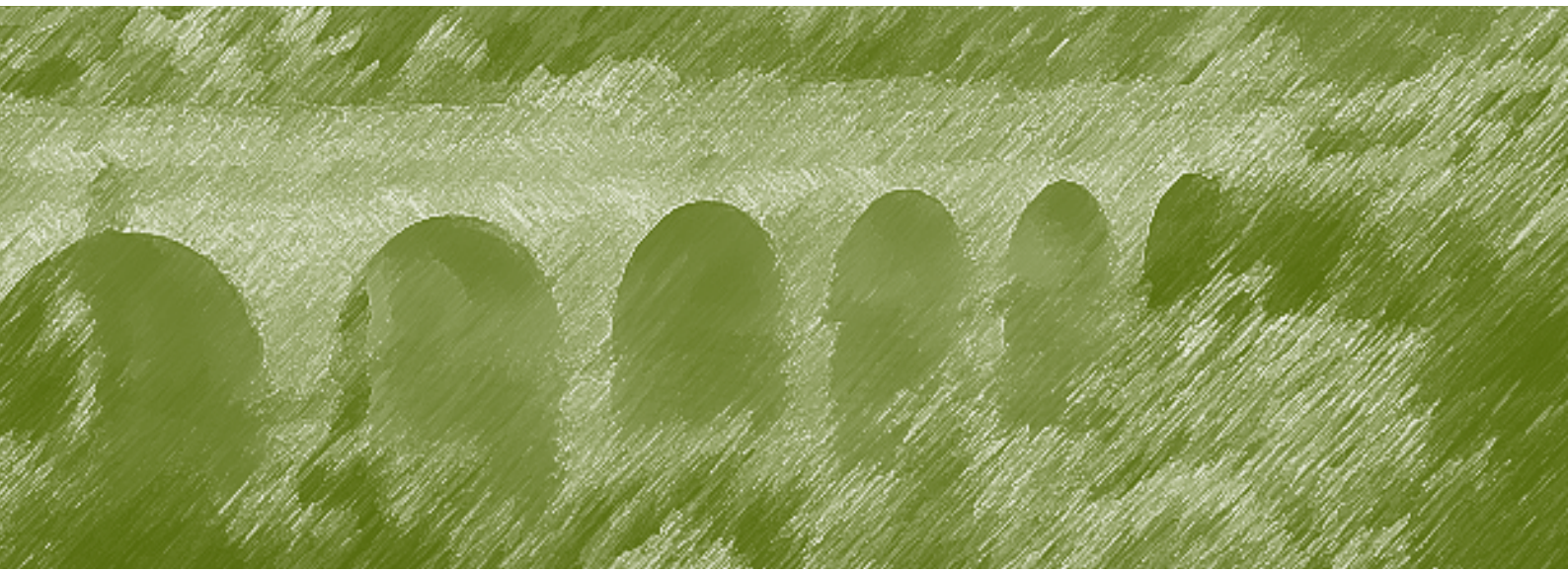
40 ETC Website, Information on the Training Aid Framework, <http://www.etc.gov.mt/site/page.aspx?pageid=2238>

41 Government launches £10 million apprenticeship expansion, Date of issue: 01/12/08, Press release number: 571 <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-571-expandingapprenticeships-dec08.pdf>

42 OECD Conference, Fostering Entrepreneurship through Proactive Policies, 18th-19th November 2008 [http://www.oecd.org/document/8/0,3343,en\\_34645207\\_34645590\\_41760008\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/8/0,3343,en_34645207_34645590_41760008_1_1_1_1,00.html)







## **PART TWO**

# The Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning



# 2

Compulsory schooling in Malta starts at the age of five with primary education. Most parents, however, start sending their children to school as from the age of 3. The government provides nursery schooling for free and is housed within primary schools. Following pre-primary education, primary school consists of six years of education.

## 2.1 Overview of the Maltese Education and Training System

### 2.1.1 Educational Pathways in Malta

Primary education is divided administratively into two cycles of three years each. Secondary education follows and involves a further five years of education. The end of secondary school marks also the end of compulsory schooling. Students then have the opportunity to either take the general education or vocational track at post-secondary level.

General post-secondary education consists of a two-year course leading to a qualification which serves as an entry point into the University of Malta. Normally attendance to an upper secondary school is two years full-time. However, there are no restrictions as to when someone sits for the Matriculation Certificate Examination. Entry to this two-year course in the public institution called Junior College or in any of the private post-secondary institutions requires a minimum of six passes at grades 1 to 5 of the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC), which is equivalent to Level 3 of the Malta Qualifications Framework. Registration for the SEC is restricted to students in their final year of compulsory schooling and other students over sixteen years of age. Its objective is to provide an opportunity for all students finishing secondary school education to obtain external certificates for the subjects studied at school.<sup>43</sup>

Vocational courses vary in length and range from two years to a number of years. Vocational education in Malta is provided by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), by the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) and the Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage (ICMCH) of Heritage Malta. MCAST in particular, is an umbrella institution which houses almost all the state vocational institutes and consequently vocational training in Malta.

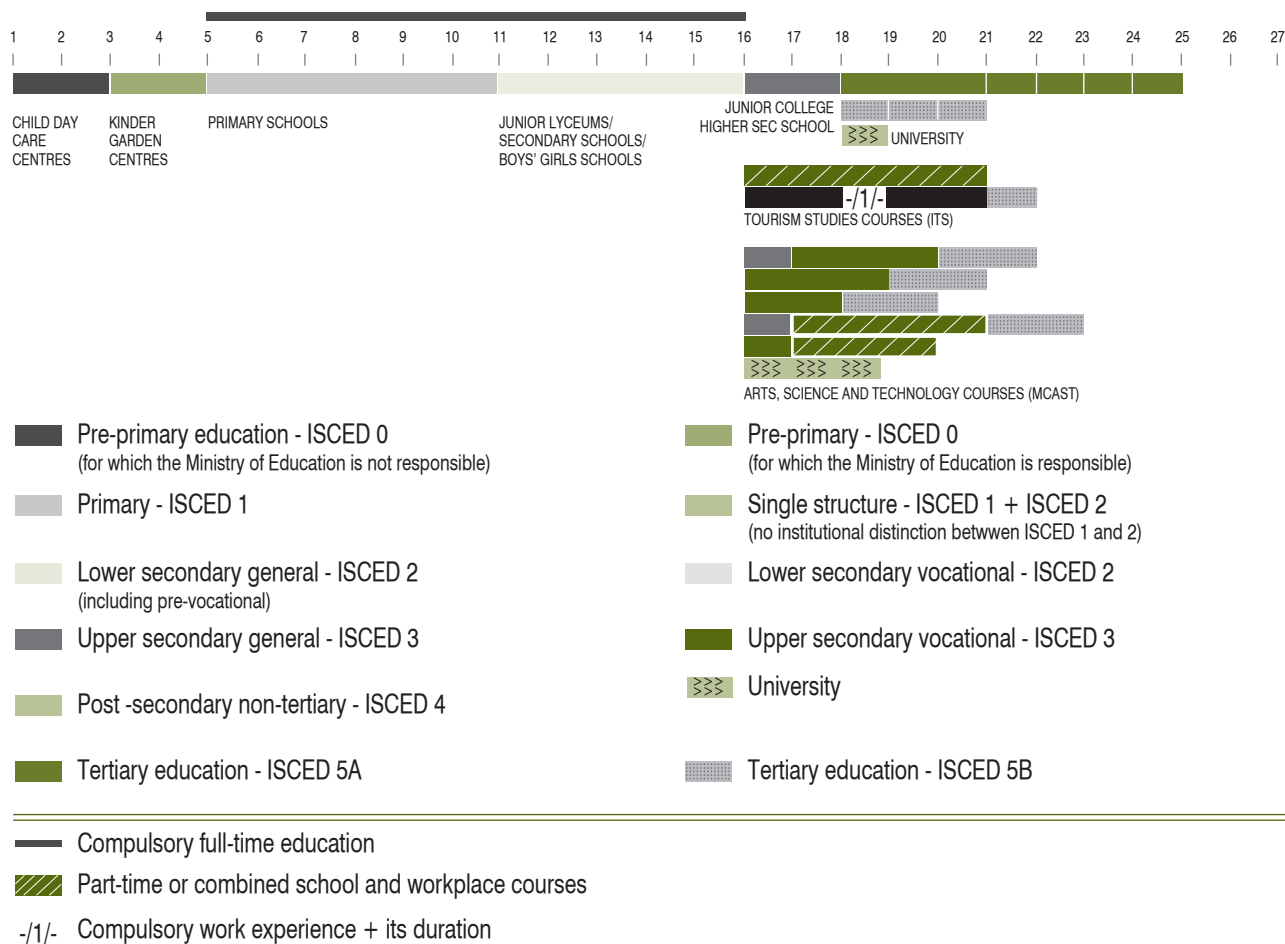
Students go through a number of defining moments in choosing their career path through their study choices. These are the following:

- end of second year in secondary school: This is when students are asked to make a subject choice as part of their specialisation. This choice will influence the range of career opportunities available to students at a later stage;
- end of secondary education: Students at this point need to decide whether they are to continue with their studies or to look for work. In addition, those who decide to stay on at school have to decide whether to take the general or vocational track and which course to follow;
- thus vocational training in Malta is at post-secondary level and is beyond compulsory schooling age

<sup>43</sup> The following subjects are offered for examination: Accounting; Arabic; Art; Biology; Business Studies; Classical Culture and Civilisation; Chemistry; Commerce; Computer Studies; Economics; English Language; English Literature; European Studies; Environmental Studies; French; Geography; German; Greek; History; Home Economics; Italian; Latin; Maltese; Mathematics; Physics; Physical Education; Religious Knowledge; Russian; Social Studies; Spanish; Technical Design (Graphical Communication or Technology) and Textiles and Design; University of Malta MATSEC Examinations Board, (2008), SEC Examinations Statistical Report 2007, p3.

Figure 2: Stages of Compulsory Education and Other Levels of Tertiary and Vocational Education Levels

Organisation of the education system in Malta, 2006/07



Source: Eurydice<sup>44</sup>

2.1.2. Description of “formal” pathways from VET to HE

Students in Malta have to decide on whether they want to follow the general education track leading to tertiary education or the vocational track at the end of compulsory education at age 16. Thus, the decision on whether to continue studying is linked to a decision on the type of post-secondary education track preferred. Those students wishing to eventually follow tertiary education go to Junior College or Sixth Form colleges at upper-secondary level, where they study two academic subjects at Advanced level and another three subjects at Intermediate level. The choice of subjects is such that all students study one science and one language at this level. The end of these two years of study lead students to sit for the Matriculation Certificate examination run by the University of Malta and which, on successful completion leads to entry into tertiary courses at the University of Malta.

Students can also choose to opt for vocational courses. These are mainly offered within the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). MCAST houses nine Institutes:

**Agribusiness:**<sup>45</sup> This institute offers courses related to agriculture and animal husbandry. It offers courses at Foundation level, BTEC-First Diploma and BTEC-National Certificate and BTEC Higher National Diploma. There are currently 6 courses offered;

**Art and Design:**<sup>46</sup> This institute offers training in art and design, offering courses from basic level at certificate level or MCAST Foundation Certificate which provide access to other courses at higher level within the same institute. Courses offered range from a Foundation Certificate in Art and Design to Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Graphic Design and Interactive Media and Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in 3D and Interiors. There are currently 14 courses offered;

44 [http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/eurybase/pdf\\_images/MT\\_EN\\_dia.pdf](http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/eurybase/pdf_images/MT_EN_dia.pdf)

45 [http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes\\_agribusiness.asp](http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_agribusiness.asp)

46 [http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes\\_artanddesign.asp](http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_artanddesign.asp)

**Building and Construction Engineering:**<sup>47</sup> This institute offers training in trades related to the construction industry. Courses are offered in skills areas such as painting and decorating, plastering, tile laying, air-conditioning, masonry, and stone construction. These are offered at different levels ranging from Foundation courses which require no qualifications, to Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma, National Diploma and Higher National Diploma. There are currently 20 courses being offered;

**Business and Commerce:**<sup>48</sup> This institute offers courses in areas related to business such as insurance, retail, administrative and secretarial studies, as well as applied science. Courses are also offered at different levels, ranging from the MCAST Foundation Certificate to BTEC National Certificate, National Diploma, Higher National Diploma and Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Business Enterprise. There are currently 12 courses being offered;

**Community Services:**<sup>49</sup> This institute offers training in the service related sector. Courses offered are mainly in hairdressing and beauty sector, child-care services, as well as sport and leisure. Courses are offered at different levels ranging from BTEC and ITEC Foundation Certificate and First Diploma to National Diploma in the different areas of study. There are currently 20 courses being offered;

**Electrical and Electronic Engineering:**<sup>50</sup> This institute offers courses related to electronics, ranging from electrical installations, industrial electronics, computer engineering to electronic engineering. These courses are offered at different levels from Foundation Course, MCAST Certificate and Diploma, to MCAST BTEC National Diploma, BTEC Higher National Diploma and Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Electronics Engineering and Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Electronics and Control Engineering. There are currently 13 courses being offered;

**Mechanical Engineering:**<sup>51</sup> This institute offers training in the area of mechanical engineering, motor vehicle engineering, aerospace as well as motor vehicle repairs. Most of the Certification offered is at City and Guilds, but there are also other courses at Certificate level leading to an MCAST Certificate. There are currently 17 courses offered;

**Information and Communication Technology:**<sup>52</sup> This institute offers training in the area of ICT. Courses are offered from a very basic level such as Foundation Certificate to higher levels like MCAST-BTEC First Diploma, National Diploma and Higher National Diploma in software development, ICT systems support and Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Software Development and Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Computer Networks. There are currently 9 courses being offered;

**Maritime Institute:**<sup>53</sup> This institute offers training to those who are interested in taking up a career in the maritime sector, whether within the Armed forces or as an officer sailing ships. The institute offers courses in Navigational Watch, Engineering Watch, Chief Mate, Second Engineer, Master Mariner, Chief Engineer as well as Probationary Cadet. There are currently overall 4 courses offered. Certification is issued by the institution and one can proceed from one course to another.

MCAST also has its Gozo Centre<sup>54</sup> where it offers a range of courses. It offers some of the courses that are also provided by the mainland institutes, thus eliminating the need for students from Gozo to travel to Malta for their studies. This year, the Gozo centre is offering 16 courses in total.<sup>55</sup> Four courses are at Foundation Certificate level, one is a general course and the other three in business, computing and care. Six courses are at Level 2: MCAST Certificate in electro-technical technology; MCAST-BTEC First Diploma level for I.T. practitioners; City and Guilds in mechanical engineering; and MCAST-BTEC First Diploma in electronics, care and construction. There is also one MCAST Certificate in administrative and Secretarial Studies at Level 3, an MCAST-BTEC National Diploma also at Level 3. At Level 4 the courses offered include the AAT Diploma in Accountancy and a Diploma in banking and financial services.

Vocational Courses are also offered by the Institute of Tourism Studies which offers courses in the area of Hospitality and Tourism. One of its courses, a Higher Diploma in Hospitality Management, leads to a University of Malta degree in Tourism Studies. The University of Malta also offers some vocational courses in the area of Healthcare.

47 [http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes\\_buildingandconstructionengineering.asp](http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_buildingandconstructionengineering.asp)

48 [http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes\\_businessandcommerce.asp](http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_businessandcommerce.asp)

49 [http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes\\_communityservices.asp](http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_communityservices.asp)

50 [http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes\\_electricalandelectronicsengineering.asp](http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_electricalandelectronicsengineering.asp)

51 [http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes\\_mechanicalengineering.asp](http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_mechanicalengineering.asp)

52 [http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes\\_informationandcommunicationtechnology.asp](http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_informationandcommunicationtechnology.asp)

53 [http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes\\_maritimeinstitute.asp](http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_maritimeinstitute.asp)

54 [http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes\\_gozocentre.asp%22](http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_gozocentre.asp%22)

55 MCAST, (2009), MCAST Prospectus 2009/10.

In the case of vocational qualifications, entry requirements would be in terms of a number of passes in the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC). The preferred subjects and grade vary according to the courses offered. In the case of vocational education, students can move from one level of qualification to a higher level course within the same vocational area without any problems.

Mobility from vocational education to tertiary education is limited. This is mainly due to the official entry requirements for entry to tertiary courses at the University of Malta requiring the Matriculation Certificate. However, there are cases where vocational qualifications are being recognised and considered as alternative entry requirements in some particular courses, mainly in the area of engineering. As from the academic year 2009-2010 MCAST introduced four top-up degrees for BTEC Higher National Diploma students. These are in Art & Design, Business and Commerce, Electrical and Electronics Engineering and Information Technology.

In addition, the University of Malta and MCAST have a maturity clause which allows any adult of age 23 years or older to apply to follow courses at tertiary level without necessarily having the usually official entry requirements. In such cases, applicants are considered on an individual basis and their prior qualifications and experiences are considered by an interviewing board. In such circumstances, value tends to be given to applicants from the vocational sector by the interviewing board in deciding whether to accept the applicant to follow the course or not.

### **2.1.3. The Structure of the University of Malta**

The University of Malta traces its origins to the founding of the Collegium Melitense by the Jesuits in 1592.

Situated in Msida, the University of Malta is the highest teaching institution of the State. The supreme governing bodies of the University are the Council and the Senate. There are some 10,000 students, including over 750 international students from some 80 different countries, following full-time and part-time degree and diploma courses referenced at MQF and EQF levels 5 to 7, many of them run on a modular and ECTS credit system. The University also offers doctorate degrees at MQF/EQF Level 8.

The University is geared towards the infrastructural, industrial and cultural needs of the country so as to

provide expertise in crucial fields. Over 2,500 students graduate in various disciplines annually. The degree courses at the University are designed to produce highly qualified professionals with experience of research, who will play key roles in industry, commerce and public affairs in general.

The University comprises eleven faculties and a number of institutes and centres. International Master's degree programmes are also offered on a Joint or Double Degree basis, with each Masters being accredited by the University of Malta and at least another leading North American or European University.

There are a number of fields which the University has identified as priority areas. These include Information and Communication Technology and Engineering. Enhanced relations with industry continue to be a priority, as does the University's contribution to the improvement of primary and secondary education and the forging of inter-university links to stimulate international student and staff exchanges.

The Malta University Holding Company Ltd (MUHC) embodies the commercial interests of the University of Malta. Its subsidiary companies serve as the interface between the University and the business community, brokering the resources and assets of the University to provide added value through commercial activity. MUHC is located in the original university building in Valletta, which incorporates the Aula Magna and dates back to the founding of the Collegium Melitense. The building also serves as a prestigious setting for the hosting of international conferences, seminars, short courses and summer schools. It is also the venue for the University's International Masters Programmes.

### **2.1.4 The Awarding Bodies**

All the public education and training institutions in Malta except the Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage (ICMCH) act as the awarding bodies of their locally designed qualifications often referred to as the home-grown qualifications.<sup>56</sup> These local awarding bodies are the University of Malta (UOM); the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) and the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC). MQC examines the workload and methods of assessment of each qualification provided by the above awarding bodies and in agreement with each individual education and training institution designate the level

<sup>56</sup> Many private training institutions provide post-secondary and degree level courses of foreign origin normally accredited and recognised bodies.

of difficulty corresponding to the Malta Qualifications Framework.

- Chartered Insurance Institute (CII); and
- ITEC

MCAST offers a number of qualifications which are designed by foreign awarding bodies but adapted to fit Malta's needs. These include:

- City and Guilds;
- Edexcel;
- Association of Accounting Technician (AAT);
- International Maritime Organisation (IMO);

Following a number of discussions on standards the qualifications awarded by local and foreign awarding bodies form part of the Malta Qualifications Framework. This process is then sealed with a formal agreement (Protocol) between the two parties.

## List of Faculties, Institutes and Centres within the University of Malta

Faculties	Institutes	Centres
1. Faculty of Arts	1. Institute of Anglo-Italian Studies	1. Centre for Communication Technology (CCT)
2. Faculty for the Built Environment	2. International Institute for Baroque Studies	2. Centre for Family Studies
3. Faculty of Dental Surgery	3. Institute of Criminology	3. Centre for Environmental Education & Research
4. Faculty of Economics, Management & Accountancy	4. The Edward De Bono Institute for the Design & Development of Thinking	4. Centre for Labour Studies
5. Faculty of Education	5. Islands & Small States Institute	5. Centre for Literacy
6. Faculty of Engineering	6. Institute of Linguistics	6. Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research
7. Faculty of Information & Communication Technology	7. Institute for Maltese Studies	7. European Documentation & Research Centre (EDRC)
8. Faculty of Laws	8. Mediterranean Institute	8. European Centre for Educational Resilience & Socio-Emotional Health
	9. Institute of Physical Education & Sport	9. European Centre for Gerontology
9. Faculty of Medicine & Surgery	10. Institute of Public Administration & Management	10. Centre on Insular Coastal Dynamics
10. Faculty of Science	11. Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies	
11. Faculty of Theology	12. Confucius Institute	
12. Faculty of Health Sciences	13. Earth Systems Institute	The campus is also the seat of the IMO International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI)
	14. Institute of Sustainable Development	
	15. Institute of Sustainable Energy	
	16. Institute of Travel, Tourism and Culture	
	17. International Ocean Institute - Malta Centre	

## 2.2 The Development of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF)

The Malta Qualifications Framework is an eight-level system which reflects the education tradition of an island under British rule for over a hundred and sixty-four years. The level descriptors of this framework reflect the various stages of the educational process from compulsory to lifelong learning. This includes the Bologna and Copenhagen paradigms. Since the promulgation of the level descriptors in Legal Notice 347 in 2005 two institutions (Directorate of Quality and Standards in Education – DQSE, and National Commission for Higher Education – NCHE) were set up to complement MQC and therefore cover the whole spectrum of education in terms of standards and quality assurance. Malta's active participation in European fora particularly those organised by the Commission led the Maltese authorities to synergise the already existing qualifications framework to the type of framework created on the EQF typology. As documented in other parts of this report, the Malta Qualifications Framework is thoroughly described in four Policy Documents making up the *Valuing All Learning* Series.

Malta is one of the 47 members of the Bologna process which embarked on a project to harmonise qualifications in Higher Education. This necessitated the introduction of ECTS at the University of Malta in 2000, and by 2005 ECTS had been fully implemented in all Faculties with the exception of Medicine and Dental Surgery.

Another process was the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) so that qualifications become comparable and transparent, as these need to be referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) by 2010.

Another process was the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) so that qualifications become comparable and transparent, as these need to be referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) by 2010. Malta launched the MQF in June 2007. It is one of the first European countries which is referencing its framework to the EQF. Besides the political commitment towards both processes, qualifications are shaped by stakeholders as more industry-driven qualifications are learning outcomes-based. Qualifications are increasingly becoming demand-led.

The MQF captures all levels of education from compulsory to post-doctoral degrees, continuous professional development and adult education and is modelled on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA). Thus the three pillars on which the MQF is founded are:

1. Qualification Levels;
2. Qualification Types; and
3. Quality Assurance Criteria.

A National Qualifications Framework is an evolving process; the dynamic nature of qualifications makes the NQF a work-in-progress.<sup>57</sup> NQFs have to be continuously maintained and must meet the challenges of a changing knowledge society. In June 2008 MQC launched a policy document on the *Validation of Informal and Non-Formal learning*. Following a consultation process and a new enabling Act for Further and Higher Education which is planned to be published by December 2009 informal and non-formal learning shall be assessed, given value, certified and will form part of the MQF.

MQC is in the process of level-rating existing and new qualifications by referencing such qualifications to the MQF and the EQF. It is currently consulting with stakeholders on the design of sectoral qualifications frameworks. Eventually as one of the deliverables of an ESF project entitled Skills+ MQC shall design, publish and promote occupational standards of nine key sectors of economic development

<sup>57</sup> Shirley Walters et al., National Qualifications Frameworks: Insights from South Africa, European Qualifications Frameworks Linking to a Globalised World Conference, Brussels 29-30 January 2009, p1, [http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/events/2009/eqf\\_paper.pdf](http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/events/2009/eqf_paper.pdf)



**Table 4: The Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning\***

8	Doctoral Degree		8
7	Master's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate		7
6	Bachelor's Degree		6
5	Undergraduate Diploma Undergraduate Certificate Higher Education Certificate	Foundation Degree VET Higher Diploma	f 5
4	Matriculation Certificate Advanced Level Intermediate Level	VET Diploma	e 4
3	General Education Level 3 SEC Grade 1-5	VET Level 3	d 3
2	General Education Level 2 SEC Grade 6-7	VET Level 2	c 2
1	General Education Level 1 School Leaving Certificate	VET Level 1	b 1 a

**Annotations:**

- \* The National Qualifications Framework is designed in such a way as to be able to include diverse forms of qualifications not as yet covered by this Framework.
- (a) Attainment of the Basic Employment Passport together with either the Adult Skills Certificate or MQC 8 Key Competences at Level 1 are also considered as a Full VET Level 1 qualification.
- (b) MQC recommends that a Full VET Level 1 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as a Full School Leaving Certificate.
- (c) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 4 General Education Level 2 subjects.
- (d) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Level 3 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 6 General Level 3 subjects.
- (e) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Diploma should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 3 Advanced Level subjects.
- (f) The Higher Education Certificate is awarded to students who do not complete a degree programme but have a minimum of 60 ECTS.

## 2.3 Qualifications Frameworks establish Quality Assurance

Qualifications frameworks are first and foremost tools for Quality Assurance. With adequate investment, a qualifications framework translates quality in education into cost-effectiveness and competitiveness.

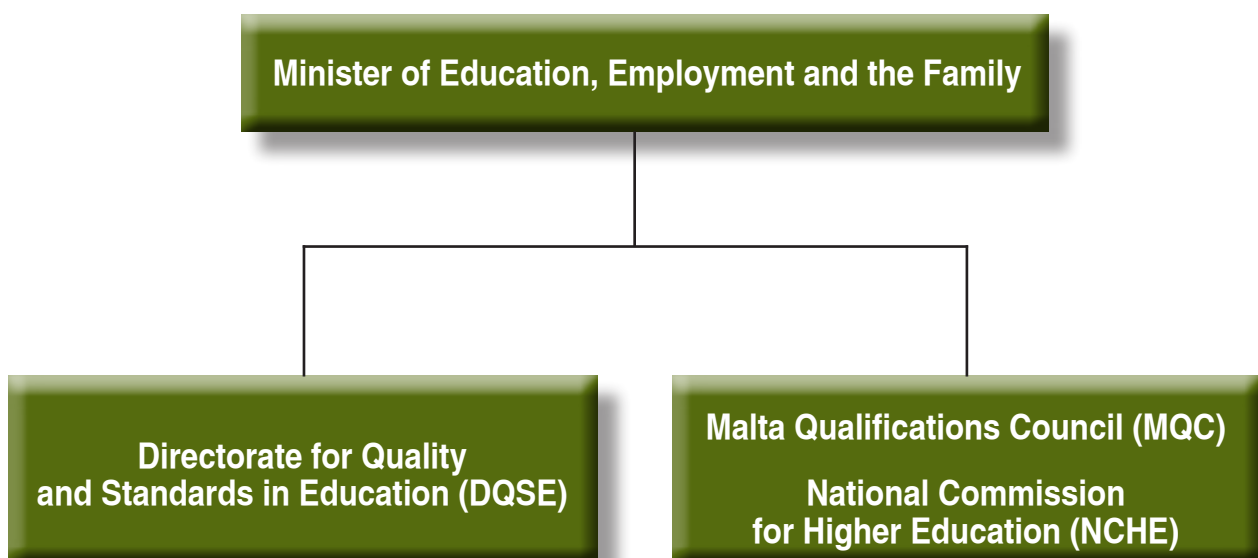
Of particular importance to this referencing process is the development of the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) which shall regulate, establish, monitor and assure standards and quality in the programmes and educational services provided by all private, public and church schools. DQSE will regulate, guide, evaluate, verify, research and report on the various elements and results of the compulsory education system (MQF Levels 1 to 3). A further objective is to assure quality education for all and promote good practices in all activities related to such education in a national curricular framework of lifelong learning.<sup>58</sup> The Malta Qualifications Council works closely with DQSE to implement the first three levels of the MQF and to ensure that all formal education activities match the level descriptors in the framework.

In this scenario one is obliged to define a quality assurance policy for Malta which is based on the

referencing process of the MQF and on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area (EQAR) and on the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) for Vocational Training. QA is a broad term which, when applied to vocational training and to higher education (including vocational higher education) must be contextualised, otherwise, it will lose its impact on its targets which are to ensure quality education and credibility of qualifications. Programmes of studies for example differ even at the same level of qualification; the same can be said for the use of equipment and the infrastructure, the learning outcomes, the assessment procedure, the credit system, qualifications of teachers and links with the labour market and with the professional sectors.

The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) is responsible for the quality and standards in compulsory education, from age 5 to 16. The Malta Qualifications Council and the National Commission for Higher Education are responsible for the quality assurance of further and higher education. All

**Figure 4: The Evolving Quality Assurance Structure for Qualifications in Malta**



58 Chapter 327 Education Act, Part II Articles 8-10.

these three quality assurance institutions constitute one quality assurance regime which falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Education, Employment and the Family.

In 2010 the Malta Qualifications Council and the National Commission for Higher Education merged into one agency. It is expected that in 2011 changes to the Education Act will formally legalise this merger.

Designing an overarching QA system for further and higher education is an excellent initiative if the two sectors (HE and HE/VET) work interdependently as they do with QA systems in compulsory education. The unifying factor between the three sectors is the Malta Qualifications Framework which sets standards by putting in place visible, predictable and coherent national systems for defining qualifications on the basis of established quality standards, for assessing learning outcomes and for awarding qualifications including the final transcript and qualification document. A system that maintains a qualifications framework ensures that the life-cycle of a qualification starts from visibility to accessibility and ends in mobility, career progression and self-actualisation.

For this purpose, a qualifications framework establishes quality assurance by:

- clarifying learning pathways and progression through level-rating;
- acting as a focal point for stakeholders to own quality in learning environments; and by
- creating greater coherence of national reform policies and by establishing a stronger basis for international co-operation, understanding and comparison.

Above all a qualifications framework is an added value to individual learners (and particularly parents of younger children) in terms of increased consistency, transparency, currency and portability. It is however the stakeholders such as career/school counsellors, trainers, recruitment agencies (including and in particular public recruitment units), teachers that ultimately sustain the benefits of quality that a qualifications framework offers to prospective learners.

Qualifications frameworks are tools that encourage the proliferation of private and public training provision

by establishing clear level-playing-field competition through agreed standards and quality assurance procedures. Learners will subsequently benefit from an open and transparent sector in which, information based on an accreditation system of each qualification, determine their value.

Greater emphasis is placed on Quality Assurance. The Malta Qualifications Council is an active member in the European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ENQA-VET). Quality assurance shall be monitored through an accreditation process, whereby all courses and all education and training institutions shall be accredited by public entities such as MQC, following the fulfilment of a set of agreed standards and criteria. Eventually all accredited institutions and formal qualifications shall be available on an online database.

### **2.3.1 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms**

Education and training institutions in Malta have an internal quality assurance system which compliments that of the external quality assurance verifiers as described above. As part of the internal quality assurance the examinations and assessments are assessed by external examiners.

The Education Directorate introduced a quality assurance system in 2005 based on internal auditing of all public, private and church schools whereby the Principal Education Officer together with five or six Education Officers spent a week in the schools to be audited to get feedback on quality assurance issues from employees, students, teachers and parents. In 2007 there was a shift of emphasis from inspection previously conducted by the team of Education Officers led by the Principal Education Officer to self-evaluation made by the schools themselves. The audits that will follow will utilise the self-evaluation documents as presented by the schools themselves. Since then there was the setting up of two Directorate Generals, one for Education Services (DES) and the other for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE). The Quality Assurance Department within the DQSE worked on publishing booklets, samples of action plans for School Development Planning and power points as tools for the schools to implement quality assurance self-evaluation and to use the power points to involve teachers, students and parents. This self-

evaluative process includes all school staff, students and parents who identify strengths and weaknesses and produce a plan to tackle all these weaknesses. The schools, state and non-state are encouraged to draw up a School Development Plan and communicate this with the DQSE, teachers, students and parents. The self-evaluation is made by the players involved such as all staff, students and parents. The role of the Principal Education Officer changed to monitoring and implementation aspects. This officer is responsible to draw a report on the self-evaluation and its effectiveness while identifying gaps. Following the report, this officer verifies that the recommendations are put in place.

The VET institutes have an internal quality assurance policy which is reviewed by external verifiers and they follow MQC's third policy document on Quality Assurance. Furthermore the foreign awarding bodies monitor that this quality assurance policy is consistent with the policy that they adhere to in the qualifications' country of origin.

In 2007 the University of Malta established the Academic Programmes Quality and Resources Unit (APQRU) to provide support for academic staff to design new or existing programmes based on quality and standards.<sup>59</sup> The APQRU provides administrative support to the Programme Validation Committee and provides quality assurance mechanisms for internal and external verification and ensures the standards and validity of all programmes of study while at the same time maximising the use of available resources. The student is the focal point of this quality assurance dimension of qualifications. He or she has the facility to submit an online student feedback form in confidence and comment on the content, methodology and assessment of the study units or any other issues. The students' data is analysed and taken into consideration for improvement.

## 2.4 Policy Context

Education is one of the sectors which are given priority in the National Reform Programme, and it is a sector in which the government aims to achieve excellence by 2015, as part of the Vision 2015 Policy. One of the tasks towards achieving this goal was the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC).<sup>60</sup> The Council's primary role is to steer the development of the MQF and to oversee the training and certification leading

to qualifications within the Framework and which is not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies.

A reform in education is a prerequisite for a functioning NQF. A shift from a learning input to a learning outcomes approach is gradually being implemented at all levels of education, but with a faster pace in VET. VQPACK, an ESF project co-ordinated by MQC shall monitor VET qualifications to ensure that these are learning outcomes-based and demand-driven, and shall publicise this as a career guidance tool for all learners.

The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) is steering the reform in compulsory education. Learning is now considered as a holistic experience, including informal and non-formal education. Greater emphasis is placed on continuous assessment rather than on examinations. The 11+ examination which puts enormous pressure on students and parents is being phased out, and learning is projected as something positive and enriching. Streaming is being replaced by classes with learners of mixed ability. One of the projected results includes a lower percentage of early school leavers; and a higher percentage of Lifelong Learners.

More national and EU funding is being invested in the training and up-skilling of the unemployed and the low-skilled through Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) schemes. ETC offers apprenticeship schemes to VET students, and industry-led courses to the unemployed and to Lifelong Learners. Other courses it offers are specifically designed for vulnerable target groups.

The MQF shows that one can have access and progression through different learning pathways. Early school leavers can access formal education through the VET route by first achieving the basic key competences. Malta has already experienced an increase in the availability of short courses; such a factor enhances lifelong learning.

In 2006, the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) launched the National Strategy for Research and Innovation (2007-2010) entitled '*Building and Sustaining the Research and Innovation (R&I) Enabling Framework*'. This strategy seeks to promote

<sup>59</sup> Full details of the objectives of APQRU are available on: <http://www.um.edu.mt/apqru/about>

<sup>60</sup> More details about MQC are found in Annex 8.

competitiveness through research and innovation to encourage economic growth just as the ICT and the financial services sectors did in Malta.

**The MCST National R&I Strategy underpins the following principles:<sup>61</sup>**

- 1 Addressing National Issues
- 2 Focusing on Selected Areas of Economic Performance
- 3 Enabling SMEs to Innovate
- 4 Exporting Locally Generated R&I
- 5 Expanding Malta’s Science, Engineering and Technology Human Capital Base
- 6 Establishing the Nexus between the Knowledge Institutions and Business
- 7 Developing a National Pro-Innovation Culture Supportive of Invention, Risk-Taking and Entrepreneurship

The knowledge society entails sustained investments in lifelong learning and skills development for innovation-driven growth that would attract a long-term economic investment through, foreign direct investment, motivated labour market and economic growth. This commitment to sustained investments in a quality education system for all is an underlying theme within the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) Strategic Priorities.

The NCHE identified a set of Strategic Priorities following a consultation process with all stakeholders on the Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020.<sup>62</sup> This policy initiative fits within the general European framework and the formal adoption on 12th May 2009 of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training the ET2020. This 12 strategic Priorities now form the backbone to the NCHE/MQC Work Programme 2011.

**The list of 12 NCHE Strategic Priorities includes the following:**

- 1 Attract more students to continue their studies after compulsory education into post secondary and university studies;
- 2 Encourage students to undertake studies in areas relevant to Malta’s economic and social development;
- 3 Attract foreign fee paying students to study in Malta in various fields of study and research;
- 4 Adapt systems for adults seeking lifelong learning opportunities;
- 5 Secure fair and equitable access to further and higher education with particular focus on vulnerable groups;
- 6 Assure quality provision across all institutions and their programmes;
- 7 Develop Malta’s Qualifications Framework and qualification recognition services;
- 8 Increase the University of Malta’s research capacity;
- 9 Facilitate and promote student and teacher mobility;
- 10 Ensure responsive systems through adequate governance and funding policies;
- 11 Maintain active participation and co-operation within Europe and Internationally; and
- 12 Develop and implement a long-term Investment Plan.

61 Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST), The National Strategy for Research and Innovation (2007-2010): Building and Sustaining the Research and Innovation (R&I) Enabling Framework, <http://www.mcst.gov.mt/files/uploaded/R&Istrategy.pdf>  
 62 NCHE, (April 2009), Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020: Recommendations of the National Commission for Higher Education.

All the strategies will have a positive impact on education in Malta and they are all directly or indirectly related to MQC. MQC is responsible for Strategy number 7 on the development of the MQF and the qualification recognition services. MQC hosts the Malta Qualification Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) which forms part of the NARIC-ENIC Network. The role of MQRIC is to verify the value and establish the comparability of local and foreign qualifications. The number of MQRIC requests for 2008 was around 2300. During the first six months of 2009 MQRIC received more than 2050 requests. While the figure for 2009 stood at over 5000 verified qualifications that at the end of 2010 will be over 6150. This illustrates that the demand for this service is actually increasing as all posts issued by all public entities and the Public Service Commission require that qualifications are recognized and validated by MQRIC. The role of the centre is publicised so that learners verify the value of a qualification before enrolling in a course of studies in Higher Education.

## 2.5 Description of Learning Outcomes: Knowledge, Skills and Competences

Learning outcomes are statements that describe what a whole qualification represents in terms of the application of its components, namely knowledge, skills and competences. According to the definition of a NQF a learning outcome is what a learner understands and is capable of doing at the end of a learning process. Therefore learning outcomes prepare individuals for both employment and for further education and training. One way of measuring the learning outcome of VET is through apprenticeship and of HE by course entry requirements. The learning outcomes system is inclusive as it integrates all learning with flexible learning pathways including informal and non-formal learning and there is no time limit.

Key competences such as communication especially in good English are what employers look for, but they must be complemented by personal qualities such as self-presentation and team work, which more often than not are the result of informal (experiential) learning and not necessarily acquired from school. The issue of self-presentation applies to all sectors as the image is a key factor for employability. It is a prerequisite for all those working in particular sectors such as the tourism sector especially the catering industry which implies issues of hygiene. These qualities together with the key competences are important for every level of

education but are even more necessary for individuals at Level 1 of the MQF to become employable. One of the key challenges today is to continue to be employable and to face this challenge, one must be flexible and adapt to the fast business cycle and participate in the re-skill, re-educate and re-structure cycle.<sup>63</sup> The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) acknowledged the value of key competences, personal qualities and informal and non-formal learning. Thus MQC had a consultative role in the process of recognising such learning by certifying it in the newly re-designed School Leaving Certificate, which forms part of the national reform in the education system in Malta.

Knowledge involves the understanding of basic, factual and theoretical information and is normally associated with formal learning and therefore with text books, with contact learning hours and as one progresses along the learning pathway one can engage in research, and participate in seminars and conferences. However, knowledge can also be obtained from informal and non-formal settings.

Skills involve the application of the acquired knowledge and understanding in different contexts. A skill may not necessarily be the result of formal learning and knowledge as described above. It may be the result of repetitive work in an informal setup.

Competences involve concepts such as whether one is competent to exercise the skills with or without supervision, with or without autonomy and with or without responsibility. At the end of 100 months of compulsory education one is expected to achieve the basic key competences which are fundamental for pursuing studies at a post-secondary level and for employability in low-skilled basic jobs. The fact that an individual has a successful achievement in these key competences has an impact on the individual's performance, on the overall service at the work place, on one's employability and finally on the national economy. Thus there are supplementary courses such as the *Merħba* course provided by the Malta Tourism Authority which gives basic knowledge, such as basic Maltese history and communication skills to people who provide a service in the tourism sector. Such short courses and other similar initiatives give basic knowledge to people who are generally experienced and have skills and competences, foster the continuous professional development, and promote lifelong learning.

63 Ellul H., President, Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (MCCEI) Presentation for the NCHE Conference, Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020, 3rd April 2009.

## Defining Key Competences:<sup>64</sup>

### 1. Communication in the mother tongue

Definition: Communication in the mother tongue is the ability to express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate way in the full range of societal and cultural contexts — education and training, work, home and leisure.

### 2. Communication in foreign languages

Definition: Communication in foreign languages broadly shares the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue: it is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in an appropriate range of societal contexts — work, home, leisure, education and training — according to one's wants or needs. Communication in foreign languages also calls for skills such as mediation and intercultural understanding. An individual's level of proficiency will vary between the four dimensions, different languages and according to their background, environment and needs/interests.

### 3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology

Definition:

- A. Mathematical competence is the ability to use addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and ratios in mental and written computation to solve a range of problems in everyday situations. The emphasis is on process and activity, as well as knowledge. Mathematical competence involves - to different degrees - the ability and willingness to use mathematical modes of thought (logical and spatial thinking) and presentation (formulas, models, constructs, graphs/charts).
- B. Scientific competence refers to the ability and willingness to use the body of knowledge and methodology employed to explain the natural world, in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions. Competence in technology is viewed as the application of that knowledge and methodology in response to perceived human wants or needs. Both areas of this competence involve an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and responsibility as an individual citizen.

### 4. Digital competence

Definition: Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.

### 5. Learning to learn

Definition: 'Learning to learn' is the ability to pursue and persist in learning. Individuals should be able to organise their own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. Competence includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to handle obstacles in order to learn successfully. It means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts – at home, at work, in education and training. Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence.

### 6. Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, civic competence

Definition: These competences cover all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary. Civic competence equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation.

### 7. Entrepreneurship

Definition: Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports everyone in day to day life at home and in society, employees in being aware of the context of their work and being able to seize opportunities, and is a foundation for more specific skills and knowledge needed by entrepreneurs establishing social or

<sup>64</sup> European Commission, (Brussels 2005), Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (presented by the Commission), COM (2005) 548 final.

commercial activity. The business community in Malta believes that this must be given a boost and should be fostered at the early stages of education.<sup>65</sup>

### 8. Cultural expression

Definition: Appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and the visual arts.

The Key Competences will play a pivotal role in the post-referencing process of the MQF to the EQF. As a matter of procedure MQC established that from MQF Levels 1 to 5 key competences will carry a considerable weight at the lower ends of the Framework and decreases at higher levels particularly after Level 5. The table below illustrates the percentage of workload established by MQC and which will help learners acquire key competences at the early stages of lifelong learning and simultaneously carry within their education and training additional competences in Sectoral Skills and Underpinning Knowledge (theory). Thus, the knowledge, skills, competence paradigm covers the whole learning process within Malta's Qualifications

Framework and fits within the EQF paradigm in relation to the acquisition of the eight key competences

### 2.6 The credit system to validate all learning

Malta's Qualifications Framework captures all levels and sectors in education. This referencing process consolidates the already existing credit system for HE that helps mapping existing and new qualifications to the Framework.

Credit is a feature that measures the volume and the workload of learning and gives currency to qualifications. Assessment of learning outcomes entitles the learner to credit and therefore to a qualification recognised by the MQF. Credits are awarded for the assessment of outcomes achieved. MQC shall accredit full or partial qualifications offered by accredited institutions.

Credits must be considered as the building blocks of qualifications and they can be accumulated and transferred. However, one must point out that transfer of credits depends on the mutual recognition

**Table 5: The Distribution of Knowledge, Skills and Competences**

Level of Qualification	Distribution of KC, SS & UK for each Qualification		
Level 5	KC 10%	SS 45%	UK 45%
Level 4	KC 20%	SS 40%	UK 40%
Level 3	KC 40%	SS 30%	UK 30%
Level 2	KC 60%		SS 20% UK 20%
Level 1	KC 70%		SS 15% UK 15%

Percentages are indicative of the distribution of contact and study hours.

■ KC – Key Competences    ■ SS - Sectoral Skills    ■ UK – Underpinning Knowledge

<sup>65</sup> Ellul H., President, Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (MCCEI) Presentation for the NCHE Conference, Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020, 3rd April 2009.



of qualifications of the sending and the receiving institutions to be established through the signing of a bi-lateral memorandum of understanding. The MQF does not prescribe transfer of credits, as it deals with exit points as access is at the discretion of the institution concerned which is regulated by its policies; however the MQF facilitates transfer of credits.<sup>66</sup>

One of the weaknesses of the QCA's first generation Framework way back in 1997 was that it lacked the feature of credit accumulation and transfer, thus there were many dead-end qualifications which discourage lifelong learning.<sup>67</sup> Experience in the UK showed that employers are after the units of learning and not after full qualifications, as units are more flexible and meet industry's needs. The modern labour market seeks soft or transferable skills and specialist knowledge and skills.

The value of credits for the MQF is based on the ECTS model so that credits are harmonised and compatible with other international education systems. The value of ECTS credits that 1 ECTS credit requires 25 hours of total learning has been agreed in the Bologna Process

by the 46 participating countries. As a benchmarking device MQC is using this ECTS value of 25 total learning hours across all levels of the framework. This single credit system is easy to use and facilitates permeability between VET and HE. From levels 2 to 7 learners are expected to undertake 60 credits of learning per year to achieve full certification at a given level.

The value of 1 credit is equivalent to 25 hours of study of which, according to the Bologna Process 6.25 hours are contact hours and 18.75 hours is the time allocated to self-study such as reading, research, seminars, conferences, tutorials, assignments, tests and related organised activities including informal and non-formal learning. This is calculated on the assumption that a learner follows 40 hours of full-time learning per week for 37.5 weeks per year, which is equivalent to a total of 1500 learning hours.

Anything less than 40 credits per year for Level 1 and 60 credits per year for levels 2 to 7 does not lead to full certification, and therefore such partial certification does not necessarily give access to the next level.

**Figure 5: The credit system of the MQF**

**1 credit = 25 hours of total learning**  
 (Total learning includes:- contact hours, practical sessions, mentoring, self-study such as reading, research, seminars, conferences, tutorials, assignments and assessment and related organised activities such as informal and non-formal learning)

**For MQF Levels 2 to 7**  
 60 credits per year X 25 hours of learning per credit = 1,500 hours of total learning per year

**For Level 1**  
 40 credits per year X 25 hours of learning per credit = 1,000 hours of total learning per year

The number of hours for compulsory education refers to the number of contact hours and *does not* include additional hours such as self-study and any recognised non-formal and informal activities.

66 TQF Management Committee, (October 2008), Trans-National Qualifications Framework Consultation Document for Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth.  
 67 Coles Mike, Recognition of Learning Outcomes Cluster Peer Learning Activity, The Added Value of National Qualifications Frameworks, London, 20th and 21st October 2008.

**Table 6: The minimum number of hours and credits per year**

Minimum number of hours per year	Qualification	Level	Qualification	Minimum number of hours per year	Minimum number of credits per year ****
Not Applicable	Doctoral Degree	8	Doctoral Degree	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
1500	Master's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate	7	Master's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate	1500	60 <sup>68</sup>
1500	Bachelor's Degree	6	Bachelor's Degree	1500	60
1500	Undergraduate Diploma Undergraduate Certificate	5	Foundation Degree VET Higher Diploma	1500	60
1500	Matriculation Certificate Advanced Level Intermediate Level	4	VET Diploma	1500 <sup>***</sup>	60
940*	General Education Level 3 SEC Grade 1-5	3	VET Level 3	1500	60
940*	General Education Level 2 SEC Grade 6-7	2	VET Level 2	1500	60
940*	General Education Level 1 School Leaving Certificate	1	VET Level 1	1000 <sup>**</sup>	40

\* The number of hours for compulsory education refers to the number of contact hours and does not include additional hours such as self-study and any recognised non-formal and informal activities.<sup>69</sup>

\*\* VET Level 1 courses require 1000 hours which include contact hours, self-study and any recognised non-formal and informal activities.

\*\*\* Contact and self-study hours are based on one academic year from October to June of the following year.

\*\*\*\* The number of credits determine the status of a Partial or Full certification.

<sup>68</sup> According to the QF/EHEA the second cycle of the Bologna Process includes 90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd cycle.

<sup>69</sup> Refer to Annex 4 for a sample of a compulsory education timetable.

**Table 7: Summary of the distribution of credits for the different vocational qualifications and the minimum number of hours per year**

Levels	VET Qualifications	Number of credits and minimum number of hours per year		
Level 5	VET Higher Diploma	KC 6 Credits 150 hrs	SS 27 Credits 675 hrs	UK 27 Credits 675 hrs
Level 4	VET Diploma	KC 12 Credits 300 hrs	SS 24 Credits 600 hrs	UK 24 Credits 600 hrs
Level 3	VET Level 3	KC 24 Credits 600 hrs	SS 18 Credits 450 hrs	UK 18 Credits 450 hrs
Level 2	VET Level 2	KC 36 Credits 900 hrs	SS 12 Credits 300 hrs	UK 12 Credits 300 hrs
Level 1	VET Level 1	KC 28 Credits 700 hrs	SS 6 Credits 150 hrs	UK 6 Credits 150 hrs

KC - KEY COMPETENCES
  SS - SECTORAL SKILLS
  UK - UNDERPINNING KNOWLEDGE

The number of credits and the minimum number of hours varies according to the percentage of Key Competences, such that Level 1 has 70% of the established credits i.e. 70% of 40 credits which is 28 credits. Similarly the allocated time is also estimated as 70% of the total number of learning hours, which for Level 1 is 1000 hours. A learner needs 700 of learning hours to get the Key Competences at Level 1. This principle applies also to all levels and to the Sectoral Skills and Underpinning Knowledge aspects of the course.

To find the number of credits for each competence, the total established credits for each level is divided by 8, which is the number of Key Competences. One of the components of the Key Competences at VET Level 1 is 3.5 credits (28 credits divided by 8). The same applies for all the 5 VET levels up to the VET Higher Diploma and for Certificates Levels 1 to 3.

Trainers and teachers are encouraged to adopt a system whereby taking into account that Key Competences are divided between those which are content-based

and those which are transversal, credits can be distributed according to the level of Knowledge, Skills and Competences required by a particular group of learners. The distribution being suggested in the Report remains, but teachers and trainers should consider this proposal as a flexible approach to ensuring that all learners achieve Key Competences during their course of studies. Key Competences should be considered as separate and unifying units at the same time, and therefore a mix and match of Key Competences would be desirable such as second language + cultural awareness; entrepreneurship + learning to learn; science and technology + digital competence.

### **VET Level 1 Certificate**

This qualification is different from the Level 1 Certificate in that it contains elements of both sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. The balance of credits between these three aspects has been established by MQC at 70% key competences, and 15% in each of sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. This amounts to a ratio of 28 credits in key competences, 6 credits in sectoral skills as well as 6 credits in underpinning knowledge. All those jobs (mainly operative) that have been identified by employers require that the Level 1 qualification should include this ratio of training. Ex: The Basic Employment Training Certificate provided by ETC.

The number of credits and the minimum number of hours varies according to the percentage of Key Competences, such that Level 1 has 70% of the established credits i.e. 70% of 40 credits which is 28 credits. Similarly the allocated time is also estimated at 70% of the total number of learning hours, which for Level 1 is 1000 hours.

### **VET Level 2 Certificate**

The ratio between key competences, sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge at MQF Level 2 is that of 60% to 20% to 20% respectively. This would amount to having 36 credits in key competences and 12 in each of sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. Those jobs, mainly operative but which require higher level competences than those within MQF Level 1 are at MQF Level 2 and consequently should have this balance of competences. Learners can start their learning pathway at any MCAST Institute progressing from the foundation course at this level to the higher VET levels. Ex: ITS offers one course at this level of difficulty, namely the Food Service Restaurant Operations.

### **VET Level 3 Certificate**

This certificate is at MQF Level 3 which is the target at which an individual can be considered to have reached the minimum level in key competences to enable the individual to progress in higher learning pathways and also be able to live as a full active citizen. This level also exemplifies those jobs that are technical or administrative and so require higher order competences than those at lower levels. The ratio of the key competences to the sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge now becomes 40% to 30% to 30%. This refers to 24 credits in key competences and 18 credits in each of the sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. Ex: the MCAST Certificate in Masonry Heritage Skills (Sewwej) which is offered in conjunction with the Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage (ICMCH).

### **VET Diploma**

The focus on key competences now goes down to only one fifth of the qualification with most of the credits focusing on sectoral skills as well as underpinning knowledge. This also reflects complex tasks which require more specific and technical competences which can only be acquired if an individual already possesses the basic key competences. With a ratio of 20% key competences, and 40% for each of the sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge, the number of credits in each of the sectors will be that of 12 credits in key competences, and 24 credits in each of the sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. This diploma has the same parity of esteem as the full matriculation certificate which normally gives access to courses offered by the University of Malta

that is 2 Advanced Levels, 3 Intermediate Levels and the Systems of Knowledge as a compulsory element. Ex: The MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Children’s Care, Learning and Development.

### VET Higher Diploma

The ratio now goes down to 10% key competences and up to 45% in each of the sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. These would amount to a total of 6 credits in key competences, and 27 credits in each of the sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. The main emphasis now is on training in skills specific to the job sector, mastery of such skills enable oneself to be efficient, to make judgements, develop problem solving skills and to be responsible for self and others.

The differences between the levels will not only be in the distribution of credits across the three aspects – key competences, sectoral skills or underpinning knowledge, but also and most importantly, in the level of difficulty between one level and another in an

ascending order. There are also differences envisaged in the level of competences required at each level. In order to avoid confusion in understanding credits and to promote mutual recognition and transparency of credits gained, a system of coding related to the levels of the framework is being suggested. The first number of the coding used for the different credits will indicate the level at which the credits is being provided. This means that a number of credits starting with a code 2 will indicate that the credit covers learning outcomes considered to be at Level 2 of competence. The implementation of such system in national vocational institutions implies the reorganisation of course make up, the method of describing courses, credit value as well as credit coding. The VET Higher Diploma is level rated with the Undergraduate Certificate and the Undergraduate Diploma offered by the University of Malta. On completion of this qualification one is considered to have completed the short cycle of the first cycle of academic and vocational and professional degrees. Ex: MCAST-BTEC Higher National Diploma in Electrical/Electronics Engineering.

**Table 8: Summary of the number of credits and the minimum number of hours per year for qualifications in key competences only**

Levels	Levels	Number of credits and minimum number of hours per year
Level 3	Level Three Certificate	KC 60 credits 1000-1500hrs
Level 2	Level Two Certificate	KC 60 credits 1000-1500hrs
Level 1	Level One Certificate	KC 40 credits 700-1000hrs

### Level 1 Certificate

This qualification is to reflect the achievement of 40 credits in the areas of key competences only and does not include sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge.<sup>70</sup> It is aimed for those who concluded their compulsory education but did not achieve full Level 1 certification. Through these 40 credits, the individual can be considered to have achieved an MQF Level 1. A learner can successfully complete compulsory education and can be awarded pass, merit or distinction in the School Leaving Certificate which is considered to be as an MQF Level 1 qualification. The reform in compulsory education incorporates a holistic type of education valuing all formal, informal and non-formal learning acquired throughout the compulsory education from the age of 5 to the age of 16. Those learners who will not have successful completion of their general education will not be entitled for a Full or Partial MQF Level 1 certification, they will be given a certificate indicating that the learners have satisfied the legal requirement of obligatory education. Ex: The Adult Education Section of the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) offer courses in Key Competences to adult learners who do not have a School Leaving Certificate. For every Key Competence there will be separate partial certificates indicating the number of credits according to the principle of accumulation and transfer of credit. This shall be formalised in a protocol shortly.

### Level 2 Certificate

This certificate shows achievement of 60 credits in the areas of key competences only and does not include sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. Through these 60 credits, the individual can be considered to have achieved an MQF Level 2. This qualification has the same parity of esteem as 4 passes at Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) grades 6 and 7. Ex: ETC is designing a course in Key Competences starting from Level 1 and progression is planned up to Level 3.

### Level 3 Certificate

Key competences offered at MQF Level 3 have a higher level of difficulty than the two previous levels and learners gain full certification following assessment of achievement based on 60 credits. The learner with full MQF Level 3 certification should have the key competences in place which enables oneself to proceed to further learning. This certificate has the same parity of esteem as a full MQF Level 3 certificate

whereby the individual achieves 6 SEC passes between grades 1 and 5. Ex: ETC is designing a course in Key Competences starting from Level 1 and progression is planned up to Level 3.

### Bachelor's Degree

At the end of the course the learner will achieve full MQF Level 6 qualification which is comparable to the same level of difficulty as the EQF Level 6. To obtain a qualification at this level, which is the first Bologna cycle the learner is expected to have successfully completed a minimum of 180 ECTS credits, at 60 ECTS credits per year of full time study. MQC is in the process of finalising a protocol with the University of Malta, in which the latter binds itself that all qualifications it offers are all learning outcomes-based. The MQF is responsible for exit points of qualifications and access is designed at the discretion of public and private education and training providers. There are a number of possible entries to this level:

- (a) the learner has achieved a full Matriculation Certificate which is composed of 2 Advanced Matriculation Level Certificates, 3 Intermediate Level Certificates and the Systems of Knowledge which is a core subject;
- (b) an undergraduate diploma or an undergraduate certificate at MQF/EQF Level 5;
- (c) the maturity clause which gives the possibility to adult learners who are 23 years and over to pursue their studies in a lifelong learning context. A number of conditions related to the specific entry requirements for specific courses apply and there will be an assessment and an interview before a candidate is accepted to follow a course;
- (d) permeability between VET and HE as a result of a formal agreement between specific institutions with respect to specific courses. Such agreements include for example the Hospitality and Tourism Management course offered by ITS at MQF Level 5 gives access to the 2nd year of the Hospitality and Tourism Management course at MQF Level 6 at the University of Malta. Similarly the MQF Level 5 course offered by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering gives access to a qualification at MQF Level 6 at the University of Malta. Some B.Ed courses also accept VET qualifications for entry into their courses. Agreements in other sectors can also be achieved.
- (e) As from the academic year 2009-2010 MCAST is

<sup>70</sup> MQC, (2007), Descriptors of Key Competences in the National Qualifications Framework Levels 1 to 3.

offering top-up professional degrees to students who have successfully achieved the BTEC Higher National Diploma in Art & Design, Information Technology, Electrical and Electronics Engineering and Business and Commerce. The access to these courses is from the VET MQF Level 5, normally associated with a Higher National Diploma offered by MCAST.

Moreover the flourishing industry of courses offered by foreign awarding bodies represented in Malta has further enhanced lifelong learning. Many adult learners are given the opportunity to follow part-time courses in every MQF Level including HE while being employed full-time. Before registering for a qualification this individual is encouraged to check with the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) which also falls within MQC's remit, to verify whether such qualification is recognised by the state where the qualification originates from. The public service and private course providers and employers request official statements issued by MQRIC indicating whether a qualification is recognised or not.

### **Master's Degree / Postgraduate Diploma / Postgraduate Certificate**

Any one of these qualifications is at MQF/EQF Level 7 and its workload agreed by the Bologna process is represented by a minimum of 60 ECTS credits per year of full time study. At a public education level MQF Level 7 is offered by the University of Malta. In principle access to this level normally requires that the learner has achieved full MQF/EQF Level 6 certification in the specialised field of study. The level of difficulty at this level represents the second Bologna cycle.

### **Doctoral Degree**

This qualification is awarded to an individual who has successfully achieved a level of difficulty as described in the MQF learning outcomes which are based on the EQF and the QF/EHEA. The doctoral degree is valued as MQF/EQF Level 8 and it represents the third cycle of the Bologna Process. Although MQC is not responsible for the entry point of any qualification, access to this level is granted by education institutions to those who have successfully achieved a high level of formal learning in the first cycle and the second cycle of the Bologna pathway. Formal learning may be complemented by informal and non-formal learning but not replaced by informal and non-formal learning.

Although the MQF is holistic and MQC shall shortly implement the policy for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, the high level of expertise at this level requires a solid formal education that cannot be replaced by other forms of learning.

## **2.7 The Alignment Process and the use of Protocols**

As a result of the referencing process an issue emerged in distinguishing between two processes:

- (i) the alignment or inclusion of individual qualifications in the MQF; and
- (ii) the referencing of the MQF and the qualifications within it to the EQF.

Individual qualifications have been aligned on the basis of learning outcomes, assessment criteria, quality assurance procedures and in vocational training, on available occupational standards. The level descriptors of the EQF, the level descriptors of the MQF and the set of criteria and procedures for referencing NQFs to the EQF have helped in no small measure to include individual qualifications at the appropriate level of the MQF. A pilot project with the Institute of Tourism Studies as well as an EQF Leonardo da Vinci project entitled the *EQF-FRAME* facilitated the alignment of qualifications at a national level as well as at a European level with five other partner countries namely Austria, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and Spain. Having an eight-level qualifications framework enhanced this process as level descriptors responded both to the European dimension of qualifications and to the traditional educational system of qualifications in Malta.

The referencing of the MQF to the EQF is a completely different process which engaged key players from public and private education and training institutions, employers' and unions' associations, students' organisations, policy-makers, political parties and many other key players in a dialogue on how level descriptors in the Maltese education system best fit the EQF and the QF/EHEA paradigms.

MQC adopts a specific approach in the referencing process that is the requirement that public and private education and training institutions sign a Protocol agreeing on MQC qualifications standards. Whether the qualification originates from Malta or overseas,

the principles of transparency and transferability of qualifications feature in the protocols. The education and training providers commit themselves to the inclusion of the MQF/EQF Level on all course descriptions such as prospectuses and all transcripts and certificates.

A Protocol is an expression of statements leading to an agreement on the level-rating of qualifications based on agreed Quality Assurance standards and criteria and level descriptors. A Protocol contains profiles of the agreeing parties as well as a list of all qualifications level-rated to the MQF.<sup>71</sup> Normally such protocols are signed by the Heads of the institutions entering into an agreement on the levels of the qualifications. Protocols are updated on a regular basis or within twelve calendar months. Following the re-design of the website of the Malta Qualifications Council the protocols shall be available online.

One of MQC's priorities is to align existing qualifications with the MQF and the EQF. Thus all courses are reviewed and given a level referenced to the MQF and the EQF. It is within MQC's remit to maintain and implement the MQF, thus all qualifications which are not in the established MQF, must have the same parity of esteem as the qualifications in each level of the Framework.

Locally designed qualifications are compared with the qualifications in the MQF. MQC discusses with the education and training provider the qualification standards such as the level of difficulty; learning outcomes; the workload in terms of contact and learning hours and MQC's credit system; the internal and external quality assurance mechanisms and the assessment methods. MQC compares the workload of the proposed qualification with a similar qualification that is level-rated. The Designated Authority of the specific sector shall examine these qualification standards and discusses with MQC whether it agrees with these standards and the level of difficulty. Where applicable the Designated Authority makes recommendations to the level-rating of such qualifications. It is the Designated Authority which together with MQC will have the final say on technical aspects of the qualification as it represents quality assurance in the sector. The training providers and MQC agree on these key elements of quality assured qualifications which are then integrated in a Protocol signed by the representatives of both parties.<sup>72</sup>

There is a different process to be followed when it comes to the alignment of courses accredited by foreign awarding bodies and offered by local education and training institutions. The procedure is as follows:

### Figure 5: Level Rating of Foreign Qualifications offered in Malta

(See Part Five of this document)

**Education and Training Provider submits a list of course titles and the name of awarding body.**

**MQC checks the full details of each qualification and looks for the level of difficulty and the NQF level of its country of origin.**

**MQC checks the referencing of the NQF of the country of origin to the EQF, and establishes the MQF Level of each qualification.**

**MQC and the education and training provider discuss the results of the level rating process and sign a protocol.**

71 A sample of a protocol can be viewed in Annex 5.

72 Bologna Process: Coordination Group for Qualifications Framework, Report on Qualifications Frameworks to be submitted to the BFUG in early 2009, third draft, 15th September 2008



## Example:

- The local education and training provider submits a list of such courses to MQC including details such as the course code; course title and the awarding body;
- MQC checks the full details of that particular course such as for example BTEC or City and Guilds, generally available in a national database of formal qualifications;
- MQC checks what is the level of difficulty according to the Framework from where the qualification originated, for example in the BTEC and City and Guilds, the applicable Framework is the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) of England, Wales and Northern Ireland;
- MQC verifies the referencing of the qualification in its country of origin's NQF to the EQF which is comparable to the MQF. From levels 5 to 8 the levels of the QCF and the EQF have the same value. Due to the QCF's entry level the first 3 levels of the QCF differ from the EQF and therefore from the MQF as QCF Level 1 is EQF/MQF Level 2; QCF Level 2 is EQF/MQF Level 3; and QCF Level 3 is EQF/MQF Level 4. The difficulty arises when it comes to level-rating QCF Level 4 courses as these may either be Level 4 or Level 5. In such cases MQC looks into each programme of studies and matches such programme to the level descriptors of the MQF and the EQF including where applicable the QF/EHEA if the qualification falls within the short cycle of the first cycle of the Bologna Process; and
- This level-rating exercise is discussed with the parties concerned and formalised in a Protocol.

MQC is in the process of setting up an online database listing information on formal qualifications provided by public institutions and eventually by private institutions. This information shall include the following details:

- the accredited formal qualifications available in Malta;
- the awarding body;
- the duration;
- the MQF Level;
- the value in credits;
- the learning outcomes;
- and the occupational standards they lead to.

Such a register will serve as a tool for learners enabling them to check about particular courses, their value

and the accredited institutions before committing themselves to a programme. It also gives publicity to accredited institutions which benefit from the database by demonstrating that they abide with established quality assurance standards either referred to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area or the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF).

MQC has published four policy documents which make part of the *Valuing All Learning* Series which have been the result of consultation with stakeholders and published for stakeholders as guidelines. The first document introduces the MQF and other European and international qualifications frameworks. The second focuses on Vocational Education and Training; the third on Quality Assurance and the fourth on the Validation of Informal and Non-formal Learning.

The following table is found in the second volume of the series and has the objective of guiding training providers to approach MQC with the information needed on home-grown qualifications to be designed on or aligned to the MQF.<sup>73</sup>

An MQC Protocol is an expression of statements leading to an agreement on the level-rating of qualifications based on agreed Quality Assurance standards and criteria and level descriptors. An MQC Protocol contains profiles of the agreeing parties as well as a list of all qualifications level-rated to the MQF.

**Table 9: Main Steps for the harmonisation of existing or new courses leading to MQC Certification**

Step	Action
1	Decide the MQF Level of Qualification (1-5) of your course based on MQF level descriptors;
2	Review existing course to identify areas of Key Competences, Sectoral Skills and Underpinning Knowledge;
3	Divide existing course in a number of credits, each with course title
4	Identify excess/under-represented credit in each of the Key Competences, Sectoral Skills and Underpinning Knowledge;
5	Draw up curriculum plan indicating where applicable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Title of qualification;</li> <li>• Level of qualification;</li> <li>• Institution issuing certification;</li> <li>• Sector and career area of qualification;</li> <li>• Duration of course;</li> <li>• Entry requirement;</li> <li>• Distribution of learning modes (work/direct teaching etc.);</li> <li>• Main modes of Assessment;</li> <li>• Titles of and number of credits for each of Key Competences, Sectoral Skills and Underpinning Knowledge; and</li> <li>• Distribution of credits within institution's semesters/terms.</li> </ul>
6	Draw up course descriptions in terms of learning outcomes. Course descriptions are to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Title of Course;</li> <li>• Institution Issuing credits;</li> <li>• Level of credits;</li> <li>• Sectoral Field;</li> <li>• Career Area;</li> <li>• Mode of Study;</li> <li>• Competences achieved;</li> <li>• Mode of Assessment;</li> <li>• Reading List; and</li> <li>• Academic/experience background of tutors.</li> </ul>
7	Course needs to go through the internal quality assurance structures within the institution. This involves ensuring that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remit of study is within institution's field of training;</li> <li>• course content is adequate by having it reviewed by a number of experts in the field within institution;</li> <li>• ensuring that course obtains formal approval within institution;</li> <li>• ensuring that course is in line with MQC guidelines;</li> <li>• external quality assurance of course is planned;</li> <li>• space/administrative/academic capacity to deliver course exists; and</li> <li>• course reviewed possibly by employers for validity of training programme.</li> </ul>
8	Course is submitted to MQC with all details for level-rating. Information to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• title of course, level, sectoral field and career area;</li> <li>• course description;</li> <li>• individual credit descriptions; and</li> <li>• description of Quality Assurance standards to be used.</li> </ul>
9	MQC evaluates the application and if successful level rates the course.

Following the establishment of the proposed legal Framework which will replace the Legal Notice 347/2005 MQC will accredit all qualifications based on

learning outcomes that demonstrate that they lead to the particular competences at a particular level.

## 2.8 Sectoral Frameworks

All aligned formal, non-formal and informal qualifications must either form part of the MQF or of one of the sectoral frameworks. The Sectoral Frameworks must also be aligned to the Malta Qualifications Framework which will act as the over-arching framework of qualifications at national level.

The MQF as launched in June 2007 includes qualifications which follow the general education, VET or Higher Education pathways. All other formal, informal and non-formal qualifications must be part of a sectoral framework such as for example a framework for qualifications in personal services and activities such as artistic qualifications and sports. Examples of beauty qualifications would include hairdressing, pedicure, manicure, nail art, massaging and others. Artistic qualifications include theatre, dance, art, and music etc.

The *EQF-FRAME* Project involved the exercise of aligning tourism qualifications of six member states represented in the consortium co-ordinated by MQC to the EQF.<sup>74</sup> In the case of Malta this involved qualifications offered by the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) which have been level-rated by MQC through its first Protocol signed by both parties in November 2007. Moreover a Sector Skills Unit with representatives of the tourism sector such as the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), ITS, the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA) and MQC meet regularly to discuss and design occupational standards which are pegged with courses offered by ITS.

Initiatives which facilitate the design of sectoral frameworks in Malta include the ongoing consultation with stakeholders. Stakeholders are also involved in the two European Social Fund (ESF) Projects co-funded by the European Commission. The *VQPACK* Project will assess the learning outcomes of qualifications offered by the public VET institutions in Malta, that is by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST); ITS and the Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage (ICMCH). This project will identify competences required by the labour market in specific sectors, which will be published in a manual. An information pack will be produced for guidance teachers, principals, students and adult learners. The other ESF Project *Skills+* shall design,

develop and publish the occupational standards of the following nine identified sectors:

1. Art & Design;
2. Community Services;
3. Agribusiness;
4. Building & Construction Engineering;
5. Business & Commerce;
6. Electrical & Electronics Engineering;
7. Mechanical Engineering;
8. Tourism Studies; and
9. Heritage Studies

MQC and ETC agreed that there will be a single set of national occupational standards. The other sectors which were not identified by MQC will be designed by ETC and agreed by MQC. These occupational standards shall form the basis of the revised Trade Testing process of ETC, as the assessors will be testing the individuals according to the established standards.

All learners should be engaged by the fact that, following an assessment of their learning outcomes, their qualifications will have a transparent value, with a currency at national and European level and possibly beyond. Qualifications can be seen as the building blocks of Sectoral Frameworks, with incremental qualifications, whereby each level of difficulty leads to another advanced level. Thus the objective of Sectoral Frameworks is to encourage lifelong learning and further investment in human capital.

## 2.9 Trans-National Qualifications Framework (TQF)

Ministers of Education of 32 small countries in the Commonwealth have agreed to set up the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Malta is one of the participants in this initiative. The VUSSC countries agreed to “create mechanisms to support the accreditation of qualifications and transfer of credits between countries.” This brought about the idea of a Trans-National Qualifications Framework which is an international framework that not only does not replace other frameworks, but aims to harmonise qualifications frameworks. The objective of the TQF is to have a translation device which facilitates credit transfer in a global setting and promotes accreditation

74 MQC, (2008), *The European Qualifications Framework and Tourism Studies: A Comparative Analysis of Tourism Systems of Qualifications – Austria, Greece, Italy, Malta, Slovenia and Spain.*

**Table 10: The MQF referenced to the TQF**

TQF Level	Qualification Titles	Minimum Credits of TQF	Hrs of TQF	EQF & MQF QF/EHEA	EQF/MQF Level
10	Doctoral Degree	360	3600	No credits	8
9	Masters Degree	240	2400	60 ECTS	7
8	Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma	120	1200	60 ECTS	
7	Bachelor's Degree with Honours Bachelor's Degree Graduate Certificate and Diploma	360	3600	180/240 ECTS	6
6	Advanced / Higher Diploma Associate Degree / Foundation Degree	240	2400		5
5	Diploma	240	2400		4
4	Advanced Certificate	120	1200		3
3	Certificate III	40	400		2
2	Certificate II	40	400		
1	Certificate I	40	400		1

mechanisms based on an agreed set of Quality Assurance criteria.

The underlying principles of this framework are:

When referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework, the architecture of the level descriptors of the TQF is very broad like the structure of the EQF as both frameworks allow flexibility so that other NQFs will be aligned to them.

- E-learning qualifications which by nature are international and are expected to increase;
- English is the language used for learning; and
- The members of the VUSSC network located across the globe all share the challenges of globalisation and the increased mobility of highly skilled professionals. The TQF has 10 levels which match with the NQFs of a number of VUSSC members. The levels in Higher Education normally associated with the Bologna process range from Level 7 to level 10.

**1 TQF credit = 10 hours of notional learning**

Notional learning includes all forms of learning including traditional learning, e-learning, distance learning or blended learning. This is based on the British credit system and for both systems to be transparent they

should be related and given a value that relates to the ECTS system where 1 ECTS credit consists of 25 hours of total learning. For example 360 TQF credits at TQF Level 7 are equivalent to 180 ECTS credits at EQF Level 6 based on a comparable value of 360 TQF credits and 180 ECTS credits.

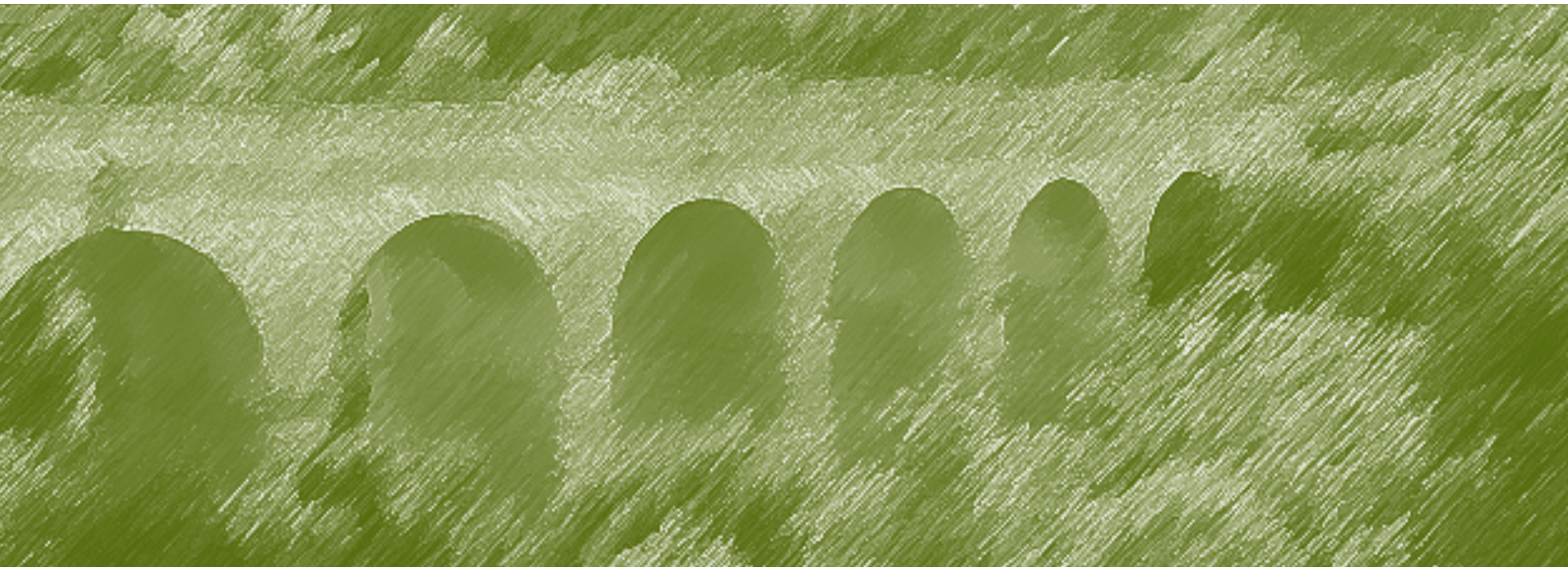
The TQF level descriptors which have been shaped by the descriptors of a number of qualifications agencies particularly the Qualifications and Credit Authority (QCA), the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), Malaysia Qualifications Authority (MQA), Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) are very flexible and easy to adopt in an NQF context.<sup>75</sup> Qualifications Agencies and other organisations responsible for the

design, implementation and maintenance of the NQF are encouraged to reference their NQF to the TQF. Alignment to this Trans-National framework can bring further benefits associated with the transparency of qualifications of individual learners and workers in a globalised world characterised by mobility.

When referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework, the architecture of the level descriptors of the TQF is very broad like the structure of the EQF as both frameworks allow the flexibility so that other NQFs will be aligned to them. The level descriptors of the TQF are not based on the knowledge, skills and competences paradigm like those of the EQF, but they incorporate the same principles of the QF/EHEA for Levels 5 to 8.

<sup>75</sup> The VUSSC's TQF Level Descriptors are found in Annex 6.





## **PART THREE**

Referencing the MQF  
to the EQF and the QF/EHEA





# 3

Although Malta's obligation was to reference the MQF to the EQF, this document also aims at cross-referencing the MQF to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA) since the level descriptors of Higher Education in Malta reflect the level descriptors of both Frameworks.

### 3. Cross-Referencing the MQF to the EQF and the QF/EHEA

The political decision on cross-referencing the NQFs to the EQF was that according to the subsidiarity principle Member States shall set up a National Qualifications Framework which best fits the national education system. Although Malta modelled its MQF on the EQF,<sup>76</sup> Member States can opt to have a Framework with more or with fewer levels than eight. In fact Ireland's NQF has 10 levels; Scotland's 12; England, Wales and Northern Ireland has 9 levels. However, by 2010 Member States should reference their qualifications to the EQF so that qualifications are transparent and have a clear value.

By 2012 all new certificates issued in all EU Member States should show the value of the qualification according to the NQF and its corresponding EQF Level. In principle this is a voluntary process, however it is the responsibility of Member States to provide their citizens with easily readable and transferable qualifications.

#### 3.1 The Referencing Criteria

The EQF Advisory Group agreed on a set of criteria which facilitate the referencing process. Although these criteria are not cast in stone, their objective is to guide Member States to align their qualifications

to the EQF. The benefits of the EQF can only be perceived if national qualifications are related to the EQF, thus giving them the values of transparency, comparability and equivalence as well as currency for transferability.

3.1.1. Legal Notice 347/2005 which established the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) established that MQC is responsible for the development and maintenance of the Malta Qualifications Framework; to promote and facilitate lifelong learning access, transfer and progression; and to foster the recognition abroad of professional and vocational certificates awarded in Malta.<sup>77</sup> This legal notice will be replaced and superseded by the Further and Higher Education Act which will revise MQC's mandate.

The Malta Qualifications Council is an entity entrusted by Government with the linkage between the various sectors of public and private education such as schools, vocational and higher education as well as training institutions for adults and the Malta Qualifications Framework. MQC acts as the broker between the making of a qualification, the delivery of the learning experience/s and the final certification process normally expressed in a transcript.

<sup>76</sup> MQC, Volume 2, p50.

<sup>77</sup> LN347/2005, Employment and Training Services Act, (CAP.343), Malta Qualifications Council Regulations, 2005, B4949.

Over the last few months MQC has acted as a promoter for the introduction of the Diploma Supplement for qualifications at MQF levels 5 to 8 and is working closely with VET institutions to introduce the Certificate Supplement for qualifications at levels 2 to 4 of the MQF.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore MQC level rates all qualifications and aligns such qualifications to the MQF and assists all training providers (including HE institutions) to re-design the course descriptions based on learning outcomes.

3.1.2. One of the pre-requisites for the referencing of the MQF to the EQF is that there must be a clear link between both Frameworks, in terms of progression of the levels of difficulty demonstrated through the level descriptors. The link between the MQF and the EQF is demonstrated in the following section of this report.

3.1.3. MQC has established standards on which education and training institutions agree upon when both parties sign Protocols and to which they are obliged to adhere to. These standards include aligning qualifications to one of the levels of the MQF, to provide learning outcomes and credit based qualifications, clear assessment procedures and eventually the recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

3.1.4. These standards are transparent and define the workload, method of assessment and internal and external Quality Assurance (a full list of the standards which all education and training providers must meet is available in table 8). These are easily available from the website of the Malta Qualifications Council and discussed on a one-to-one basis during meetings with education and training institutions.<sup>79</sup>

3.1.5. The Malta Qualifications Council is the body responsible for the National Qualifications Framework and hence it will also assume the responsibility to quality assure those qualifications that fall within the Framework and which correspond to the level-descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. It will be MQC's responsibility to quality assure vocational training and learning experiences which fall within informal and non-formal education as well as continuous professional development qualifications.<sup>80</sup>

3.1.6. The Further and Higher Education Act which is expected to be published in 2009 will establish the

criteria on which accrediting bodies will be established in Malta. It is expected that a Quality Assurance Agency will be responsible for all further and higher education qualifications and that such agency will tap the already existing resources available within the National Commission for Higher Education and the Malta Qualifications Council. Once this process is set in motion, one cannot exclude the setting up of private Quality Assurance Agencies in Malta.

3.1.7. Experts from Member States were called upon to peer review Malta's referencing process at all levels of the MQF. These experts were selected on the basis of experience and expertise in undertaking similar processes in their country of origin. These international experts are Mr Tom Bain Former Assistant Director of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Dr James Keevy Director, International Liaison, South African Qualifications Authority, Mr Vincent McBride, Senior Specialist, Planning Monitoring Evaluation, European Training Foundation and Dr Jim Murray, Executive Chairman National Qualifications Authority Ireland. The following national experts were consulted Mr Felix Borg General Manager Malta Employment and Training Corporation, Dr Jennifer Cassingena Harper Commissioner National Commission for Higher Education, Dr Suzanne Gatt Senior Lecturer Faculty of Education University of Malta and Mr Emmanuel Zahra, Director Institute of Mechanical Engineering (MCAST). They reviewed the document in their personal capacity and not as representatives of the institutions they are employed with.

3.1.8. It is the objective of this report to define the underlying principles behind the referencing process, its development and implementation, and the impact it will have on stakeholders. This report will be published and presented to the stakeholders for further consultation.

3.1.9. There will be a Register at EU Level listing the Member States which have completed the referencing process. The Malta Qualifications Council shall inform the European Commission following finalisation of this report and approval by stakeholders through consultation. The Commission will then provide a virtual link to this report.

3.1.10. Level-rating of courses provided by public education and training institutions has been agreed

78 Refer to Annex 7 for a specimen of the Diploma Supplement used by the University of Malta and a specimen of the Certificate Supplement.

79 MQC, (2007), Valuing All Learning Series, Volume 2, Guidelines for a Vocational Education and Training System for Malta's National Qualifications Framework, p50.

80 The MQC Quality Assurance Policy for VET is provided with full details in MQC, (2007), Valuing All Learning Series, Volume 3, A Quality Assurance Policy for Vocational Education and Training.

upon between these institutions and MQC, and formalised in Protocols which bind these institutions to indicate the level of the MQF and EQF on all new transcripts and certificates issued by them. This procedure will follow with private education and training providers who shall also follow the same process

as the public institutions and re-shape their courses on the learning outcomes model, assign credit to all learning, sign a Protocol with MQC and show the MQF and EQF Level-rating on all information on courses and transcripts and certificates. This process has already started with some providers and will be finalised by 2012 as recommended by the European Commission.

**Table 11: EQF Indicators for Referencing**

*see also pgs 22-26*

<b>Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF</b>
1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications Framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework.
3. The national Framework or qualifications system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications Framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.
5. The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications Framework or system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).
6. The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.
7. The referencing process shall involve international experts.
8. The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national Framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point, and shall address separately each of the criteria.
9. The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.
10. Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level.

**Table 12: EQF Indicators for Referencing**

Criteria for verifying that national frameworks are compatible with the Bologna Framework:
1. The national framework for Higher Education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for Higher Education.
2. There is a clear demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the European framework.
3. The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS compatible credits.
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are transparent.
5. The national quality assurance system for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent <i>Communiqué</i> agreed by ministers in the Bologna Process.
6. The national framework, and any alignment with the European framework, is referenced in all Diploma Supplements.
7. The responsibilities of the domestic parties to the national framework are clearly determined and published.

The referencing process undertaken by MQC took into account both sets of criteria particularly in the analysis of the level descriptors for the MQF. From a thorough study of both criteria it clearly transpires that an amount of overlap between the two sets is evident as can be demonstrated in the following table. In the MQF referencing process particular attention was given to the synergy between the two sets of criteria and how they impinge on the principles governing the referencing of the MQF to the two frameworks.

In our analysis of the two sets of criteria the following observations were made:

1. The first criterion and the seventh criterion of the QF/EHEA correspond to the first criteria of the

EQF in that the base for both criteria is the legal competence that should govern the Designated Authority involved in the referencing process.

2. Both criteria illustrate the importance of having “clear and demonstrable links” between the National Qualifications Framework and the overarching frameworks of the EQF and the QF/EHEA.
3. The third criterion in both sets focus on the importance of establishing a clear and measurable means to value qualifications such as a credit system and the learning outcomes approach. However, the EQF related criteria places also reasonable links with arrangements for the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

**Table 13: A comparative overview of the criteria of the EQF and QF/EHEA**

**Mapping of the two sets of criteria and procedures governing the EQF and the QF/EHEA**

EQF	QF/EHEA
1. Legal Competence governing the referencing process	1. Legal Competence governing the national framework for HE qualifications
2. Demonstrable link between Qualifications and level descriptors.	2. Demonstrable link between Qualifications and cycle descriptors
3. Learning Outcomes, VINFL and credit system	3. Learning Outcomes, ECTS or compatible credits
4. Transparency	4. Transparency
5. National Quality Assurance System consistent with EQARF	5. National Quality Assurance System consistent with Bologna Communiqués
6. The referencing process should be endorsed by QA institutions	6. the referencing process should be reflected in the Diploma Supplement
7. The referencing process to be reviewed by international experts	7. The key players to the national framework are determined and published
8. The official endorsement and publication of the Referencing Report	
9. EQF platform to maintain Referencing Report Register	
10. The referencing process should be visible on all certificates, diplomas and degrees	

4. Transparency is the common denominator between the two sets of criteria and procedures as a tool for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualifications system.
5. The fifth criterion brings out the importance of the European dimension in this referencing process indicating that both the political mandates (Bologna Communiqués and the EQARF tool).
6. The tenth criterion of the EQF can be matched to the sixth criterion of the QF/EHEA. Both indicators focus on the necessary mechanisms to certify any learning process in a standard and easily verified manner.
7. Criteria 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the EQF are not directly linked to the seven-tier set of criteria of the QF/EHEA. The sixth criterion of the EQF is about the endorsement

of the referencing process by quality assurance entities, while the eighth criterion is about the official endorsement and publication of the referencing report. The criteria for the QF/EHEA do not consider the need for international expertise in the verification of the national framework to the Bologna Framework. On the other hand the EQF seventh criterion values the consultation of advisors experienced in the referencing process of National Qualifications Frameworks. The EQF ninth criterion considers it necessary to have a visible European referencing process as a Register of Referencing Reports facilitates the referencing process as a mutual learning exercise for those European countries which are in the process of designing their NQF and its referencing to the EQF. Another objective of this register is that it is a tool for transparency and mobility.

### 3.2 Setting Common Standards through Level Descriptors

As a pre-requisite for the referencing of qualifications to the MQF and to the EQF the qualifications must be learning outcomes-based. Learning outcomes are statements that describe what a learner knows and is able to do at the end of a learning process. They are a combination of Knowledge, Skills and Competences. Knowledge is described as theoretical or factual. Skills are the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. Competences are associated with autonomy and responsibility.

The nature of the level descriptors is generic as a neutral reference point so that they can be applied to all forms of qualifications whether formal, informal and non-formal as well as to all sectoral qualifications. They have the objective to set standards describing the progressing level of difficulty. The level descriptors of the MQF are more detailed than those of the EQF. This aspect provides further clarification and makes them more user-friendly and easy to use. Another feature of the MQF's level descriptors is that they are focused on the individual, the verb in singular form shows that the level descriptors are designed with the individual in mind. The level descriptors can be equated to qualifications criteria that measure complexity, volume and the level of learning expected for the particular qualification.<sup>81</sup> They give a broad profile of what an individual should know and do with varying degrees of autonomy and responsibility.

The MQF Level descriptors are presented side by side to the EQF to facilitate a comparative understanding of both systems. Malta's level-descriptors were built upon those published by the Government of Malta in Legal Notice 347 of 2005 when a first attempt to create a National Qualifications Framework was undertaken at that time. Malta's Qualifications Framework has been influenced by the eight-level classification of the EQF but it responds directly to a long-standing system of a Maltese qualifications system. As a matter of fact the original level descriptors of the MQF were approved in June 2007 when the official National Qualifications Framework was launched by the Minister of Education. Assessment of progression is facilitated by the numbering of each component within the knowledge, skills, competences and learning outcomes fields which enhances comparison between levels.

However, the level descriptors of the MQF are distinguished from those of the EQF because they include a list of learning outcomes which summaries the knowledge, skills and competences and which points out specific skills such as communications skills, judgmental skills and learning skills which progress throughout the framework as tabled in table 24 which shows the progression within the MQF. Progression in the MQF is not recorded in terms of knowledge, skills and competences but in terms of knowledge and understanding; applying knowledge and understanding; communication skills; judgmental skills; learning skills and autonomy and responsibility.

The learning outcomes in all the following MQF Level Descriptors are stated in the following order:

1. Knowledge and Understanding;
2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding;
3. Communication Skills;
4. Judgmental Skills;
5. Learning Skills; and
6. Autonomy and Responsibility

The following tables illustrate (in the highlighted text) a comparison between the Malta Qualifications Framework level descriptors and those of the European Qualifications Framework. It is important to underline that the Maltese level descriptors reflect the education system and culture of Malta but can be substantially referenced to the EQF Level descriptors. In comparing the two sets of level descriptors, note has been taken of the Maltese longer version of describing the level of difficulty expected at each of the eight levels of qualifications. The style of writing level descriptors is typical of a system of education which lays particular emphasis on the explicit written context of describing qualifications.

81 TQF Management Committee, (October 2008), Trans-National Qualifications Framework Consultation Document for Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth, p15.

**Table 14: The Level Descriptors for Level 1**

EQF MQF

<b>Level Knowledge</b>	<b>Level 1 EQF</b> Basic general knowledge;	<b>Level 1 MQF</b> 1. acquires basic general knowledge related to the immediate environment and expressed through a variety of simple tools and contexts as an entry point to lifelong learning; 2. knows and understands the steps needed to complete simple tasks and activities in familiar environments; 3. is aware and understands basic tasks and instructions; and 4. understands basic textbooks.
<b>Skills</b>	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks;	1. has the ability to apply basic knowledge and carry out a limited range of simple tasks; 2. has basic repetitive communication skills to complete well defined routine tasks and identifies whether actions have been accomplished; and 3. follows instructions and be aware of consequences of basic actions for self and others.
<b>Competences</b>	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context;	1. applies basic knowledge and skills to do simple repetitive and familiar tasks; 2. participates in and takes basic responsibility for the action of simple tasks; 3. activities are carried out under guidance and within simple defined timeframes; and 4. acquires and applies basic key competences at this level.
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	1. Knowledge and Understanding;  2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding;  3. Communication Skills;  4. Judgmental Skills;  5. Learning Skills; and  6. Autonomy and Responsibility	1. has basic knowledge and understanding of textbooks and simple tasks while relating to the immediate environment 2. follows instructions and completes repetitive simple tasks in familiar contexts and under a quality controlled system; 3. communicates basic information in familiar repetitive contexts; 4. assesses and ensures that assigned tasks have been completed effectively; 5. acquires and applies key competences to defined actions; and 6. takes some responsibility for completing simple tasks and exercises limited autonomy.

The underlying principle behind the MQF and the EQF Level 1 qualification is that the learner is expected to have basic learning outcomes. The term basic is defined as elementary<sup>82</sup> yet fundamental and which serves as a starting point.<sup>83</sup> One should possess basic knowledge from one's immediate environment or from basic textbooks, and apply this knowledge to

complete a limited range of simple routine tasks and to follow instructions. Both communication and key competences at this level are also basic. The tasks are accomplished following step by step guidance, and therefore one will not have full responsibility for one's actions. The responsibility will be shared with the person guiding the tasks.

82 <http://thesaurus.com>

83 <http://dictionary.com>

**Table 15: The Level Descriptors for Level 2**

EQF MQF

<b>Level Knowledge</b>	<b>Level 2 EQF</b> Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study;	<b>Level 2 MQF</b> 1. possess good knowledge of a field of work or study; 2. is aware of and interprets types of information and ideas; 3. understands facts and procedures in the application of basic tasks and instructions; and 4. selects and uses relevant knowledge to accomplish specific actions for self and others.
<b>Skills</b>	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;	1. has the ability to demonstrate a range of skills by carrying out a range of complex tasks within a specified field of work or study; 2. communicates basic information; and 3. ensures tasks are carried out effectively.
<b>Competences</b>	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy;	1. applies factual knowledge and practical skills to do some structured tasks; 2. ensures one acts pro-actively; 3. carries out activities under limited supervision and with limited responsibility in a quality controlled context; and 4. acquires and applies basic key competences at this level.
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	1. Knowledge and Understanding; 2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding; 3. Communication Skills; 4. Judgmental Skills; 5. Learning Skills; and 6. Autonomy and Responsibility	1. understands and uses good knowledge for tasks, procedures or a field of work or study; 2. follows instructions and completes a range of well-defined tasks; 3. communicates basic information in unfamiliar contexts; 4. selects and uses information for specified tasks and be pro-active; 5. acquires and applies key competences to a range of actions; and 6. takes responsibility and exercises autonomy in well-defined tasks under a quality controlled system.

Level 2 of both Frameworks shows the gradual increase in the level of difficulty. The learner is expected to have a good knowledge rather than a basic general knowledge. One should be able to evaluate, select and interpret information accordingly. Then this factual information is used to demonstrate a range of complex skills, including a more advanced level of communication skills and key competences. Unlike Level 1 the learner is competent without necessarily being in a familiar environment and the tasks are not simple and repetitive. The element of pro-activity is introduced at this level. The fact that the

learner is expected to carry out well-defined tasks gives certain though very limited degree of specialisation. Therefore he/she is supervised and monitored in the whole process but not given the direction needed in Level 1. This is where a limited amount of autonomy is given to the learner, who is responsible for completing well-defined tasks. However, the learner is not responsible for the quality assurance aspects of the tasks he/she is assigned to. This would be the responsibility of the person with a supervisory role and who has a higher level of competence.



**Table 16: The Level Descriptors for Level 3**

EQF MQF

<p><b>Level Knowledge</b></p>	<p><b>Level 3 EQF</b>                  Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study;</p>	<p><b>Level 3 MQF</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. understands the relevancy of theoretical knowledge and information related to one field of work or study;</li> <li>2. assesses, evaluates and interprets facts establishing basic principles and concepts in a particular field of work or study;</li> <li>3. understands facts and procedures in the application of more complex tasks and instructions; and</li> <li>4. selects and uses relevant knowledge acquired on one's own initiative to accomplish specific actions for self and others.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Skills</b></p>	<p>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>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. demonstrates a range of developed skills to carry out more than one complex task effectively and in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts;</li> <li>2. communicates more complex information; and</li> <li>3. solves basic problems by applying basic methods, tools, materials and information given in a restricted learning environment.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Competences</b></p>	<p>Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems;</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. applies knowledge and skills to do some tasks systematically;</li> <li>2. adapts own behavior to circumstances in solving problems by participating pro-actively in structured learning environments;</li> <li>3. uses own initiative with established responsibility and autonomy, but supervised in quality controlled learning environments normally within a craftsmanship environment; and</li> <li>4. acquires key competences at this level as a basis for lifelong learning.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Learning Outcomes</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge and Understanding;</li> <li>2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding;</li> <li>3. Communication Skills;</li> <li>4. Judgmental Skills;</li> <li>5. Learning Skills; and</li> <li>6. Autonomy and Responsibility</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. understands theoretical knowledge and information related to complex procedures in a field of work or study;</li> <li>2. follows instructions and carries out complex tasks systematically and in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts;</li> <li>3. communicates complex information in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts;</li> <li>4. assesses, evaluates and interprets facts related to a field of work or study and applies basic problem solving techniques;</li> <li>5. acquires and applies key competences as a basis for lifelong learning; and</li> <li>6. takes agreed responsibility for completing complex tasks, and interacts with the immediate environment and in defined actions at one's own initiative.</li> </ol>

Although Levels 1 and 2 are also associated with the completion of compulsory education, full MQF Level 3 certification gives access to further education, therefore the key competences have a higher level of difficulty when compared to the previous levels. The key competences at this level must have the same parity of esteem as six Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) passes grades 1 to 5. Therefore this level introduces problem solving skills, the systematic carrying out of procedures and the demonstration of learning outcomes following personal initiative. The learner is able to understand complicated instructions and carry out a range of tasks which require a range of developed skills. At this level the learner is able to communicate information which is more complex than the previous level. Whereas in the previous level pro-activity was supervised, it is now manifested out of own initiative and requires the learner to be responsive to problems which need urgent action. Some tasks are now carried with responsibility and autonomy.

Level 4 is characterised by an advanced level of key competences which gives access to the short cycle of the first Bologna cycle, if one follows the academic route, which has the same parity of esteem as a national diploma. Theoretical knowledge at this MQF Level has become broad, and the learner is expected to analyse the knowledge and come up with principles and the application of procedures in broad contexts. Selection, evaluation and analysis are all in broad contexts and not limited to specific contexts as in the previous level. Progression to this level is distinguished by expertise in and application of a range of technical or academic skills, the introduction of qualitative and quantitative

concepts of work, and the changing role of the learner to that of a supervisor. Whereas in the previous level he/she was autonomous and responsible for a limited number of one's actions, this level introduces responsibility for a wide range of competences of self and others, and the provision of solutions. The learner is responsible for carrying out his/her tasks effectively, monitors the work of others and implements quality assurance mechanisms.

Although at first sight there seems to be a sudden shift from the descriptors of Level 4 to those of Level 5, the progression is gradual and the changes in the learning outcomes build upon the previous levels. This can be attributed to the higher level of difficulty required for completing this short cycle of the first Bologna cycle of the QF/EHEA.<sup>84</sup> MQF Level 5 introduces aspects such as further learning and basic research, personal academic development, judgements on social and ethical issues, personal social responsibility, and the effective and efficient management of projects and colleagues. MQF Level 5 descriptors emphasise the demonstration of technical and practical knowledge, even when communicating with people from different backgrounds. They also highlight the present level of achievement and the self-assessment of prospects for career progression through access to higher education. There is a developed degree of autonomy and responsibility, and whereas in the previous level the learner had a supervisory role, now the role shifted to include aspects of management. This involves team building and training, and mastering of unpredictable problems.

84 Bologna Process Coordination Group for Qualifications Framework, Report on Qualifications Frameworks – submitted to the BFUG (12th -13th February 2009).

**Table 17: The Level Descriptors for Level 4**

EQF MQF

<p><b>Level Knowledge</b></p>	<p><b>Level 4 EQF</b> Factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study;</p>	<p><b>Level 4 MQF</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. understands broad theoretical knowledge and analysis of information related to a field of work or study;</li> <li>2. understands facts and establishes basic principles in broad contexts within a field of work or study;</li> <li>3. applies facts and procedures in broad contexts within a defined field of work or study; and</li> <li>4. selects and analysis theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a specific field of work or study.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Skills</b></p>	<p>A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study;</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. demonstrates acquired knowledge and the ability to apply a range of technical or academic skills to carry out multiple complex tasks;</li> <li>2. communicates theoretical and technical information in a work or learning environment; and</li> <li>3. generates solutions to specific problems within a field of work or study.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Competences</b></p>	<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, take some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities;</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. applies knowledge and skills to perform qualitative and quantitative tasks that require technical capacity normally associated with a technician's competence;</li> <li>2. supervises the quality and quantity of work of self and others' under quality assured structures, with responsibility and autonomy; and</li> <li>3. demonstrates an advanced level of key competences at this level as a basis for higher education.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Learning Outcomes in the MQF</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge and Understanding;</li> <li>2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding;</li> <li>3. Communication Skills;</li> <li>4. Judgmental Skills;</li> <li>5. Learning Skills; and</li> <li>6. Autonomy and Responsibility</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. understands and analyses broad theoretical, practical and technical knowledge related to a field of work or study;</li> <li>2. follows instructions and carries out defined theoretical, complex and technical tasks;</li> <li>3. communicates theoretical and technical information in a work or learning context;</li> <li>4. interacts with and generates solutions to problems within the immediate environment of a given field of work or study;</li> <li>5. applies key competences to defined actions and to a technical or academic field of work or learning context; and</li> <li>6. exercises autonomy and takes responsibility for defined qualitative and quantitative tasks of self and others by completing complex tasks in a broad context under quality assured mechanisms.</li> </ol>

**Table 18: The Level Descriptors for Level 5**

EQF MQF

<p><b>Level Knowledge</b></p>	<p><b>Level 5 EQF</b>                  Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundary of that knowledge;</p>	<p><b>Level 5 MQF</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. understands knowledge in a field of study that builds upon advanced general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks leading to further studies to complete the first cycle;</li> <li>2. develops strategic and creative responses in researching solutions to well defined concrete and abstract problems; and</li> <li>3. makes judgements based on knowledge of relevant social and ethical issues.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Skills</b></p>	<p>A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems;</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. demonstrates transfer of theoretical and practical knowledge, in creating solutions to problems;</li> <li>2. conveys ideas, in a well structured and coherent way to peers, supervisors and clients using qualitative and quantitative information;</li> <li>3. has the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems; and</li> <li>4. evaluates own learning and identifies learning needs necessary to undertake further learning.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Competences</b></p>	<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>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. manages projects independently that require problem solving techniques where there are many factors, some of which interact and lead to unpredictable outcomes;</li> <li>2. shows creativity in managing projects, manages people and reviews performance of self and others; train others and develop team performance;</li> <li>3. expresses a comprehensive internalized personal world view reflecting engagement of solidarity with others; and</li> <li>4. has the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Learning Outcomes</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge and Understanding;</li> <li>2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding;</li> <li>3. Communication Skills;</li> <li>4. Judgmental Skills;</li> <li>5. Learning Skills; and</li> <li>6. Autonomy and Responsibility</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. understands advanced textbooks which may lead to further academic or vocational learning and, researches solutions to abstract problems;</li> <li>2. demonstrates operational capacity and management skills using creativity;</li> <li>3. interacts with others to convey abstract and concrete solutions to problems in a field of work or study;</li> <li>4. formulates practical and theoretical responses to abstract and concrete problems and makes judgements on social and ethical issues;</li> <li>5. evaluates own learning and can improve key competences for further learning, and promotes team training; and</li> <li>6. is responsible for the effective and efficient management of projects and people within agreed timeframes.</li> </ol>

**Table 19: The Level Descriptors for Level 6**

EQF MQF

<p><b>Level Knowledge</b></p>	<p><b>Level 6 EQF</b> Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study involving a critical understanding of theories and principles;</p>	<p><b>Level 6 MQF</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. understands knowledge that builds upon advanced general education and typically includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;</li> <li>2. uses detailed theoretical and practical knowledge which is at the forefront of a field of study and involves critical understanding of theories and principles;</li> <li>3. understands methods and tools in a complex and specialised field of work or study and innovation in terms of methods used; and</li> <li>4. makes judgements based on relevant social and ethical issues that arise in a field of work or study.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Skills</b></p>	<p>Advanced skills demonstrating mastery and innovation required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study;</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. applies knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to work or study;</li> <li>2. communicates ideas, problems, and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences using a range of techniques involving qualitative and quantitative information;</li> <li>3. has the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;</li> <li>4. devises and sustains arguments to solve problems; and</li> <li>5. consistently evaluates own learning and identify learning needs.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Competences</b></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>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. demonstrates administrative design, resource and team management and is responsible for work or study contexts that are unpredictable and require that complex problems are solved;</li> <li>2. shows creativity and initiative in developing projects in management processes, manage and train people to develop team performance; and</li> <li>3. has developed those learning skills that are necessary to continue to undertake further studies with a high degree of autonomy.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Learning Outcomes</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge and Understanding;</li> <li>2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding;</li> <li>3. Communication Skills;</li> <li>4. Judgmental Skills;</li> <li>5. Learning Skills; and</li> <li>6. Autonomy and Responsibility</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. understands professional theoretical and practical knowledge in a specialised field of work or study;</li> <li>2. demonstrates innovative theoretical and practical responses to work or study contexts;</li> <li>3. communicates ideas, problems, and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences using a range of techniques involving qualitative and quantitative information to sustain arguments;</li> <li>4. makes professional judgements on social and ethical issues within the area of specialisation, masters problem solving skills, and evaluates the management of projects and people;</li> <li>5. assesses own learning and can specialize in one or more key competences for further learning; and</li> <li>6. is responsible for the management of creative and innovative projects and the team's performance.</li> </ol>

Full Level 6 certification of the MQF means completion of the first cycle of the Bologna process, formally known as the first degree. Unlike all the previous levels this level is characterised by specialisation in a particular area of study. Specialisation in a given discipline is subject specific competence and generic non-specific competences include the key competences which contribute to the specialisation in a field of study.<sup>85</sup> This specialisation entails innovation and consistent professional development. Communication takes another dimension at this level, that of sharing expertise with specialist and non-specialist audiences. Even the personal social responsibility is directed towards the area of specialisation. Whereas learning and study in Level 5 was carried out with some autonomy, the learning skills at this level are developed such that learning, study and working can be done with a high degree of autonomy and responsibility. In a work context autonomy and responsibility is also demonstrated through decision making in terms of the administration of resources, the co-ordination of multiple complex factors, creativity and innovation. The learner assesses the situation and acts with responsibility for self, others and the organisation.

Knowledge at Level 7 of the MQF may be specialised or multi-disciplinary as defined by the level descriptors of the QF/EHEA associated with this level. A characteristic feature of this level is that it introduces original research which has an impact on the need for knowledge, the skills to get the knowledge, evaluate and analyse the competences to produce original writing with responsibility and autonomy. The individual has developed a mastery of the knowledge and skills and is capable of adapting to new technological, economical and social challenges.

Communication and problem solving skills are also shaped by the degree of specialisation, by original research and experience. The judgmental response at this level is done through critical evaluation and with limited and incomplete information. Whereas the learner at Level 6 could choose to specialise in one or more fields of study, professional expertise at this level requires specialisation in a single area of study only. Compared to the responsibilities of the previous level which are restricted to the management of projects and people, the individual at Level 7 has more and wider responsibilities. These include responsibilities coming from the impact of the production of original research, for one's operations within society and the organisation, and for adapting to the changing needs of the work or study environment.

Progression to Level 8 is characterised by an advanced level of expertise in the area of specialisation and knowledge is focused on the area of specialisation and does not include multi-disciplinary knowledge. Whereas in Level 7 an individual demonstrates capability to adapt to the changing needs of the environment, at Level 8 an individual reaches a level characterised by leadership and innovation in mastering research in work and study contexts. Thus Level 8 is distinguished by a higher degree of expertise and authority in a specialised field, which brings with it the responsibility for a number of projects related to the field. An individual with a doctorate or a more advanced qualification has the social responsibility to keep abreast with the technological, social and cultural challenges and to provide forecast and innovative ideas for future developments. This can only be achieved through continuous professional development at this level.

85 Bergan Sjur, p48.

**Table 20: The Level Descriptors for Level 7**

<p><b>Level Knowledge</b></p>	<p><b>Level 7 EQF</b>                  Highly specialised 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;                   Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields;</p>	<p><b>Level 7 MQF</b>                  1. has comprehensive knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that knowledge typically associated with Bachelor’s level; and                  2. uses specialised or multi-disciplinary theoretical and practical knowledge some of which is at the forefront of a field of study. This knowledge forms the basis of originality in developing and/or applying ideas.</p>
<p><b>Skills</b></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>1. demonstrates specialised or multi-disciplinary knowledge that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of one’s knowledge and judgements;                  2. can communicate to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously work or study related conclusions and knowledge which may be the outcome of research, self-study or experience;                  3. performs critical evaluations and analysis with incomplete or limited information to solve problems in new or unfamiliar environments, and to produce original research; and                  4. develops new skills in response to emerging knowledge and techniques and demonstrates leadership skills and innovation in complex and unpredictable work and study contexts.</p>
<p><b>Competences</b></p>	<p>Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches;                   Take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams;</p>	<p>1. creates a research-based diagnosis to problems by integrating knowledge from new or interdisciplinary fields and makes judgements with incomplete or limited information;                  2. manages people and projects and demonstrates the ability to respond to the fast changing business environment;                  3. demonstrates autonomy in the direction of learning and a high level of understanding of learning processes; and                  4. has the learning skills to allow continuation to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.</p>
<p><b>Learning Outcomes</b></p>	<p>1. Knowledge and Understanding;                   2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding;                   3. Communication Skills;                   4. Judgmental Skills;                   5. Learning Skills; and                   6. Autonomy and Responsibility</p>	<p>1. has comprehensive specialised or multi-disciplinary theoretical and practical knowledge which forms the basis of original research, which may contribute to social and ethical issues;                  2. demonstrates capability in using knowledge and skills, to adapt to the fast changing business environment and to manage people and projects efficiently;                  3. communicates with specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously conclusions and knowledge which may be the outcome of original research, self-study or experience;                  4. performs critical evaluations and analysis with incomplete or limited information to solve problems in new or unfamiliar contexts, and to produce original research;                  5. makes assessments of personal continuous professional development, takes initiative to undertake self-directed study and may proceed to further specialisation; and                  6. is accountable and responsible for the original research within a personal social responsibility and/or business context, for one’s operations and for adapting the management of people and projects reflecting the dynamic nature of the environment in which one operates.</p>

**Table 21: The Level Descriptors for Level 8**

EQF MQF

<p><b>Level Knowledge</b></p>	<p><b>Level 8 EQF</b>                  Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields;</p>	<p><b>Level 8 MQF</b>                  1. has a systematic understanding of a highly specialised field of study which builds upon a specialised or multi-disciplinary knowledge and understanding; and                  2. extends or redefines existing knowledge and/or professional practice.</p>
<p><b>Skills</b></p>	<p>The ability to apply the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques including synthesis and evaluation to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice;</p>	<p>1. demonstrates mastery in skills such as the selection and analysis of research, writing, design, development and sustainability of the argument manifested in innovative scholarly research;                  2. responds to technological, social and cultural issues and addresses the needs of a knowledge-based society;                  3. communicates expertise to a wide audience including peers and the general public using different methods including national and international publications, and participates in specialist fora; and                  4. demonstrates expertise in critical evaluations and analysis with incomplete or limited information to solve problems in new or unfamiliar environments, and to produce original research.</p>
<p><b>Competences</b></p>	<p>Competence at the forefront in work or study including research contexts demonstrating substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly or professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes;</p>	<p>1. demonstrates authority in a specialised field of work or study and makes judgements involving a multitude of interacting factors;                  2. promotes social, scientific and ethical advancement through actions; and                  3. has a sustained commitment in the development of new ideas.</p>
<p><b>Learning Outcomes</b></p>	<p>1. Knowledge and Understanding;                  2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding;                  3. Communication Skills;                  4. Judgmental Skills;                  5. Learning Skills; and                  6. Autonomy and Responsibility</p>	<p>1. has theoretical and practical expertise in a specialised field of knowledge which may contribute to social and ethical issues in a national and international dimension;                  2. demonstrates leadership and innovation in mastering research in work and study contexts;                  3. communicates expertise to a wide audience including peers and the general public using different methods including national and international publications, and participates in specialist fora;                  4. demonstrates expertise in critical evaluations and analysis with incomplete or limited information to solve problems in new or unfamiliar environments, and to produce original research;                  5. has a sustained commitment to generate new ideas and innovative projects related to technological, cultural and social development; and                  6. is responsible for the leadership of a number of specialised projects and an authority in a specialised field of work or study.</p>



### 3.3 Mapping Qualifications to MQF Levels: Some Practical Examples

This section provides some practical examples of mapping qualifications to the MQF. These learning outcomes-based units demonstrate that the MQF Level descriptors inspired by the EQF and of the QF/EHEA paradigms are practical and easy to read and use.

The first section represents a unit which makes up part of a qualification offered by the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), which is a VET institute which offers courses from MQF levels 2 to 5 to post-secondary students and adult learners. The entry level to one of the courses offered by the institute is Level 1 normally associated with a compulsory education school leaving certificate. The MQF Level 5 qualification in Hospitality and Tourism Management gives access to the second year of the MQF Level 6 course in tourism management offered by the University of Malta.

Another example of learning outcomes-based VET qualification is one of the units which constitutes the MCAST-BTEC National Certificate in Agriculture which is offered by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology was is composed of 9 VET institutes which offer courses designed by foreign awarding bodies and others designed locally and which currently range from MQF Level 2 to MQF Level 5. However, as from the academic year 2009-2010 MCAST shall introduce professional degrees at MQF Level 6 in four key sectoral areas.

The third section represents an example of a learning outcomes-based unit in MQF Level 6 offered by the University of Malta which offers academic qualifications from MQF levels 5 to 8 and which is responsible for the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examinations with 6 passes at grades 1 to 5 being equivalent to MQF Level 3 and 4 passes at grades 6 to 7 equivalent to MQF Level 2.

The methodology of the following tables illustrates the shift from learning inputs to learning outcomes. Whereas until recently all the courses were described in terms of knowledge, the current trend is to describe every aspect of the qualification including a range of skills and competences. MQC promotes learning

outcomes qualifications as it is one of the principles of MQC protocols and the referencing to the EQF. ITS and MQC signed the first such protocol and a number of institutions are in the final process of signing this protocol in 2009. MQC is in the process of finalising the protocol with MCAST, the University of Malta, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education and the Employment and Training Corporation as well as with a number of private training providers.

#### 3.3.1 A learning outcomes-based unit offered by the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS)

Table 21 shows the knowledge, skills and competences acquired when the individual follows the unit on *Cold Food Preparation* offered by ITS as part of the Craft Certificate in Food Preparation and Production. The level of difficulty and the workload associated with this course value it as Level 2 of the MQF. ITS has no credit system but it is planned that it will be introduced shortly. Each statement shows what an individual is supposed to know and understand and is complemented by two accompanying statements describing the skills and competences which that knowledge leads to. For example the sixth statement which describes knowledge and understanding related to the storage and service of cold preparations is followed horizontally by the judgmental skill to evaluate quick service and healthy food, and the competences introduce the responsibility to ensure quality control. The fourth column listing the learning outcomes summarizes the key elements of the other three columns and distinguishes between knowledge and understanding; applying knowledge and understanding; communication skills; making judgements and taking responsibility; and learning skills. Although not in the same order, these are all the domains of the learning outcomes as listed in the MQF Level descriptors. They do not have to be in the same order, otherwise the process of level rating and writing learning outcomes-based qualifications becomes rigid and loses its practicality. In fact there are two statements that demonstrate the application of knowledge and understanding, the minimum is one but there can be several statements describing each domain.

**Table 22: The learning outcomes of a unit at MQF Level 2: Cold Food Preparation is Part of the Craft Certificate in Food Preparation and Production**

<b>KNOWLEDGE</b> At the end of the course the learner will be exposed to the following knowledge and understanding of:	<b>SKILLS</b> At the end of the course the learner will have mastered the following skills:	<b>COMPETENCES</b> At the end of the course the learner will have acquired the responsibility and autonomy to:	<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES</b> At the end of the course the learner will be able to:
1. a variety of commodities to produce healthy and well presented cold dishes.	produces a variety of cold dishes which involves the use of commodities either raw pre-prepared, or pre-cooked and cooled items into required styles of presentation.	combine and / or mix commodities with regards to flavour and texture balance.	have knowledge and understanding of how to prepare cold dishes into required styles of presentation.
2. a range of cold preparation methods and techniques.	demonstrates the various methods and techniques of preparation;	indicate the correct use of equipment and utensils;	apply knowledge and understanding to produce and serve the types of food suitable for cold preparations:
3. the importance of temperature and timing in cold preparations.	evaluates the right temperatures during preparation as appropriate; and	carry out tests using the temperature probe, following the appropriate procedures.	(a) snacks, salads, cold buffet items and sandwiches;
4. the appropriate food suitable for cold preparations.	seasons, garnishes and marinades foods.		(b) fresh, frozen, cooked, pre-cooked, canned processed, convenience; and
			(c) meat, fish, shellfish, vegetables, fruits, salads
			communicate basic information on the types of food suitable for cold preparations.
5. the importance of suitable equipment and utensils used in cold preparation process.	complies with all preparation procedures to eliminate the risk of contamination.	ensure that all areas, utensils and equipment to be used are in a fit state of cleanliness and repair.	apply knowledge and understanding to operate large and small equipment suitable for process such as refrigerators, counters, food processors.
6. the preparation, storage and service of cold preparations.	identifies the main advantages: (a) quick service (b) healthy eating and higher retention of nutrients in uncooked food.	maintain quality and avoid factors that may cause food deterioration.	make judgements by and takes responsibility for assessing and ensuring dish presentations are fit for purpose exercise learning skills and consider progression to the next level.

### 3.3.2 A learning outcomes-based unit offered by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)

**Table 23: The learning outcomes of a unit at MQF Level 4: Agricultural Organic Production as part of the MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Agriculture**

<b>KNOWLEDGE</b> At the end of the course the learner will be exposed to the following knowledge and understanding of:	<b>SKILLS</b> At the end of the course the learner will have mastered the following skills:	<b>COMPETENCES</b> At the end of the course the learner will have acquired the responsibility and autonomy to:	<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES</b> At the end of the course the learner will be able to:
the principles of organic farming and the role of regulatory and advisory organisations	follows the principles of organic farming in farming processes	be responsible for abiding with the regulatory and advisory frameworks	know and understand about the production of agricultural products which adhere to organic farming principles and regulatory and advisory frameworks
the importance of maintaining a healthy soil as the basis of organic production	demonstrates knowledge of the importance of the impact of organic practices on soil, animals, the environment, countryside and the consumer	supervise the quality of one's work and others ensuring maintenance of soil fertility	communicate to peers and consumers the importance of maintaining a healthy soil as the basis of organic production
the process of converting soil degradation	applies judgmental skills to quantify the damage of the soil and demonstrate the ability of restoring the soil;	make sure that the quality of the soil is restored	apply judgmental skills to assess the degraded soil and uses qualitative and quantitative measures to restore it
the principles of organic crop production	applies methods of organic production that concentrate on controlling weeds, pests and diseases of crops	ensure that crop production is maintained through the application of organic farming methods	produce organic crops according to a quality controlled and productive mechanism
the principles of organic livestock production	applies methods of organic production that concentrate on controlling weeds, pests and diseases of livestock	ensure that livestock production is maintained through the application of organic farming methods	<p>produce organic livestock according to a quality controlled and productive mechanism</p> <p>be responsible for the production of crops and livestock, and the maintenance and restoration of degraded soil according to the principles of organic farming and regulatory and advisory frameworks</p> <p>make a personal assessment of whether one shall proceed to further learning</p>

Table 22 shows the learning outcomes acquired on completion of the unit entitled Agricultural Organic Production as part of the MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Agriculture offered by the Institute of Agribusiness which is one of the nine institutes which compose MCAST. MCAST does not have a credit system yet, but it is planned that an ECVET-based system in which every credit translates itself into 25 points will be introduced in due course. Such a credit system further facilitates permeability between VET and HE.

The underlying principle behind the methodology of learning outcomes-based qualifications as demonstrated above is that the learner acquires knowledge and understanding and applies it. So the learners can apply the principles of organic farming in practice and is responsible for abiding with the regulatory and advisory frameworks which safeguard the principles of organic farming. The individual is expected to know and understand and demonstrate such learning and understanding through the application of judgmental skills so the learner can assess soil degradation and determine the methods to deal with it. Another skill is the communication of the knowledge and understanding as the learner is aware of the principles guiding one's actions. At this level the individual is autonomous and responsible for one's own actions and those of others. Through the achievement of the above learning outcomes the learner has the technical know-how which when applied results in the production of organic agricultural produce.

### **3.3.3 A learning outcomes-based unit offered by the University of Malta (UoM)**

The Academic Programmes Quality & Resources Unit (APQRU) within the University of Malta established a set of Guidelines for the writing of effective learning outcomes so that new study units or programmes and others which are renewed follow the same standards.<sup>86</sup>

MQC met APQRU and following a discussion on the link that these guidelines have with the MQF and the EQF, the two parties agreed that these guidelines should be adopted as a model for the writing of learning outcomes for all higher education degrees awarded by the University of Malta. Thus, there is coherence between the model presented hereunder by MQC (related to an undergraduate course in Conflict Resolution) and APQRU's paradigm.

The study unit Conflict Resolution and International Relations forms part of the course leading to a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations. It has a workload of 100 hours of which 25 are contact hours, 2 hours for test and 2 hours for tutorials and the remaining 70 hours are dedicated to reading and study work. Its value is 4 ECTS credits and the level of difficulty is MQF/EQF Level 6. This unit explores peace and conflict theories in the context of international relations. Various methodological approaches to conflict transformation are explored in particular dialogue, negotiation, arbitration and mediation as tools for conflict resolution and transformation. These positions are challenged against current problems fuelling conflicts such as cultural and national identity, abuse of power, terrorism, intolerance towards diversity, underdevelopment, military capabilities and social and racial injustice.

This study unit also attempts to critically answer the questions: What is our understanding of conflict resolution in relation to international relations? Will it help to accommodate differences to resolve conflicts? What is the role of international mediators in conflict resolution? Can mediators truly be neutral when they have their own cultural values and biases?

The lectures and seminars examine how political and cultural contexts affect conflict resolution at the individual, group and organisational level. The emphasis is on contexts such as class, religion, culture and race.

Self-study includes reading, research, preparation of presentations, following documentaries and attendance to conferences and seminars.

<sup>86</sup> APQRU University of Malta, (2009) , Guidelines for the writing of effective learning outcomes, [http://www.um.edu.mt/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/66219/LO-LV.pdf](http://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/66219/LO-LV.pdf)

**Table 24: The learning outcomes of a unit at MQF Level 6: Conflict Resolution and International Relations forms part of the B.A. International Relations**

<b>KNOWLEDGE</b> At the end of the course the learner will be exposed to the following specialised knowledge and understanding of:	<b>SKILLS</b> At the end of the course the learner will have mastered the following skills:	<b>COMPETENCES</b> At the end of the course the learner will have acquired the responsibility and autonomy to:	<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES</b> At the end of the course the learner will be able to:
conflict as an applied concept.	shows an understanding of conflict as a means to resolve incompatibilities at individual, community, national and international levels.	discuss and critically review conflict theories in the context of individual, community, national and international levels.	write and speak about contemporary conflict theories particularly those developed by Johan Galtung and Peter Wallenstein.
violence and its international manifestation in arms trade.	demonstrates an insight into violence seen from a direct, structural and cultural dimension.	critically construct a conceptual framework for the study of violence in its various manifestations in society and within the international community particularly the issues of terrorism and civil unrest.	demonstrate an own conceptual framework of the manifestations and the impact of violence on decision-making and on the quality of life of individuals in civil society.
conflict Formation; Intervention and Transformation.	manifests an understanding of how conflicts are formed and deformed through intervention and transformation processes.	communicate and alert effectively on the roots and symptoms of conflict formation and the techniques used to defuse conflict.	deploy a range of schools of thought on conflict formation, intervention and transformation particularly within the context of intercultural and international relations.
conflict life-cycle.	demonstrates an understanding of the conflict cycle and how it impacts on development.	discuss and critically review aspects of a conflict cycle within the framework of IR theories.	develop a critical understanding of how conflicts develop, manifest, destroy and re-build relations.
non-violent conflict transformation	demonstrates an understanding of how communication, cooperation and confidence-building are at the basis of non-violent conflict transformation.	discuss and critically review aspects of conflict resolution using information and communication technology, development and preventive diplomacy as tools for conflict resolution.	demonstrate an ability to produce policies based on effective inter-cultural communication, sector-based cooperation and confidence-building measures.
transcending conflict and conflict resolution in the State system.	has the predictive capacity to visualise the roots of conflict in IR and the benefits of the core values of democracy: security, freedom, well-being and identity.	critically deploy classical and contemporary theories of IR to illustrate how such core values of the State challenge aspects of aggression and violence as documented in history.	demonstrate an ability to analyse aspects of aggression and security as determining the structure and function (internally and externally) of States.
the institutionalisation of peace: litigation, arbitration and mediation.	assesses how litigation, arbitration and mediation are institutions of negative and positive peace.	discuss and critically review a number of case studies in which mediation plays a pivotal role in conflict transformation.	develop the capacity to consolidate, expand and integrate conflict resolution theories into training in mediation techniques.
mediation as an alternative dispute resolution technique.	demonstrates an understanding of the role mediators play in conflict resolution particularly in aspects of mediation related to international conflicts.	provide insights to the role of mediators and the factors influencing their impact on the resolution of conflict through peace settlements or plans and their execution and monitoring.	deploy, participate and take initiatives within civil society to highlight conflict issues in IR particularly those related to international terrorism, gender, the environment, self-determination, State recognition and arms trade.

The resolution of conflicts between States.	Builds a case study in Inter-State conflict by analysing its roots, its manifestation and its economic, cultural, social and political impacts.	Analyse the conflict complexes of actual or potential rivalry between actors involved and produce insights into the solution of such conflict.	Produce a mapping of conflict resolution from an economic, political, social and cultural perspective.
The International community and conflict resolution.	Communicates knowledge of the role of the United Nations in conflict resolution by drawing on the various peace missions across the world.	Analyse the effective and ineffective impacts of the United Nations on war-torn countries.	Take an active role in analysing conflict situations and in providing a creative approach to its resolution.

The individual learner studying this unit acquires knowledge and understanding of a range of schools of thought on conflict formation, intervention and transformation particularly within the context of intercultural and international relations. One is able to communicate the knowledge and understanding through writing and speaking about contemporary conflict theories and the personal conceptual framework of the manifestations and the impact of violence on decision-making and on the quality of life of individuals in civil society. At MQF/EQF Level 6 the learner is expected to master judgmental skills. A learner following this unit develops a critical understanding of how conflicts develop, manifest, destroy and re-build relations, demonstrates an ability to analyse aspects of aggression and security and takes an active role in analysing conflict situations. At the end of the learning process the individual is expected to be responsible for demonstrating an ability to produce policies based on effective intercultural communication, sector based cooperation and confidence-building measures. The learners applies knowledge and understanding by deploying, participating and taking initiatives within civil society to highlight conflict issues in international relations, produces a mapping of conflict resolution from an economic, political, social and cultural perspective. Moreover, the individual is expected to have the learning skills to develop the capacity to consolidate, expand and integrate conflict resolution theories into training in mediation techniques.

Thus, what the learner is supposed to know is in principle the recommendation of the EQF, and at this level the QF/EHEA which gives more importance to learning skills than the EQF, the reason could be that the EQF is implicitly a framework for lifelong learning.

### 3.4 The EQF and MQF: A Comparative Analysis

The progression of the level descriptors of the MQF is influenced by the consultation with stakeholders who in turn had the national and the European contexts as constant points of reference. This process has helped in aligning the MQF to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA).

The domains of the EQF are the Knowledge, Skills and Competences. This can be verified as very generic and flexible; however it is the objective of every NQF to adopt the national level descriptors according to the best fit principle. A key element in all the levels of the MQF is the provision of detail which makes it more user-friendly, easier to understand and to relate with. There are some particular skills and competences in the MQF which feature in every level and their progression can be monitored and distinguished from more general skills and competences which may not be consistently found throughout the level descriptors. The Knowledge and Understanding of the MQF includes information about what a learner is supposed to know and understand, this section in the EQF is termed as Knowledge. The Skills section of the EQF is further developed in the MQF where specific domains which highlight progression within different aspects of skills are introduced. These include Applying Knowledge and Understanding, Communication Skills, Judgmental Skills and Learning Skills. Instead of Competences the MQF introduces Autonomy and Responsibility indicating that the competences achieved at every level are accountable and measured with autonomy and responsibility. The domains of the MQF correspond to those of the QF/EHEA with the exception, that the latter does not include autonomy and responsibility.

**Table 25: Progression within the MQF**

Learning Outcomes	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8
<b>Knowledge and Understanding</b>	basic knowledge and understanding of textbooks and simple tasks while relating to the immediate environment;	understands and uses good knowledge for tasks, procedures or a field of work or study;	understands theoretical knowledge and information related to complex procedures in a field of work or study;	understands and analyses broad theoretical, practical and technical knowledge related to a field of work or study;	understands advanced textbooks which may lead to further academic or vocational learning and, researches solutions to abstract problems;	understands professional theoretical and practical knowledge in a specialised field of work or study;	has comprehensive specialised or multi-disciplinary theoretical and practical knowledge which forms the basis of original research, which may contribute to social and ethical issues;	has theoretical and practical expertise in a specialised field of knowledge which may contribute to social and ethical issues in a national and international dimension;
<b>Applying Knowledge and Understanding</b>	follows instructions and completes repetitive simple tasks in familiar contexts and under a quality controlled system;	follows instructions and completes a range of well-defined tasks;	follows instructions and carries out complex tasks systematically and in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts;	follows instructions and carries out defined theoretical, complex and technical tasks;	demonstrates operational capacity and management skills using creativity;	demonstrates innovative theoretical and practical responses to work or study contexts;	demonstrates mastery of knowledge and skills, adapts to the fast changing business environment and manages people and projects efficiently;	demonstrates leadership and innovation in mastering research, work and study contexts;
<b>Communication Skills</b>	communicates basic information in familiar repetitive contexts;	communicates basic information in unfamiliar contexts;	communicates complex information in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts;	communicates theoretical and technical information in a work or learning context;	interacts with others to convey abstract and concrete solutions to problems in a field of work or study;	communicates ideas, problems, and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences using a range of techniques involving qualitative and quantitative information to sustain arguments;	communicates with specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously conclusions and knowledge which may be the outcome of original research, self-study or experience;	communicates expertise to a wide audience including peers and the general public using different methods including national and international publications, and participates in specialist fora;
<b>Judgmental Skills</b>	assesses and ensures that assigned tasks have been completed effectively;	selects and uses information for specified tasks and be proactive;	assesses, evaluates and interprets facts related to a field of work or study and applies basic problem solving techniques;	interacts with and generates solutions to problems within the immediate environment of a given field of work or study;	formulates practical and theoretical responses to abstract and concrete problems and makes judgements on social and ethical issues;	makes professional judgements on social and ethical issues within the area of specialisation, masters problem solving skills, and evaluates the management of projects and people;	performs critical evaluations and analysis with incomplete or limited information to solve problems in new or unfamiliar contexts, and to produce original research;	demonstrates expertise in critical evaluations and analysis with incomplete or limited information to solve problems in new or unfamiliar environments, and to produce original research;
<b>Learning Skills</b>	acquires and applies key competences to defined actions;	acquires and applies key competences to a range of actions;	acquires and applies key competences as a basis for lifelong learning;	applies key competences to defined actions and to a technical or academic field of work or learning; context;	evaluates own learning and can improve key competences for further learning, and promotes team training;	assesses own learning and can specialize in one or more key competences for further learning;	makes assessments of personal continuous professional development, takes initiative to undertake self-directed study and may proceed to further specialisation;	has a sustained commitment to generate new ideas and innovative projects related to technological, cultural and social development;

<b>Autonomy and Responsibility</b>	takes some responsibility for completing simple tasks and exercise limited autonomy;	takes responsibility and exercises autonomy in well-defined tasks under a quality controlled system;	takes agreed responsibility for completing complex tasks, and interacts with the immediate environment and in defined actions at one's own initiative;	exercises autonomy and takes responsibility for defined qualitative and quantitative tasks of self and others by completing complex tasks in a broad context under quality assured mechanisms;	is responsible for the effective and efficient management of projects and people within agreed timeframes;	is responsible for the management of creative and innovative projects and the team's performance;	is accountable and responsible for the original research within a personal social responsibility and/or business context, for one's operations and for adapting the management of people and projects reflecting the dynamic nature of the environment in which one operates;	is responsible for the leadership of a number of specialised projects and an authority in a specialised field of work or study;
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**Table 26: Progression within the EQF**

Learning Outcomes	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8
<b>Knowledge</b>	Basic general knowledge;	Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study;	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study;	Factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study;	Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundary of that knowledge;	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study involving a critical understanding of theories and principles;	Highly specialised 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;	Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields;
<b>Skills</b>	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks;	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;	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information;	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study;	A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems;	Advanced skills demonstrating mastery and innovation required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study;	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;	The ability to apply the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques including synthesis and evaluation to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice;
<b>Competences</b>	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context;	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy;	Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems;	Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change;	Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change;	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts;	Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches;	Competence at the forefront in work or study including research contexts demonstrating substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly or professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes;
				Supervise the routine work of others, take some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities;	Review and develop performance of self and others;	Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups;	Take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams;	



### **Level 1**

Knowledge and understanding of the MQF differs from the knowledge of Level 1 of the EQF as besides basic general knowledge, it adds the possibility of entry into lifelong learning and includes knowledge and understanding about the use of simple tools, about basic tasks and instructions, and about steps for familiar activities. Whereas the EQF equates skills with the carrying out of simple tasks, the MQF goes further and distinguishes between the application of skills, communication skills and judgmental skills. The MQF restricts the application of skills to a limited range of skills. It includes basic repetitive communication skills, and the fact that the individual is aware of consequences assumes that the individual exercises judgement during work or study. The Competence domain of the EQF focuses on work or study under direct supervision in a structured context, whereas the MQF includes basic responsibility for simple routine and repetitive tasks and shared responsibility for those tasks which are carried out under guidance.

### **Level 2**

The EQF defines knowledge at Level 2 as basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study. The MQF goes beyond this and considers knowledge in a field of work or study as good knowledge not just basic, and adds the understanding of facts and procedures in the application of basic tasks and instructions. Judgmental skills are used in selecting, using and interpreting knowledge related to the specific assigned tasks. The EQF skills are focused on practical skills in a routine environment and using simple rules and tools, whereas the MQF indicate demonstration of a range of skills in carrying out complex tasks. The MQF also adds the communication of basic information and the judgement that an individual checks that the tasks are carried out effectively. The MQF and the EQF agree that the individual must complete tasks with limited supervision and autonomy at this level. However, the MQF gives judgmental value and adds pro-activity in one's actions. It also includes the learning skills to acquire and apply key competences at this level.

### **Level 3**

Both the EQF and the MQF agree on the importance of knowledge and understanding of facts and procedures in a field of work or study. However, the MQF introduces the element of personal initiative and, acknowledges the importance of theoretical knowledge

at this level. It also introduces judgmental skills such as the assessment, evaluation and interpretation of facts establishing basic principles and concepts in a field of work or study. Both frameworks agree on the range of developed skills and the basic problem solving skills. However, the MQF also includes that the individual is capable of demonstrating the range of skills in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts. Furthermore the individual is capable of communicating more complex information. Both frameworks agree on autonomy and responsibility. The MQF also adds personal initiative and quality assured contexts, and assumes that the individual is working in a craftsmanship environment. Like the previous levels and the levels to follow, the MQF considers the individual as possessing learning skills to be further developed in a lifelong learning context.

### **Level 4**

The EQF and the MQF agree on the principle that the learner should possess factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study, but where they differ is that the MQF introduces also the term of broad theoretical knowledge and in broad contexts. It also includes judgmental aspects such as the selection and analysis of theoretical knowledge and information. Both frameworks agree on the autonomy and supervision of others associated with this level. The MQF introduces qualitative and quantitative aspects and the fact that the technical capacity is normally associated with a technician's competence. A feature which is common in all MQF levels is that the individual is expected to have the learning skills which will enable one to proceed to further learning and at this level to the short cycle of the first cycle of higher education.

### **Level 5**

The knowledge at MQF Level 5 is expected to be based on advanced general secondary education at post-secondary level which is indeed as the EQF recommends comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical. Moreover, the MQF introduces researching solutions and problem solving skills. At MQF Level 5 the individual is also expected to make judgements on knowledge of relevant and social issues. Both frameworks agree on the demonstration of a range of skills which lead to creative solutions to problems. The learner demonstrates communication skill by conveying structured and coherent ideas to peers, supervisors and clients using judgmental skills and

communicates information which is both quantitative and qualitative. The learning skills statement shows that by MQF Level 5 the learner should be ready to proceed to higher education. The competences in both

frameworks focus on the management supervision and development of team players in an environment characterised by unpredictable change. The MQF applies the term “some autonomy” to further studies to higher education.

**Table 27: Progression within the QF/EHEA<sup>87</sup>**

Learning Outcomes	Level 6 1st cycle	Level 7 2nd cycle	Level 8 3rd cycle
<b>Knowledge and Understanding</b>	[is] supported by advanced text books [with] some aspects informed by knowledge at the forefront of their field of study.	provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing or applying ideas often in a research context.	[includes] a systematic understanding of their field of study and mastery of the methods of research associated with that field.
<b>Applying Knowledge and Understanding</b>	[through] devising and sustaining arguments.	through problem solving abilities [applied] in new unfamiliar environments within broader [or multidisciplinary] context.	[is demonstrated by the] ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt substantial process of research with scholarly integrity. [is in the context of] a contribution that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work some of which merits national or international refereed publication.
<b>Making Judgements</b>	involves gathering and interpreting relevant data.	[demonstrates] the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete data.	[requires being] capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas.
<b>Communication</b>	[of] information, ideas, problems and solutions	[of] their conclusions and the underpinning knowledge and rationale (restricted scope) to specialist and non-specialist audiences (monologue)	with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general (dialogue) about their areas of expertise (broad scope)
<b>Learning Skills</b>	have developed those skills needed to study further with a high level of autonomy.	study in a manner that may be largely self directed or autonomous.	expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts technological, social or cultural advancement.

<sup>87</sup> The Dublin Descriptors for the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area is found in Annex 7

## Level 6

There is a consensus among the EQF, QF/EHEA and the MQF that this level is characterised by an advanced level of knowledge and skills particularly judgmental skills. There are some aspects which the MQF adopted from the EQF and others from the QF/EHEA. The EQF and the MQF agree on the production of innovative work. Similarly to the QF/EHEA the MQF includes skills such as the gathering and interpreting of information and the communication of ideas, problems and solutions based on sustained and well-researched arguments. The EQF does not go into these details but includes critical understanding and the demonstration of mastery and innovation in solving complex and unpredictable problems. The EQF's judgmental skills are more problem-oriented and the QF/EHEA's and the MQF's are more research-oriented. The QF/EHEA includes autonomy and responsibility as part of learning skills and it does not include statements that show managerial responsibility. However this is not the case in the EQF and the MQF as they both take into consideration the management of people and projects. The MQF like the QF/EHEA expect the learner to demonstrate learning skills with a high level of autonomy. The two distinct features that are not found in the EQF and the QF/EHEA are linked to personal competences such as when an individual makes judgements on social and ethical issues, and that one is competent and uses one's initiative. Although the QF/EHEA includes the communication of ideas, problems and solutions they do not go into the details about the audience and the methodology of delivery as the MQF does. The level descriptors of the MQF are more detailed than those of the QF/EHEA and the EQF because it is a national framework and therefore does not have to be as general and flexible as the other two frameworks. The MQF Level descriptors are more comprehensive for the sake of clarity, but they do not ask for more than the EQF is asking for.

## Level 7

All the frameworks with which the MQF is aligned, that is the EQF and the QF/EHEA, emphasise the importance of original research at Level 7. These also agree on the review of personal development. The MQF and the QF/EHEA consider knowledge at this level to be of a specialised or a multi-disciplinary nature, however this

is not the case in the EQF which concentrates on the specialised type of knowledge. This does not imply that the MQF requires more and higher level skills, but it provides a more detailed description. The statement dealing with critical evaluation is found in Level 7 of the MQF, and in Level 8 of the EQF and the QF/EHEA. Communication is excluded from all levels of the EQF. However, this is present in the QF/EHEA and the MQF. However, the MQF's statement describes in more detail and includes the fact that the communicated information may be the outcome of research, self-study or experience, thus recognising informal and non-formal learning. The MQF and the EQF are more business-oriented than the academic-oriented QF/EHEA. The latter does not include statements about individuals in the work environment where they will be responsible for projects and for the quantitative and qualitative work as well as the personal development of subordinates.

## Level 8

The three frameworks agree that at this level the individual should have reached a high level of expertise in a specialised area of study or profession. All the frameworks give the same importance to the mastering of critical assessment and evaluation related to the research and other material related to the specialised field of study. The individual has a certain authority in the field which has to be sustained by continuous professional development. All frameworks agree that at this level one has a personal social responsibility to promote technological, social and economic development through researching, testing and communicating innovative ideas. The QF/EHEA and the MQF include a statement about communicating the expertise to scholars and the general public and the MQF goes further by indicating how the methodology of communicating the specialised expertise including publication and participation in specialist fora. The MQF is distinguished from the other frameworks as it also includes managerial aspects in terms of responsibility for the leadership of specialised projects. This enhances the character of Level 8 as a professional level and not a level strictly restricted to academic fields. Unlike the managerial role associated with the previous level, at Level 8 the individual is responsible for projects which are specialised, thus using the expertise acquired in the field of specialisation.

### 3.5 The MQF in a European and Interregional Context

The concept of qualification frameworks was introduced in the United Kingdom. The idea of the European Qualifications Framework is only recent following the greater need for transparency of qualifications in a globalised labour market and economy.

The table below shows the value of the levels of the Malta Qualifications Framework when compared to European and International Frameworks as well as the EQF and the QF/EHEA. It shows that the EQF, MQF

and the South African NQF (SA NQF) have the same number of levels of the same value.

The table illustrates three 10-level frameworks namely the New Zealand NQF (NZ NQF), the Trans-National Qualifications Framework (TQF) and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (INFQ). The levels 8 and 9 of the NZ NQF and the TQF, and level 9 of the INFQ have the same level of difficulty as Level 7 of the EQF, the MQF and the SA NQF which corresponds to the second cycle of the Bologna Process. The first Bologna cycle, Level 6 of the EQF, MQF and SA NQF is comparable to Level 7 of

**Table 28: The MQF compared to current European and International Qualifications Frameworks**

EQF Level	MQF Level	QF/EHEA Level	SCQF Level <sup>88</sup>	QCF Level <sup>89</sup>	INFQ Level <sup>90</sup>	TQF Level	NZ NQF Level	SA NQF Level
8	8	3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle	12	8	10	10	10	8
7	7	2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle	11	7	9	9	9	7
						8	8	
6	6	1 <sup>st</sup> cycle	10	6	8	7	7	6
			9		7			
5	5	short cycle	8	5	6	6	6	5
			7	4			5	
4	4		6	3	5	5	4	4
3	3		5	2	4	4	3	3
2	2		4	1	3	3	2	2
						2		
1	1		3	E3	2	1	1	1
					1			
			2					
		1						

EQF: European Qualifications Framework;

MQF: Malta Qualifications Framework;

QF/EHEA: Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process);

SCQF: Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework;

QCF: Qualifications and Credit Framework (England, Wales and Northern Ireland);

INFQ: Irish National Framework of Qualifications;

TQF: Trans-National Qualifications Framework (Small States of the Commonwealth);

NZ NQF: New Zealand National Qualifications Framework; and the

SA NQF: South African National Qualifications Framework

88 John Hart for SCQF, (30th May 2008), Report on the Referencing of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), p14.

89 QCDA, (August 2009), Report on Referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, p6.

90 National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, (9th April 2009), Referencing of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF), p3-4.

the TQF and the NZ NQF and to Levels 7 and 8 of the INFQ.

Level 6 of the INFQ and TQF and Levels 5 and 6 of the NZ NQF correspond to the short cycle of the Bologna Process and to Level 5 of the EQF, MQF and the SA NQF. The first 4 Levels of the NZ NQF have the same level of difficulty as the first 4 Levels of the EQF, MQF and the SA NQF. The INFQ's and the TQF's Level 5 has the same value as Level 4 of the MQF and INFQ's and the TQF's Level 4 carries the comparable learning outcomes as Level 3 of the MQF. The first 2 Levels of these two frameworks differ when compared to the 8-level frameworks because the INFQ's Level 3 is equivalent to the MQF's Level 2, and the TQF's Levels 2 and 3 have the same value as MQF Level 2. Similarly Level 1 of the MQF is comparable to Levels 1 and 2 of the INFQ and to Level 1 of the TQF.

The QCF of England, Wales and Northern Ireland differs from the MQF, EQF and the SA NQF because it introduces an entry level (the E3) which has the same level of difficulty of the EQF Level 1 at an entry point, and the qualifications at Levels 3 and 4 of the QCF are referenced to Level 4 of the MQF, EQF and the SA NQF. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) has 12 Levels and the learning outcomes of its Level 3 are comparable to those of the EQF Level 1. The SCQF's Levels 7 and 8 are referenced to Level 5 of the MQF, and the SCQF's Levels 9 and 10 are referenced to Level 6 of the MQF. Level 11 of the SCQF has the same value as Level 7 of the MQF, and MQF's Level 8 normally associated with the completion of the third Bologna cycle (doctoral degree) has the same value of the SCQF Level 12.

Referencing between frameworks is a very important exercise which increases transparency of qualifications across national, international and interregional borders and institutions. However, this report illustrates that it is not the establishment of frameworks that gives value and meaning to qualifications but their referencing to other qualifications frameworks, in the form of accumulation

and transfer of credits, learning outcomes and levels of difficulty enabling learners to achieve a higher level of mobility.

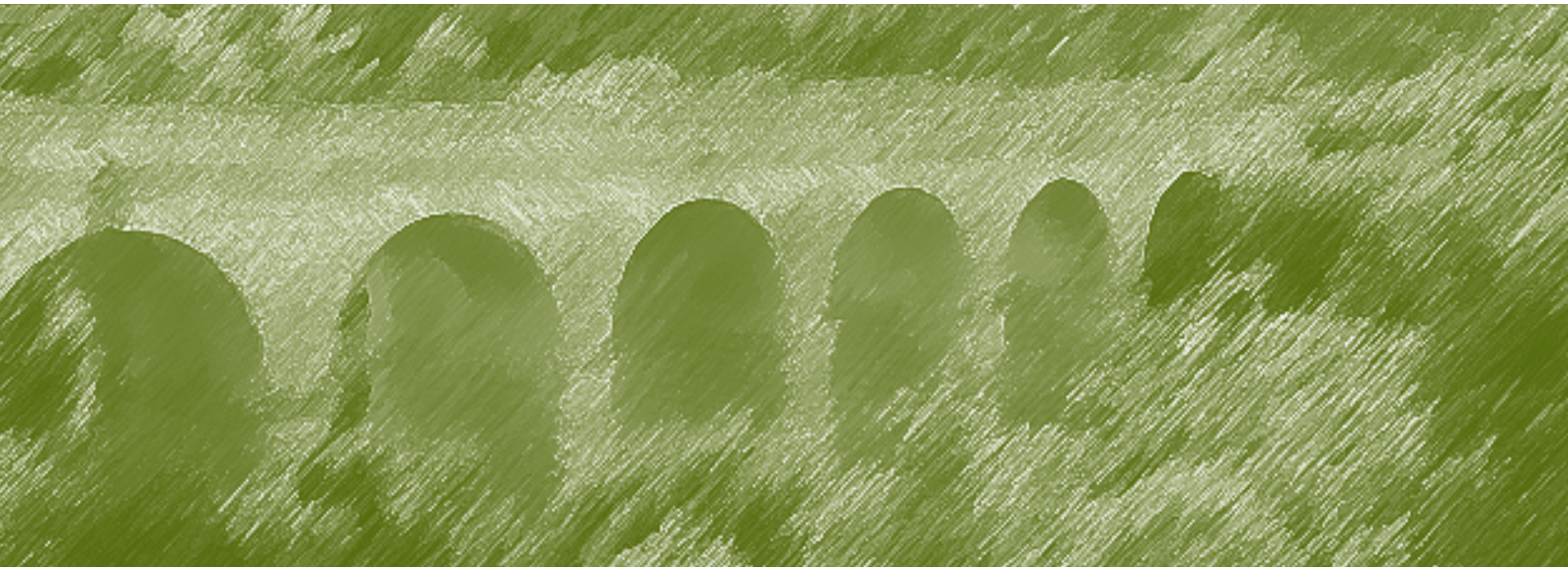
This report aims at guiding the individual, whether a young student at school leaving age or an adult learner, as well as all stakeholders to understand and appreciate the factors determining the levels of qualifications making up the MQF and their value on the European and international education environments and the global labour market.

The level descriptors demonstrate that the programme of studies at every level of difficulty should provide opportunities for students to know and understand subject-specific knowledge, learn how to apply in concrete situations knowledge and understanding, possess communication skills relative to the level of qualification, acquire judgmental and learning skills and be responsible and autonomous in one's own actions.

According to the standards based on learning outcomes as described above, at the end of a learning process whether formal, informal or non-formal the individual should benefit from personal development as well as increase the capacity for employability and sustained employment.

Referencing between frameworks is a very important exercise which increases transparency of qualifications across national, international and interregional borders and institutions.





## **PART FOUR**

# The Role of Stakeholders





# 4

The role of stakeholders in setting up and implementing a qualifications framework is instrumental in ensuring success, sustainability, application and employability. Referencing the MQF to the EQF and the QF/EHEA is a key element of the implementation phase of the MQF. It improves the transparency and understanding of qualifications and facilitates more consistency and coherency between European and Trans-National qualifications. Any National Qualifications Framework that is aligned or referenced to other frameworks, particularly the EQF and the QF/EHEA benefits from this added value.

## **4 The Added Value of the MQF referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA**

The added value is manifested by the following mechanisms:

- transparency and understanding of qualifications;
- consistency and coherence between different qualifications frameworks;
- increased currency of single qualifications;
- the creation of national level descriptors as standards used for comparability;
- the enhancing of access and progression;
- a credit system and units as building blocks of qualifications;
- accumulation and transfer of credits;
- mobility;
- learning outcomes-based qualifications;
- greater stakeholders' involvement;
- national reform; and
- European, international and Trans-National cooperation.

The above mechanisms require a co-ordinated effort, as the successful implementation of the MQF necessitates commitment and depends on the stakeholders' direct

involvement and ownership of the framework. Such a commitment strengthens the coherence between the role of the MQF as a translation device and the quality assurance mechanism. This part of the report seeks to address the issue of stakeholders' involvement and their contribution to the design, establishment and implementation of the MQF.

### **4.1 The Role of Stakeholders in the MQF and beyond**

One must here distinguish between two important terms: stakeholders and social partners. The stakeholders group is more extensive and refers to individuals or organisations who will be effected by a given measure or policy (see reports of meetings with stakeholders on pg. 26). Therefore the term stakeholders is an umbrella term that includes all members of civil society that may or may not belong to an organisation. Social partners are also stakeholders. The term social partners refers to representative organisations such as unions, employers associations, chambers of commerce, and federations of industry. Their task is to represent the interests of their members at a national and European level. MQC seeks to involve both social partners and stakeholders in

the development of the MQF. Important stakeholders in this process include the individual learners, the education and training providers and social partners.

MQC is an independent reference point that functions as an integrating force between stakeholders representing education and industry, and the three main education pathways namely compulsory education, VET and HE. In fact MQC Governing Board which has a policy and decision making role is chaired by an individual with established expertise in the private sector and independent judgmental qualities. The board members are government policymakers in economics and quality assurance in education, representatives of the University of Malta and MCAST and representatives of two social partners namely the Malta Employers' Association (MEA) and the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC). The Malta Council for Social and Economic Development is also represented on the Council. The Board decides on issues related to the MQF including quality assurance and the recognition of foreign qualifications. This is one of the instances where stakeholders including social partners are directly involved.

The MQF's first draft was designed by MQC board; however it was only finalised following a number of consultation meetings with individual stakeholders including student bodies, education and training providers and social partners. The establishment of the Framework led to its implementation, and this also necessitated the stakeholders' direct contribution. MQC managed to reach out to the stakeholders by publishing four policy documents in a series of books entitled *Valuing All Learning* on the MQF, on VET, on Quality Assurance and on the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

There are four different dimensions to MQC – stakeholder co-operation:

1. one-to-one consultation meetings;
2. seminars and conferences related to the MQF;
3. sector skills units; and
4. EQF information seminars for stakeholders

One-to-one consultation meetings with stakeholders are very time consuming, but very productive. They help to establish a *rapport* between organisations and individuals, and MQC. The topic of these meetings depends on the development of the MQF, such that

There are three kinds of seminars and conferences organised by MQC, namely those related to the EU projects, peer learning activities such as those co-ordinated by ENQA VET, and consultation events. Stakeholders and social partners are also project partners and national associates in projects co-financed by the European Commission where MQC is either the co-ordinator or a partner.

at the initial stages of the setting up of MQC the topic was the design of the MQF, now that the MQF is at its implementation phase the discussion is about the level rating of qualifications, sectoral frameworks, the level descriptors and the referencing process. Generally, the stakeholders themselves identify the need to approach MQC and education and training providers seek guidance on how a course can be designed to follow the quality assurance criteria and the principles of the Framework, so that this process would lead to the signing of a Protocol between the two institutions.

There are three kinds of seminars and conferences organised by MQC, namely those related to the EU projects, peer learning activities such as those co-ordinated by ENQA VET, and consultation events. Stakeholders and social partners are also project partners and national associates in projects co-financed by the European Commission where MQC is either the co-ordinator or a partner. The Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) contributed to the results of the the *EQF-FRAME*, a Leonardo da Vinci project which had the objective of aligning the tourism qualifications of the partner countries. ITS, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage (ICMCH) are vocational education and training (VET) providers directly involved in the two ESF Projects awarded to MQC.

Social partners shall also contribute through their guidance on the necessary learning outcomes relevant to the future needs of industry. A number of social partners also support the *EQF InLearning* project, which has the objective to pilot a Lifepass portfolio of individuals' informal and non-formal learning. These include employees' and employers' unions, the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (MCCEI), the printing industry association, ETC and MCAST. Irrespective of whether the stakeholders or social partners are actively involved in the projects, they are nevertheless invited for seminars and conferences related to the MQF, so that MQC keeps them informed of developments through communication. Consultation events in 2008 and 2009 focused on the referencing process and to a lesser extent the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

*Skills+*, one of the ESF projects aims at designing, publishing and promoting the occupational standards in nine sectors following the setting up of sectoral skills units with representatives of industry and education. A piloting project is already ongoing and unions, the MTA and ITS representatives have designed occupational standards in collaboration with MQC. Such stakeholder involvement is vital as they contribute through sector specialisation, and MQC cannot have specialisation in every sector. In doing so, the MQF has been at the centre of our discussions particularly in establishing a closer relationship with the EQF and other Frameworks of Qualifications.

Stakeholders are also involved through information sessions about the EQF and the MQF. In 2008, MQC organised four information seminars for Guidance Teachers and Counsellors, gave talks to teachers as part of their in-service training, to students when invited by particular schools and eight seminars specifically for identified target groups.

The target groups were:

1. College Coordinators and Heads of Schools;
2. NGOs;
3. Directors of Public and Private Training Institutions;
4. Human Resources Managers;
5. Parents' Associations Representatives;
6. Employers and Trade Union Activists;
7. Students' Organisations; and
8. Teachers and lecturers

This initiative was very well received, there was interest, the seminars were very well attended and consequently MQC shall organise similar meetings in the future. MQC also participates in educational media programmes to disseminate information to civil society about what is the role of MQC and the MQF and its wider perspective and referencing to the EQF and the QF/EHEA.

There are positive results coming out of co-operation between stakeholders such as the partnership between Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (MCCEI) and MCAST, and which also contributes to the implementation of the MQF. These include student visits to industry; promotion of work-based learning; presentations in industry to MCAST students, the upskilling course on manufacturing excellence offered jointly to individuals who work in industry, and the ongoing discussion of qualifications to ensure that these are demand driven.

The shift to learning outcomes led to an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders, so that the MQF will have demand-driven qualifications which have their programmes constantly quality assured. Learning outcomes are also a guidance tool for stakeholders especially learners, so it is in MQC's interest to ensure that these are in place. The *rapport* which has been created with stakeholders shall be strengthened with further collaboration, as it is based on mutual trust and the stakeholders' ownership of the MQF.

*Skills+*, one of MQC ESF projects aims at designing, publishing and promoting the occupational standards in nine sectors following the setting up of sectoral skills units with representatives of industry and education. A piloting project is already ongoing and unions, the MTA and ITS representatives have designed occupational standards in collaboration with MQC.

## 4.2 The Impact of the MQF and the Referencing Process on Stakeholders

The design of learning outcomes-based qualifications, level-rating of existing compulsory, VET and HE qualifications and of sectoral qualifications necessitate the collaboration with a number of stakeholders' networks. Such a dialogue encourages stakeholder ownership of the MQF and promotes mutual trust. It is in the stakeholders' interest to shape learning outcomes, occupational standards, qualifications, the Framework and reform. Discussions on the development of occupational standards involve industry and identify and address skills gaps and future skills needs.

All stakeholders whether an individual or an organisation benefit from a framework referenced to the EQF and QF/EHEA. One of the key benefits of the MQF is the added-value of a qualification referenced to the MQF and the EQF. From an education and training providers' perspective there is a shift in the potential market of aligned qualifications from a local base to a European and international one. On the other hand this aspect is an advantage for all learners as their qualification has a clear value, and qualifications can cross borders efficiently without the need for unnecessary delay resulting from qualifications which require recognition. Besides mobility, the individual learner has the opportunity to know before enrolling in a course the validity of the qualifications in Malta and in a European and interregional context. Career

All stakeholders whether an individual or an organisation benefit from a framework referenced to the EQF and QF/EHEA. One of the key benefits of the MQF is the added-value of a qualification referenced to the MQF and the EQF.

guidance is further enhanced with the publication of the occupational standards in 2011 which complement the referenced framework, whereby an individual has an indication of job opportunities and career prospects related to a particular qualification at particular MQF Level. Membership to professional organisations is made easier as with a referenced framework comparability of qualifications is easier for the individual to understand and does not require a bureaucratic process. Employers also benefit from a referenced framework as they would know the value of local and foreign qualifications and it would facilitate the selection process.

A National Qualifications Framework referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA must be user-friendly and conducive to transparency, mobility and progression. These factors promotes efficiency and therefore contributes to competitiveness. They also encourage lifelong learning and mobility of learners and workers and an education system based on greater integration without harmonisation. A stakeholder still benefits from a national best fit system which is tailor-made for the needs of the local market but in an integrated context with a relationship and alignment with other national frameworks.

## 4.3 Application of the Referencing Process

The next phase of this project is to apply this referencing process to qualifications across all the levels of the Malta Qualifications Framework. In reality this procedure has already started. Stakeholders approaching MQC on level-rating of qualifications have been continuously exposed to the three overarching Frameworks (MQF, EQF, QF/EHEA) in one consolidated context so that a new culture in establishing levels of qualifications is gradually inculcated at an early stage of the process.

Results have been very satisfactory. The Maltese adapt to change very fast and in many cases are fast learners as well. Public and private institutions have immersed into such a new paradigm without hesitation but with a critical and constructive approach. On the one hand this attitude consolidates the already accomplished experience with our traditional system of qualifications and on the other hand it injects into such a long-standing successful system, elements of innovation that facilitate learning and mobility.

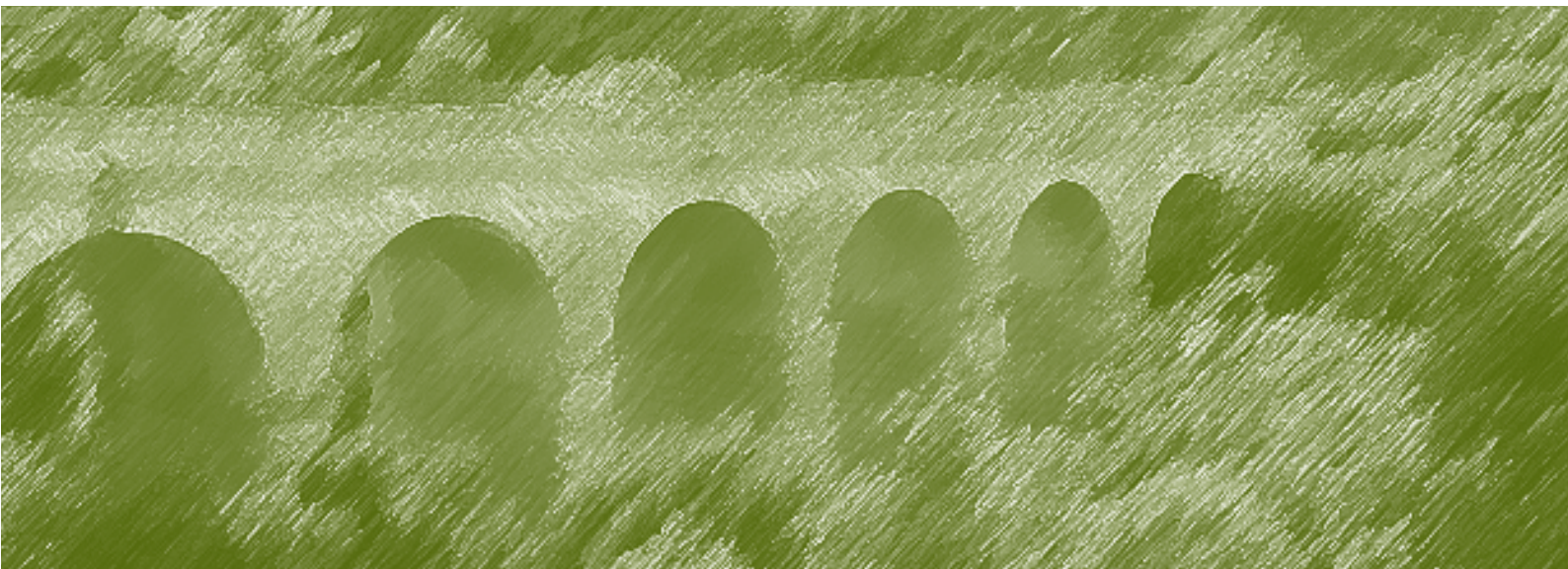
Through the publication of this Report it is expected that further changes will be made by many stakeholders to the referencing process itself so that it is further fine-tuned to the EQF and the QF/EHEA. MQC looks forward to this learning experience which, from our constant contacts with training institutions and industry (employers) has established a constructive dialogue which was systematically fed into the research, preparation and writing of this Report.

This Referencing Process has already established many supporters. It is expected that an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders on such a process will lead to more learning experiences from which individuals and the Maltese Nation at large can greatly benefit from.

The next chapters illustrate two examples of how a national qualifications framework serves as a catalyst for innovation such as the creation of Awards system referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework and new school leaving certificate capturing formal, informal and non-formal learning.

A National Qualifications Framework referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA is user-friendly. This factor promotes efficiency and therefore contributes to competitiveness.





## **PART FIVE**

# Implementing the Referencing Process





# 5

A major development in 2010 of the referencing process has been the design of an awards policy referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework. Ensuring quality and standards is one of the key challenges that Malta's system of education faces today. The other challenges are to create home-grown qualifications that can match international standards and criteria, attract more learners to lifelong learning and foreign students to Malta's further and higher education public and private institutions.

This chapter is written to address these objectives by proposing an awards system that can best fit the Malta Qualifications Framework, help training providers design qualifications that respond to the needs of individuals, employers and the labour market and provide young learners with a holistic form of education.

The awards system that is designed aims at giving every individual who embarks on a formal learning experience the tools to upgrade, adapt and widen his or her knowledge, skills and competences. In its concluding message the EC document New Skills for New Jobs states that "increasingly there is nowhere to hide for low-skilled communities, low-skilled workers or low skilled companies. And the EU is not yet highly-skilled enough to guarantee its future success. 'Business as usual' is not an option!"

The main message of this chapter is to grow - from dependency on external standards to interdependency on quality and standards in education and training which are essentially endogenous. MQC's vision is to see more citizens with recognised skills and competences and more training providers building their own capacity as a means to provide education at the highest levels. In achieving these goals this chapter proposes the following messages:

- 1 that eight different awards be designed to capture the widest possible awards system that best fits

the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning;

- 2 that every formal, non-formal and informal learning experience be classified under one or more of these awards;
- 3 that the transparency and value of short courses, create a culture in which these courses will be considered as building blocks of qualifications promoting and facilitating lifelong learning and employability;
- 4 that the different profiles of qualifications will require constant updating in the classification and level-rating of knowledge, skills and competences;
- 5 that the European tools (ECTS/ECVET/ESG/EQARF) and processes (Bologna/Copenhagen) will serve as constant benchmarks for Malta's "quality control" in all education and training programmes;
- 6 that the Malta Qualifications Council is authorised to define and classify qualifications in consultation with competent and designated authorities, public training providers and authorities as well as with sector skills councils when these are set up to represent the different economic sectors of our economy;
- 7 that in vocational education and training the model adopted by our public VET institutions will serve as an indicator against which all vocational and professional qualifications will be classified;
- 8 that all international qualifications and outreach

programmes awarded locally would also be governed by a credit system comparable to that used in Malta and that final transcripts be in line with the Diploma and Certificate Supplement where applicable;

- 9 that qualifications will continue to be measured and quality assured by their exit point;
- 10 the entry criteria that is access points for higher education 'outreach' programmes aiming at learners aged 17 to 23 would be comparable to entry criteria of public further and higher education institutions;
- 11 that the classification of qualifications and awards would be an ongoing process to facilitate the recognition, accreditation and quality assurance of every learning experience in order to upgrade skills and chances of professional development or employability.

This chapter should serve not only to share our understanding of the complex context of education and training but also to transform these strategic indicators into policies on a national level and establish a fair playing field for all.

## Classifying Qualifications

### 5.1 Introduction

France, Ireland and the UK have been working on NQFs for the last decade or so and claim to have reached an advanced stage of implementation. Malta launched its first attempt at setting up a qualifications framework in October 2005 through Legal Notice 347. At that time very few people spoke about a qualifications framework. Many were unaware that such frameworks exist. Others were uncertain about their function within an education and training system.

Today, practically all public and private training providers and several stakeholders talk about Malta's framework of qualifications, level descriptors, learning outcomes, accreditation and recognition processes as well as the importance of quality assurance. More and more customers approach the Malta Qualifications Council requesting a level for their qualification.

It is on the strength of this *culture change* in defining and understanding qualifications that this document has been written.

These past five years have been a learning experience not only for those directly engaged within the Malta Qualifications Council but also for those who have been in touch with this agency. The international links established since 2005 have helped us design a framework of qualifications which best fits our system of education, synergises the vocational and the academic strands and recognises all learning including that acquired in informal and non-formal contexts.

In June 2007 the Malta Qualifications Framework was launched after almost two years of discussions, consultations and international reviews. In September 2009, MQC presented its referencing report to the EQF Advisory Group and it was endorsed by all Member States. Three months later, the Commission took an active part in the launching of the *Referencing Report* at *Europe House* – the new offices of the *European Commission* and of the *European Parliament* in Valletta. With respect to the recognition of our national qualifications framework, the activity at *Europe House* sealed Malta's favourable position vis-à-vis the rest of the other Member States. We were the second country (after Ireland) to have referenced our national framework of qualifications to that of the European Qualifications Framework and the first to reference our framework also to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. Other Member States are following on Malta's footsteps and referencing the two European Frameworks to their comprehensive national qualifications framework.

This document is another in the series of documents aimed at implementing the Malta Qualifications Framework. It focuses on the final product of a learning process – the award. An award is in itself a judgement that an authority makes on the successful completion of a task or a performance. In the context of qualifications, awards are definitions of an achievement at a level of competence declared by an authority or an autonomous, self-regulated, recognised and accredited education and training institution. Therefore the purpose of this document is to define the different awards that best fit the Malta Qualifications Framework so that training providers, learners, teachers, employers, trade union activists, parents and other stakeholders share a common language and recognisable standards.

Eight different awards have been designed to express the widest possible awards system in Malta's qualifications framework. These awards have been expressed within Malta's obligation as signatory of the *Bologna Process* (1999) and the *Copenhagen Process* (2002) as well as full Member of the European Union. The eight awards are:

1. Academic Higher Education Awards  
Higher Vocational Education and Training (VET) Awards
2. Vocational Education and Training Awards
3. Continuous Professional Development Awards
4. Customised Awards
5. Work-Based Awards
6. School Awards
7. Higher and General Education Legacy Awards
8. VET Legacy Awards

It is expected therefore that all formal, informal and non-formal learning falls within one or more of these categories. The *Higher Education Awards* could be of an academic/research or vocational nature (*Higher VET Awards*) respecting the three Bologna cycles of Bachelor, Master's and Doctorate qualifications or the EQF level descriptors at levels 5 to 8. These levels when applied within Universities must reflect research and a wide knowledge-base within the sector whereas when offered within colleges must seek a balance between knowledge, skills and competences acquired through formal learning and work experiences. Each of these levels has been assigned specific workloads which must be successfully completed in order to claim such award.

At a later stage, when the accreditation, quality assurance and licensing process starts, workloads would have to be visible and verifiable. This would apply for both home-grown and foreign qualifications.

*Vocational Education and Training Awards (VET)* respond to the Copenhagen Process. These awards are normally based within vocational colleges and respond to a set of standards and criteria that match theory with practice. Normally VET qualifications are provided in colleges, in workplaces, in employment and training institutions and in specialised agencies that prepare young and older persons to become employable in the shortest time possible.

*Continuous Professional Development Awards* reflect an added training or research learning base which updates an already advanced level of knowledge, skills or competences acquired through an undergraduate or a post-graduate degree. These awards are normally designed for professional development in regulated professions as well as to broaden and extend skills.

*Customised Awards* are normally used by many employers and training organisations to upgrade the knowledge, skills and competences of their workforce. Unlike CPDs, customised awards are focused on occupational areas and are tailor-made training and qualification packages for individual organisations. Most customised awards are work-based vocational qualifications. Employers often use these awards to challenge and benchmark the competence of their workforce, accredit competences or to provide evidence of competence of the workforce.

*Work-Based Awards* are often associated with apprenticeship schemes in which learning takes place in controlled work environments. It is vital for economies to grow and for social well-being that more people are given the opportunity to learn while they work. These awards may also take into account prior learning so that learners are given the opportunity to build, during their working years, their own portfolio of achievements as a means to ensure employability. WBAs offer mature workers the same opportunities as trainees to have their existing competences recognised as well as providing opportunities for lifelong learning.

For the purpose of this document, *School Awards* are qualifications acquired during compulsory and post-secondary education that leads to higher education but which is not vocational training. The SEC and MATSEC awards fall under this category. But there could be other awards such as the International or the European Baccalaureate.

*Legacy awards* are of two categories: those within vocational education and training and which fall within the first five levels of the MQF and those that fall within each level of the Malta Qualifications Framework in mainstream education including higher education. Legacy awards are qualifications awarded prior to a date which competent authorities establish as enough to represent a knowledge-base and competences required in today's labour market.

In establishing a classification of awards that can be referenced to the MQF, this document also refers to a credit system that cuts across all awards. In defining awards, 1 credit represents 25 hours of total learning. Learning can take place through a combination of contact hours, controlled practical sessions, mentoring, self-study such as reading and research, tutorials, assignments, assessments in the form of written and oral tests, seminars, conferences and recognition of informal and non-formal learning. It is pertinent to point out that the distribution of credits is the prerogative of accredited and recognised training institutions however this document establishes the minimum required to achieve full qualification at the prescribed level.

An important aspect of this document is that of establishing a title (award) to a qualification. For instance, learners may obtain a Level 6 qualification by successfully completing a Bachelor's degree or a Continuous Professional Development Award or a Customised Award. Similarly a learner may obtain a Master's degree or a post-graduate diploma or a Continuous Professional Development Award at MQF Level 7. Although each award within the same qualification level will have a different workload, yet the title itself of the award will express the nature of the qualification at the prescribed level descriptor of the MQF. Learners may also achieve partial qualifications having obtained fewer credits than the minimum established by this document. It is a huge benefit to providers and learners to work within a credit system. For learners in particular it would be easier to get on to qualifications and progress.

This process is an important development in the implementation of the MQF.

Awards will establish workloads and therefore employers will have a clearer picture of one's own achievements within the national and European framework of qualifications.

The system will certainly encourage more learners to partake of the lifelong learning process which NQFs support. It will make the MQF easier to understand and more transparent at national and international level. This system will also increase permeability between vocational education and training and higher system education making learning pathways more visible, facilitating access and participation. Furthermore the

system will strengthen the link between education and training and the labour market and opens the opportunity for competent authorities to validate informal and non-formal learning with agreed structures of assessment and standards.

## 5.2 Definition of Terms

A qualifications framework provides a methodology for indicating the level of difficulty and attainment in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences achieved, as a result of formal, informal or non-formal learning experience.

Qualifications are generally reflected in educational awards and describe the knowledge, skills and competences a person must acquire to be successful in a particular occupation, or in a field of study, or in a field of culture, or in a sector of development. Classification of qualifications to a specific level of difficulty is based on the weighting of the workload and learning activities required to achieve the award.

An objective of this document is to respond to the need of giving short courses a clear value indicative of the level of difficulty and the workload translated in credits. Malta's proposed credit system cuts across all learning in further and higher education and is based on the notion of 1 credit equals 25 hours of total learning which includes contact hours, self-study, hands-on experience and assessment.

The transparency and value of such short courses creates a culture in which these courses are considered as building blocks of qualifications that promote and facilitate lifelong learning. A credit system facilitates flexibility as the learners, particularly those engaged in the labour market, are encouraged to accumulate the credits at one's own pace.

Particular attention has been given to include all learning activities at all levels in the framework and through all learning pathways, from doctoral programmes, to work-based learning, to older awards. The aim is to assist education and training providers to design qualifications in a more focused, outcomes-based approach.

Experience within the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) and relations with ENICs (European Network of Information Centres) and NARICs

(National Academic Recognition Information Centres) has shown that qualifications at the same level of difficulty vary in duration, size, input, output, intensity, and outcomes. For instance, a Master's programme, a post-graduate diploma and a post-graduate certificate all fall within MQF Level 7, yet all three awards carry different workloads and outcomes. The same could be said in the vocational education and training sector in which one level of difficulty could be expressed in different qualifications ranging in size and outcomes from two-year programmes to an intensive 5-hour or 10-hour course.

Similarly, recognition processes are constantly being challenged by an increasing variety of qualifications that, although they respect the level of difficulty set within the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), have reduced workloads or may serve as credits for transfer, progression or continuous professional development. In vocational training, an increasing number of short courses are being designed to cater for immediate and specific needs within industry and the labour market in general. Some skills (example, VRT - vocationally related training - courses; courses in the printing, care and beauty industries) require a few hours of training in order to acquire specific knowledge, skills and competences. The classification of such concrete learning experiences is necessary to provide a more comprehensive picture of the variety of such experiences that can be referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MQF).

The current stage of awards and classification within the Malta Qualifications Framework is backed by the profiles of qualifications verified since August 2008 as

follows: School Awards (SAW), VET Awards (VAW); Higher Education Awards (HEA), Higher VET Awards (HVA), Continuous Professional Development Awards (CPD), Customised Awards (CUS), Work-based Learning Awards (WBA), Legacy Awards (LGE/LHE/LVT) which can be of two types: Higher and General Education Legacy Awards or VET Legacy Awards.

This classification is neither exhaustive nor complete but solely indicative of a pilot phase in which public and private training providers are being invited to classify their learning experiences (courses, training programmes and any other form of learning experience) within one or more levels of the MQF. The following tables lists the acronyms used for each award:

In classifying qualifications, learners and employers will be in a better position to assess the knowledge, skills and competences needed to achieve specific tasks in a work-based environment.

The system may also be applied to qualifications awarded by recognised international sectoral/professional certifying bodies.

Awards are also referenced to specific levels within the MQF as follows:

Academic Higher Education Awards	MQF Level 5 to 8
Higher VET Awards	MQF Level 5 to 8
VET Awards	MQF Level 1 to 4
CPDs	MQF Level 5 to 7
Customised Awards	MQF Level 1 to 6
Work-Based Awards	MQF Level 1 to 5
School Awards	MQF Level 1 to 4
Legacy Awards (VET)	MQF Level 1 to 5
Legacy Awards (HE/General Education)	MQF Level 1 to 8

**Table 29 - Awards by Education Sector**

MQF LEVEL	General Education Academic Strand			Vocational/Professional Strand Recognition of prior Learning				
	HEA	LGE	CPD	HVA	CPD	CUS	WBA	LGE
8	HEA	LGE		HVA				
7	HEA	LGE	CPD	HVA	CPD	CUS		
6	HEA	LGE	CPD	HVA	CPD	CUS		
5	HEA	LGE	CPD	HVA	CPD	CUS	WBA	LGE
4	SAW	LGE		VAW	CPD	CUS	WBA	LGE
3	SAW	LGE		VAW		CUS	WBA	LGE
2	SAW	LGE		VAW		CUS	WBA	LGE
1	SAW	LGE		VAW		CUS	WBA	LGE

### 3. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to contribute to greater transparency and fairness in the classification of qualifications and awards falling within the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MQF) which is referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

The key functions of this document are to:

- establish transparency and consistency at national level of nomenclature in the education sector
- establish consistent relationship between programmes and awards within the national qualifications framework;
- maintain a national register of recognised and accredited awards;
- provide guidelines developed by MQC on a national awards system;
- promote an understanding of an awards system related to all education and training programmes
- promote credit accumulation and transfer thus facilitating lifelong learning
- recognise informal and non-formal learning across the first three levels of the MQF

Increasingly diverse qualifications and awards require a clear policy on the classification of knowledge, skills and competence within each level (level of difficulty) and the workload attached to the attainment of each qualification.

The MQF is characterised by eight levels of qualifications. Within each level a number of qualifications have been placed to distinguish between one level and another and to classify qualifications according to levels of difficulty.

Levels covering general education or vocational education and training enjoy the same parity of esteem which means that the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) recommends to employers that individuals in possession of either general education certificates or diplomas or vocational education and training certificates and diplomas should be considered of comparable labour market value (though they may have very different profiles.)

### 4. Applicability

The proposed classification of qualifications and awards applies to all qualifications and awards within the MQF and to those qualifications and awards referenced to the MQF accredited and recognised by the Malta Qualifications and Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC). It also applies to general education, vocational training, continuous professional training, short courses, professional qualifications and those qualifications falling within the three cycles of the Bologna Process.

It also applies to foreign qualifications requiring recognition status within the MQF.

Due to the increasing number of diverse local and foreign qualifications, it is necessary to assign to each qualification a status within a level of difficulty based on the formal workload of each accredited and recognised qualification.

The classification of Awards is recommended by MQC.

### 5. Definitions

For the purpose of this classification there are eight types of Awards:

Full title	Acronym
1. Academic Higher Education Awards Higher VET Awards	HEA HVA
2. VET Awards	VAW
3. Continuing Professional Development Award	CPD
4. Customised Awards	CUS
5. Work-based Learning Awards	WBA
6. School Awards	SAW
7. Legacy Awards VET	LGE
8. Legacy Awards GE*/HE	LGE

\*General Education

**Table 30 - Awards by definition**

Academic Higher Education Award including VET Awards Higher VET Award (Doctoral degree)	A supervised research of up to 100,000 words leading to an academic or vocational award conferred by a recognised institution of higher education.
Higher Education Award including VET Awards (Postgraduate Diploma)	A post-graduate taught academic or vocational award with a minimum of 60 ECTS by a recognised institution of higher education.
Academic Higher Education Awards Higher VET Awards (Bachelors' Honours Degree)	A taught academic or vocational award which may include supervised research and a maximum of 240 ECTS awarded by a recognised institution of higher education.
Academic Higher Education Award Higher VET Awards (Higher VET Diploma)	An undergraduate taught vocational award (which may include a final dissertation or practical assessment) and a minimum of 120 ECVET credits by a recognised institution of higher education.
Academic Higher Education Award Higher VET Awards (Undergraduate Higher Certificate)	A taught academic award with a minimum of 30 ECTS by a recognised institution of higher education.
School Award (Matriculation Certificate) VET Level 4	The Matriculation Certificate (2 subjects at Advanced Level, three at intermediate level and Systems of Knowledge) as awarded by the University of Malta or a VET MQF Level 4 qualification comparable to an MCAST Level 4 qualification with a minimum of 120 ECVET.
School Award (4 SEC subjects grades 6-7) VET Level 2	4 single subjects grades 6 or 7 as awarded by the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) of the University of Malta or a VET Level 2 MCAST qualification with a minimum of 60 ECVET.
Continuing Vocational / Professional Development Award	An award based on a minimum of 4 ECVET/ECTS in a specific sector.
Work-based Learning Awards	Awards based on supervised on-the-job training with a minimum of 5 ECVET or the validation of prior learning and a minimum of 5 years of professional experience in a recognised sector.

The definition of each award requires an adequate distribution of study / practice / workloads assigned to each award as an indication of the extent of the

study and training period required to achieve defined knowledge, skills and competence. The following table illustrates the bands for each award:

Table 31 - Awards by credits		
Award	MQF Level	Workload
Academic Higher Education Award	Level 8	Doctoral degree
Higher VET Awards	Level 7	60-120 ECTS/ECVET
	Level 6	180-240 ECTS/ECVET
	Level 5	30-90 ECTS/ECVET
VET Awards	Level 4	60-120 ECVET
	Level 3	60-120 ECVET
	Level 2	60-120 ECVET
	Level 1	Minimum 40 ECVET
Continuing Professional Development Award	Level 6	Min of 4 ECTS/ECVET
	Level 5	Min of 4 ECTS/ECVET
	Level 4	Min of 4 ECTS/ECVET
Customised Awards	Level 6	Min of 4 ECTS/ECVET
	Level 5	Min of 4 ECVET
	Level 4	Min of 4 ECVET
	Level 3	Min of 4 ECVET
	Level 2	Min of 4 ECVET
	Level 1	Min of 4 ECVET
Work-based Learning Awards	Level 6	Awards based on supervised on-the-job training with a minimum of 5 ECVET or the validation of prior learning and a minimum of 5 years of professional experience in a recognised sector.
	Level 5	
	Level 4	
	Level 3	
	Level 2	
	Level 1	
Legacy Awards (General Education MQF L1 to L8 or VET-related MQF L1 to L5)	Level 8	Awards conferred to individuals prior to 2007 and which have relevance to the labour market and employment. VET awards are classified up to MQF Level 5.
	Level 7	
	Level 6	
	Level 5	
	Level 4	
	Level 3	
	Level 2	
	Level 1	
School Awards	Level 4	Matriculation Certificate
	Level 3	6 SEC Grades 1-5
	Level 2	4 SEC Grades 6-7
	Level 1	School Leaving Certificate



## 6. Classification authority and responsibility

The classification of awards applies only to home-grown qualifications. Only the Malta Qualifications Council is authorised to define and classify qualifications in consultation with competent and designated authorities, sector skills councils and further, vocational, higher education institutions and professional bodies where applicable.

The classification of the awards as listed in the Malta Qualifications Framework is mandatory according to legislation. Where there is no prescribed title of an award (eg VET Diploma), users may construct a basic title in consultation and with the approval of the MQC and related designated authorities or sector skills councils as appropriate.

<b>Table 32 - Awards by level of difficulty</b>			
<b>MALTA QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK incorporating the EQF &amp; the QF-EHEA</b>			
<b>A Classification of Qualifications by level of difficulty.</b>			
	<b>QUALIFICATION</b>	<b>TYPE OF AWARD</b>	
<b>8</b>	Doctoral Degree 3rd cycle Bologna Process E/MQF Level 8	Academic Higher Education Award Higher VET Awards Legacy Awards	<b>8</b>
<b>7</b>	Master's Degree (Academic or Vocational) Post-graduate Diploma (Academic or Vocational) Post-Graduate Certificate (Academic or Vocational) 2nd cycle Bologna Process E/MQF Level 7	Academic Higher Education Award Higher VET Awards HE Award HE Award Continuing Professional Development Award Legacy Awards	<b>7</b>
<b>6</b>	Bachelor's Degree (Academic or Vocational) 1st cycle Bologna Process E/MQF Level 6	HE Award Continuing Professional Development Award Customised Awards Legacy Awards	<b>6</b>
<b>5</b>	Undergraduate Certificate Undergraduate Award Foundation Degree/VET Higher Diploma Higher Education Certificate Short-cycle Bologna Process E/MQF Level 5	HE Award HE Award HE Award Continuing Professional Development Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Awards	<b>5</b>
<b>4</b>	Matriculation Certificate VET Diploma Advanced level Intermediate level Pre-Tertiary Course E/MQF Level 4	School Award VET Award School Award School Award School Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Awards	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	6 Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) grades 1-5 VET Level 3 E/MQF Level 3	School Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Awards	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	4 SEC grades 6-7 VET Level 2 E/MQF Level 2	School Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Awards	<b>2</b>
<b>1</b>	School Leaving Certificate VET Level 1 E/MQF Level 1	School Award VET Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Awards	<b>1</b>

## 7. Classification structure

The classification structure is based on the qualifications as defined by the Bologna Process and established awards in the Laws of Malta. The following tables illustrate the title of the qualification and the assigned type of award (based on the prescribed level of difficulty) at each level of the MQF.

## 8. Criteria for classifying qualifications

The criteria for referencing qualifications has been based on the specific workloads as specified in the Bologna Process (for higher education) and on established standards and criteria for all other qualifications in vocational and professional education and training and in general education. For instance, a Level 6 qualification is based on a minimum of 180 or maximum of 240 ECTS credits; a qualification in the HE short-cycle on 30 ECTS; a Matriculation certificate comprising 2 Advanced Level subjects, 3 at Intermediate level and Systems of Knowledge as a separate subject. Other options may be established from time to time.

In vocational education and training the model adopted by VET public institutions has been established as benchmark against which all vocational and professional training qualifications will be classified. The following is the referencing of each designated award and the prescribed workload assigned to each of such awards:

## 9. Classification appeals

It is being proposed that public and private Education and Training providers should be entitled to appeal to the MQC Classification Appeals Board on the classification of their qualifications, the assigned title of awards, and the prescribed workloads. All training providers shall have a right to full access to information kept at the Malta Qualifications Council that is relevant to their pending appeal. Filing a classification appeal does not affect any other rights that the education and training providers may have under other provisions of law or regulation.

The proposed Classification Appeals Board should be made up of two independent members, the Registrar or his representative of the MCAST, and the Registrar or her representative of the University of Malta. The Chief Executive Officer of MQC will act as secretary to the Board but will have no vote. Representatives of private

training providers may also be co-opted. The Chairman of the Board shall be one of the two independent members appointed on the Board.

Decisions by the Classification Appeals Board should be final.

Compliance with classifications appeal decisions should be mandatory

## 10. Qualifications standards

It is also being proposed that qualifications standards should be established by the MQC in consultation with public and private training providers. It is the relevant Ministry or the University of Malta or the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, or the competent / designated authority or the Sector Skills Council that shall establish the process to meet such standards in terms of: title, workload, assessment procedure, entry requirements, and format of the final transcript (which should either be in the EUROPASS Diploma or Certificate Supplement format).

Classified qualifications should be only those based on a final formal assessment which may be in written, oral or project format. Only quality assured qualifications should be formally classified.

Legacy Awards should be recognised in consultation with the University of Malta and the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology or the competent/ designated authority or the Sector Skills Council.

Awards with no formal or/and authenticated information attached to the certificate or diploma should not be recognised.

Customised Awards should be classified as long as the criteria mentioned above are adhered to. Such awards may include very short courses normally at MQF Level 1 to 7 only. Awards at MQF Level 5 to 7 would normally be classified

## 11. International Sectoral Awards

For many years, several Maltese citizens have acquired qualifications from international sectoral bodies or from established international bodies particularly in information and communication technology and in vocational subjects and in the arts. A number of Maltese institutions have adopted 'international' or 'outreach' qualifications as their benchmark for access

**Table 33 - Awards by workloads**

<b>Description of workloads</b>			
	<b>DESIGNATED AWARD</b>	<b>INDICATIVE WORKLOAD</b>	
<b>8</b>	Academic HE Award Higher VET Awards Legacy Awards	Full-time research equivalence minimum 36 months Transcript verification	<b>8</b>
<b>7</b>	Academic HE Award (Master's) Higher VET Awards Continuing Professional Development Award Customised Awards (Short courses) Legacy Award	Minimum 60 ECTS Minimum 60 ECTS Minimum 04 ECTS Minimum 04 ECTS Transcript verification	<b>7</b>
<b>6</b>	Academic or VET HE Award (BA/BSc Hons) Academic or VET HE Award (BA/BSc) Continuing Professional Development Award Customised Awards Legacy Award	Minimum 240 ECTS/ECVET Minimum 180 ECTS/ECVET Minimum 04 ECTS/ECVET Minimum 04 ECTS/ECVET Transcript verification	<b>6</b>
<b>5</b>	HE Award Continuing Professional Development Award Customised Awards (Short courses) Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Award	Minimum 120 ECVET for Foundation Degree or VET Higher Diploma) Minimum 04 ECTS/ECVET Minimum 04 ECVET Minimum 04 ECVET Transcript verification	<b>5</b>
<b>4</b>	School Award/VET Award School Award/VET Award School Award/VET Award School Award/VET Award Continuing Professional Development Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Award	Minimum of 60 Credits Minimum of 60 ECVET (VET Diploma) Minimum of 60 Credits (3 A Level subjects) Minimum of 30 Credits (3 Intermediate single subjects) Minimum 04 ECVET Minimum 04 ECVET Not applicable Transcript verification	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	School Award/VET Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Award	Minimum of 60 credits Minimum of 04 ECVET Minimum of 04 ECVET Transcript verification	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	School Award/VET Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Award	Minimum of 60 credits Minimum of 04 ECVET Minimum of 04 ECVET Transcript verification	<b>2</b>
<b>1</b>	School Award/VET Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Award	Minimum of 40 credits Minimum of 04 ECVET Minimum of 04 ECVET Transcript verification	<b>1</b>

into employment or have acted as franchisee for international awarding bodies.

MQC considers appropriate to include in this document its proposed policies and criteria for the level-rating of such 'international' qualifications/awards with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF).

MQC considers the Bologna and the Copenhagen processes (and subsequent developments since 1999 and 2002 respectively) and the Referencing Report published in November 2009 as guidelines for the level-rating of all international qualifications to the MQF.

**All international qualifications or “outreach” programmes awarded in Malta should be governed by (a) a credit system comparable to that used in Malta (1:25) and (b) final transcripts using the Certificate or Diploma Supplement format where applicable. The entry criteria for higher education “outreach” programmes aiming at learners aged 17 to 23 should be comparable to those established by public higher education institutions (where applicable).**

11.1 MQC will have no authority in setting the standards and size of international qualifications and awards. Neither does it have any influence on the content of such awards and whether these awards match the occupational standards requested by industry.

11.2 MQC should consider size and content relevant to local contexts as important criteria for level-rating such awards to the MQF.

11.3 For the purpose of this document, international sectoral awards are defined as awards (qualifications) designed to meet the industry-driven needs of a specific sector. Although these awards are not home-grown and do not form part of the national qualifications system, they are generally accepted by both industry and the learner as meeting the knowledge, skills and competences needed in specific sectors leading to employability. Examples of such awards are those related to IT, such as the ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence), qualifications in the arts, music, dance and drama awarded by various accredited institutes and centres or those awarded by bodies such as City and Guilds, LCCI (London Chamber of Commerce and Industry) through various local representatives and EDEXCEL/BTEC awards.

11.4 International awarding bodies adopt various forms of programme design, delivery, quality assurance and certification. Such processes are either managed centrally or through a franchise in a particular country. In Malta there are several franchisees for international awarding bodies. In cases where the international sectoral certifying body operates a franchise model, the MQC policies and criteria set out in this document shall apply to the appointed franchisee in Malta.

11.5 The following principles should underpin the process of having international sectoral awards level-rated with the MQF:

Established sectoral certifying bodies or their appointed franchisee may continue to deliver awards in Malta; they may apply for recognition of the awards from MQC;

- all international or outreach awards/qualifications may retain their own brand and identity;
- If international sectoral certifying bodies or their franchisee wish to level-rate these awards to the MQF, they shall apply for validation to the MQC.

The Award document should include:

- a set of learning outcomes for each programme that clearly respond to the level descriptors of the MQF;
- a quality assurance policy which is already in place and functioning;
- a credit system comparable with that established within the MQF and evidence of an appropriately qualified coordinator/director and lecturer/s together with the necessary facilities and resources for each programme delivered in Malta.

Alignment of sectoral awards with the MQF should be kept under review in line with national and international developments in the area of sectoral awards, the specific needs within local industry and, where applicable, the European Qualifications Framework and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area.

11.6 In order to have its awards/qualifications level-rated with the MQF, the international sectoral certifying body should also fulfil the following criteria:

- documented evidence of its international status and stature, including reviews from at least three different countries (two of which must be full

members of the European Union) of competent authorities on the quality, standards and relevance of sectoral international qualifications to industry and employment;

- if an appointed franchisee, the franchisee should show evidence of a minimum of 5 years experience in the sector or in a relevant education and training in Malta and should provide recognised references that indicate good standing and credibility within its sector and industry;
- indication of authorisation and appraisal of the franchisee from the international certifying/awarding body;
- evidence that it has the academic/training capacity to design, re-design, up-grade qualifications/awards according to changing sectoral requirements to match the level-descriptors of the MQF;
- have documented procedures of a quality assurance policy in place, including internal and external verification processes and an appeals / complaints system;
- a documented programme and assessment procedure in line with international and national standards and governed by a credit system in line with MQF guidelines and standards.

11.7 Applications for the alignment of international qualifications should be submitted to an MQC Technical Committee (MQC/TC) which shall include representatives of industry (by sector) and public training authorities. The MQC/TC will send its recommendations to the MQC Council for a final decision.

11.8 Applications for the level-rating of international qualifications to the MQF must reach MQC in writing. The eligibility criteria are those defined in 11.5 and 11.6. Applicants shall submit all the required information before the application is processed.

If all documentation is considered eligible for verification, the MQC/TC may request clarifications or further information from the international awarding/certification body or the franchisee. The final decision will be taken by the MQC Council and will be published on the MQC website.

## 12. Conclusion

The classification of qualifications is an ongoing task which facilitates the recognition, accreditation and quality assurance of qualifications of the Maltese Educational system at all levels of the Malta Qualifications Framework. This classification may also be adopted with respect to international sectoral awards / qualifications.

Such classification is based on European tools (Bologna/Copenhagen) and Maltese standards as established from time-to-time by nationally recognised competent authorities and bodies.

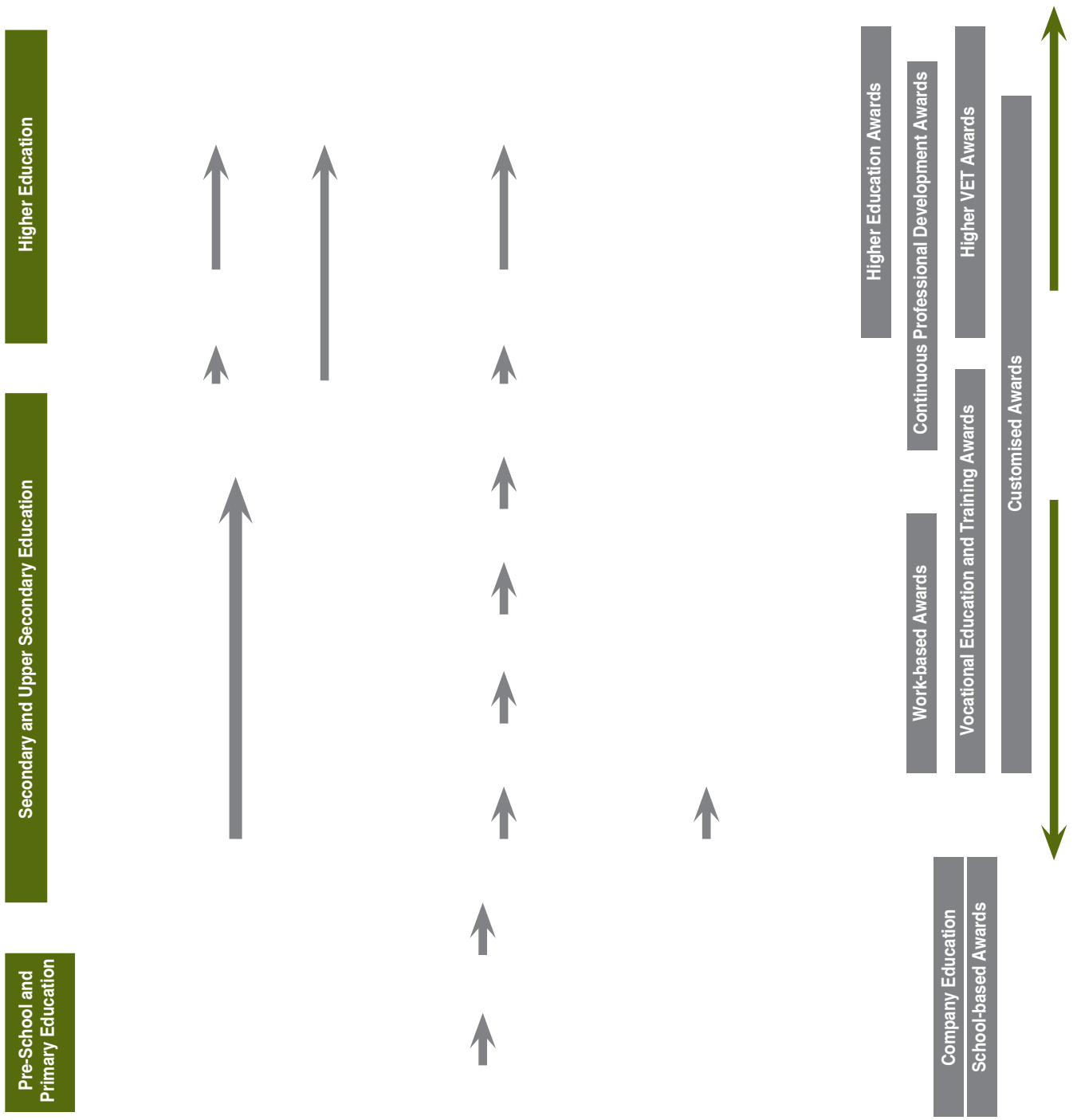
The Bologna and Copenhagen tools serve as constant indicators of quality and standards and transparency in classifying qualifications and the related awards. The following are the tools used to classify and level-rate qualifications:

- European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning
- Qualifications Framework – European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process)
- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)
- European Quality Assurance and Reference Framework (EQARF)
- European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)
- European Credit for Vocational Education and training (ECVET)
- EUROPASS Diploma Supplement
- EUROPASS Certificate Supplement
- The European Framework for Key Competences
- The National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC)

This document will be updated regularly, to reflect current trends in classifying qualifications and their respective award title.

Table 33 - The Maltese Education and Awards Systems

**THE MALTESE EDUCATION AND AWARDS SYSTEM**



# Secondary School Certificate and Profile Guidelines determining the verification of informal learning in secondary education

(prepared in collaboration with DQSE)

## Definition of Terms

For the purpose of these Guidelines, informal learning is being defined as all formal and non-formal activities that take place outside school hours in which learners are actively engaged in a culturally or life skill enriching experience.

The restructuring by the Directorate for Standards and Quality in Education (DQSE) of the School Leaving Certificate led to the integration of formal, non-formal and informal activities in a new transcript that illustrates what a person has achieved during secondary education. This includes all academic subjects, all non-formal activities organised by the College or school but which do not feature in the National Curriculum, informal learning which takes place outside school hours and which is independent from school regulations and assessment procedures, personal qualities which a learner acquires during his or her school days and evidence of attendance during the school year.

This document focuses on the guidelines that determine whether or not teachers and education officers should list learning activities submitted by learners aged 11 to 16 outside school hours and which can be valued as learning experiences.

These guidelines have been divided into four sections:

- definitions of informal learning and the school context;
- registering a learning institution;
- documenting informal learning;
- the teacher's role;
- validating evidence of learning.

MQC and DQSE will be issuing a Call for all public and private institutions in which forms of learning takes place to register their interest in validating informal learning to learners aged between 11 and 16.

Following such Call, a database will be set up to ensure that all validation takes place within defined standards and criteria.

The database will be updated regularly and kept on the MQC/DQSE websites for visibility, verification and information purposes. Certified informal learning must correspond to registered institutions only. No entry in the Secondary School Certificate and Profile will be valid unless the registered institution conforms to the standards and procedures set in this document.

Specific marks will be allotted to each verified activity as indicated in the DQSE Handbook of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile.

Learning takes place in different contexts and should develop various capabilities in individuals. For centuries, learning has been considered as a tool for the acquisition of knowledge leading to a status in one's adult life. However, with the increase in leisure time and technology, learning, irrespective of how and where it is acquired, is helping individuals gather knowledge, but also develop and express new skills and competences such as entrepreneurship, entertainment skills, creativity in the arts, dance and music and organisational skills.

These learning environments help learners to develop specific qualities and attitudes for instance responsibility, punctuality, appearance, sociability, loyalty and so on. These personal qualities will also be valued by the Secondary School Certificate and Profile. The main objective of a wider concept of education should be that of lifelong learning, where individuals yearn to consider learning as a lifelong experience.

Traditionally, we have perceived learning as that taking place in schools and universities. But experience has shown that learning can also take place beyond the formal classroom or lecture room environments. Indeed learning can also take place at work, in the community, at home, in kitchens, parks, youth clubs, the theatre and band clubs, among others. In fact, the majority of learning opportunities outside the classroom, such as those provided by private, religious, philharmonic, social and voluntary organisations are often classified as informal learning. The main advantage with informal

learning is flexibility – it can happen anywhere and any time and can also be tailored to meet the needs of the learners, the organisations and, most importantly, the community.

So far, informal learning had no formal recognition by the State. However, with the introduction of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile informal learning will be formally recognized and valued and can serve as a key indicator for employment, further studies or for a person's curriculum vitae. Informal learning improves the quality of our lives the learner's outreach in the community and at national and international levels. (last sentence needs reviewing).

This document indicates the various opportunities to value the rich cultural heritage of our population and to ensure that skills and competences are acknowledged and visible to the labour market.

### **Definitions of informal learning and the school context**

CEDEFOP defines informal learning as learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure.

It is often referred to as experiential learning, and can to a degree, be understood as accidental learning. The European Commission in its communication on Lifelong Learning defines informal learning as learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time and/or learning support). Typically, it does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases, it is also non-intentional.

Informal learning is seen by some as the learning that takes place in everyday life, and this includes for example, learning how to tie laces or a rope. Others perceive informal learning as projects undertaken by individuals, such as photography. Individuals may start reading about the subject, reading texts and surfing the internet as to acquire more knowledge about the subject and also joining groups that include enthusiasts about photography. Indeed, some also view informal learning as learning that is acquired through joining voluntary, social, cultural and private organisations, such as youth clubs, band clubs, scouts and girl guides.

Specialist (and often generous) individuals in these settings help individuals to think about experiences and

situations that would help in the individual's strive for self-actualisation. In fact informal learning can be all the above and more. It is a process of continuous

learning in different contexts and different settings for purposes that vary from learning a life skill to learning a language, modeling, drama, dance or a musical instrument.

In her study *Informal Learning in the Community: a trigger for change and development*, Victoria McGivney, defines informal learning as follows:

- Learning that takes place outside a dedicated learning environment and which arises from the activities and interests of individuals and groups, but which may not be recognised as learning.
- Non course-based learning activities (which might include discussion, talks or presentations, information, advice and guidance) provided or facilitated in response to expressed interests and needs by people from a range of sectors and organisations (health, housing, social services, employment services, education and training services, guidance services).
- Planned and structured learning such as short courses organized in response to identified interests and needs but delivered in flexible and informal ways and in informal community settings.

It can be clearly seen that the distinction between what is formal learning and informal learning is that while the prior takes place in education institutions such as schools, the latter occurs in settings beyond these education institutions.

Coombs and Ahmed view informal learning as the lifelong process by which every individual acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment – at home, at work, at play: from the examples and attitudes of family and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books; or by listening to the radio or viewing films or television. Generally (informal learning) takes place in unorganized, unsystematic and even unintentional settings at times, yet accounts for the great bulk of any person's total lifetime learning – including that of a highly 'schooled' person. (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974)

These definitions, together with those of CEDEFOP and the Commission clearly indicate informal learning as



learning that takes place outside formal educational environments. However, whereas McGivney states that ‘planned and structured learning such as short courses’ is part of informal learning, Coombs and Ahmed see informal learning as that learning that takes place in ‘unorganized, unsystematic and even unintentional settings and contexts’.

For the purpose of this document, MQC/DQSE will treat informal learning as all that learning that occurs outside formal schooling.

Thanks to information and communication technology, it is now widely accepted that children and young people learn all the time. Informal learning enhances motivation, enjoyment and skill acquisition, and this by tapping into real life scenarios. Experiences in different settings and outside the formal can help young people gain higher aspirations, greater self-esteem, higher confidence, greater well-being and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences that would be useful in their working life.

### Registering a learning institution

Learners aged 11 to 16 can register their informal learning experiences if the organisation that they

attend is registered with the MQC. The registration of such organisations will take place on an ongoing basis but initially through a public Call. Organisations that are eligible for registration must have one or more of these descriptions:

- Social clubs
- Band clubs
- Drama schools
- Dance schools
- Music academies and schools
- Art academies and schools
- All recognised religious organisations
- Sport clubs, nurseries and academies
- MFA/GFA registered Football Clubs
- Philanthropic organisations
- Philharmonic societies
- Life skill clubs
- Voluntary associations
- Hobby clubs
- Chess Academy
- NGOs

In registering for validation, organisations must submit the following information online or through surface mail:

Malta Qualifications Council and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education	
SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE AND PROFILE	
REGISTRATION FORM VALIDATION OF INFORMAL LEARNING	
Name of the organisation	
Location	
Objectives	
Short history of the organisation	
Statute or Constitution	
Head of Organisation	
Teaching staff and a short curriculum vitae	
Police conduct of Head of organisation	
Sample of regular teaching programmes or activities	

Information submitted will be archived within MQC and subject to the Laws of Malta namely the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act.

On successful Registration, the Organisation will be given an MQC/DQSE Accreditation Label (to be produced on each certified learning experience) and a certificate to be displayed for information purposes. Registration is conditional to verification of organisation's conduct, activities and assessment by MQC or DQSE verifiers.

Organisations which have either filed for bankruptcy or have been judged by the Law Courts of Malta to be found guilty of crime or inappropriate behaviour or not conforming to the Laws of Malta will be deleted from the list.

### Documenting informal learning

Each Accredited Organisation could produce its own learning toolkit. Examples of such toolkits will be provided for all organisations for the assessment of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by the young person.

Different assessment methods can be used according to the sector or activity. MQC/DQSE recommend that a common tool should be introduced for the documentation of the learning experiences of the individual.

Assessment methods could include:

- Interviews (particularly at the start of the learning experience)
- Simulated and real activities/performances/exhibitions etc. (e.g. playing an instrument, dancing, acting, singing)
- Debate (discussions, internal and external participation in groups)
- Presentations (internally or to the community)
- Observation (of individual competence/skill followed by a structured debrief)
- Group or peer assessment
- Artifacts, photographs and other forms of evidence of the informal learning experience
- Portfolio

The common tool for organisations should be the portfolio method (which could be in the form of diaries, journals, learners' files, pen drives).

This could include:

- Details of the young person;
- Experiences acquired through the different Accredited Organisation/s and in other informal learning settings. Such experiences can be documented in writing and also through photos or other forms of media;
- Competences – social, innovative, organisational, leadership, problem solving, team skills, intercultural, creative, artistic and communication skills;
- How the criteria stipulated for this learning process was met – how the knowledge,
- Feedback from the Accredited Organisation/s

### Validating evidence of learning

Recognising, valuing and validating informal learning provides a basis for improving quality and also for improving the learner experience.

Recognising the achievements of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by young people in informal settings, can provide a basis for qualitative and quantitative monitoring system for the organisations to use in order to monitor and improve the provision of the training offered and also to measure the impact of such training on the young people and also on the organisation itself.

Consequently, these results would offer sound evidence to be included in the Secondary School Certificate and Profile.

Recognising the achievements of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by young people in informal settings, can provide a basis for qualitative and quantitative monitoring system for the organisations to use in order to monitor and improve the provision of the training offered and also to measure the impact of such training on the young people and also on the organisation itself.

Young people, who attend the organisations offering informal learning, can also benefit from the measurement of their achievements. Assessing informal learning can help individuals to be more motivated, engage in the activities and learning within the organisation and also progress more in the formal systems of learning.

Recognising the achievements of the individuals in informal settings could also be the key to lifelong learning, as the individuals reflect on their achievements and encourage and motivate themselves to carry on learning. Barriers to learning can be overcome and positive attitudes towards formal learning can be developed.

For all informal learning experienced by young people, there needs to be a credible and transparent system that would

- recognise and record knowledge, skills and competences acquired and
- assure that the learning process in the informal settings is appropriate and fit for purpose.

Hence, this system should be designed as to:

- 1 promote the needs and interests of young people.
- 2 look at 'reasonable accommodation' – this through taking account the diverse situations of the learners and the learning itself
- 3 look for specific learning outcomes
- 4 empower and encourage learners to reflect, identify and recognise progress and achievement so that they better their self-efficacy beliefs
- 5 promote and instill dialogue between learners and trainers
- 6 promote good and best practices, so as to improve the acquisition and transfer of learning and the assessment.

Registered Organisations that provide informal learning should look at the following five elements in introducing a measuring system for informal learning:

- 1 an appropriate aim – aims of all activities should be stated and explained. This should be done as to ensure that all involved are aware of the activity, the contents, roles and outcomes.
- 2 an initial assessment – young people need to go through an initial assessment to find out what the young people already know, what support they need and consequently to establish a bench mark for the

assessment of the learner's achievement. This initial assessment could include a) previous learning, b) reasons for learning, c) existing skills and d) preferred learning style and activities.

3 establishing objectives and learning outcomes – the objectives and learning outcomes should be identified at the start of the learning process.

4 recognising and recording of progress during the learning process – young people should be provided with the chance of reviewing their progress at different stages during this learning process so that both the learner and the trainer will be able to notice any progress or lack of it. The process of informal learning should encourage young people to be constantly and consistently aware of what they are acquiring and the level of progress achieved from time to time. Indeed, young people should be given supported feedback or reviews throughout the learning process, identifying strengths and weaknesses and areas that need developing within agreed timeframes.

5. Assessment (learner and trainer), overall achievement at the end of the learning process – this final assessment allows both the learner and the Registered Organisation to measure the progress made in relation to the learning objectives and bench marks stipulated at the beginning of the learning process. This final assessment should include a) learner self-assessment, b) impact of the learning process on the learner, c) feedback from the trainer (future progression) and d) evidence of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by the learner.

It is the responsibility of each MQC/DQSE Accredited Organisation to ensure transparency in its learning processes and in its certification. MQC/DQSE will be making ad hoc inspections to verify that standards and procedures are being followed particularly in the following three areas:

- A healthy and clean environment
- Qualified and responsible personnel & teachers
- Documentation and activities

It is the responsibility of the school to validate informal learning by grading acquired competences on the forms provided by DQSE and as detailed in the Handbook for Computation of Marks for the Secondary School Certificate and Profile (see Appendix 2)

## The Teacher's role

### *Teachers play an important role in the recognition of informal learning*

In education teachers play different roles in different contexts. In Skinner's world, the teacher is expected to prepare the whole learning process in detail and during the process he or she is expected to take an observer or evaluators' role. In Piaget, besides laying down the rules for learning to take place, the teacher leaves room for experimenting in a relatively open structure but this freedom is also restricted within defined pedagogical frameworks. In Rousseau, the teacher gives up control and leaves learning to incidental experiences which the learner is expected to grasp from his or her environments. The teacher facilitates learning and assists the learner in classifying these experiences into worthwhile life skills.

Informal learning is a mixture of these various approaches to learning. People learn in different ways depending on the stimulus the environment provides and the motivating factors that push learners to learn an activity or skill.

Validating informal learning is an added value given to learning that takes place outside the teacher's remit. Educators today acknowledge that outside the formal schooling hours learning takes place systematically through other means of activities such as social, cultural, sport clubs and primarily through systems of communication such as internet and television.

For the purpose of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile, teachers will validate recognized certificates that indicate a learning experience which the learner has acquired within:

- a defined period of time or/and
- as an ongoing activity or/and
- by participating in a club or association or organisation.

In recognizing such informal learning experiences teachers must ensure that the following indicators are clearly documented:

- the certificate carries the MQC/DQSE label
- awarding association/body is a recognized organisation listed in the MQC/DQSE
- the activity is not part of the formal or informal school activities

- the name of the accredited organisation is printed in a clear manner;
- the name and signature of the Head of the organisation should appear on the Informal Education form provided by DQSE.

As stated earlier on, it is strongly recommended that teachers see that the DQSE Informal Education forms are properly filled in and that they carry the organisation's stamp, registration number and the attendance. The teachers will give marks according to the attendance registered during the course. The marks assigned each year for informal education depend on the attendance and activities performed. Such activities and any associated appearance, behaviour and performance must not be in conflict with the rules and regulations of the school and therefore it will be the school who takes the final decision on the marks assigned.

The teacher may ask the learner questions about what has been learnt or may invite the learner to share this knowledge or skill during formal and non-formal activities in the school. Skills learnt during informal activities may also be used to encourage other learners to take up new hobbies, new social or sport activities or engage themselves into more active participation in the community.

The validation of informal learning is a great challenge to teachers in all levels of education. Learners will provide new experiences; there will be added access to information on new skills, new activities in the community and an increased belonging to civic and social roles. Furthermore, learners will also be exposed to possible activities which as a class or group they can entertain outside school hours.

Informal learning is a mixture of these various approaches to learning. People learn in different ways depending on the stimulus the environment provides and the motivating factors that push learners to learn an activity or skill.

Informal learning shows great promise for revitalizing education and schooling. Teachers must be on the look out to explore the spaces, situations and relationships within which learning occurs and the nature of that learning. Every opportunity should be taken to discover the connections and tensions that exist between the informal acquisition of incidental and organised knowledge and the espoused formal process of reference to competence-based standards set in national curricula. Informal learning must be seen within the context of the School Leaving Certificate as a support to formal learning and a critique of 'what to be competent and knowledgeable' actually means.

Not everyone is an educator but all experiences educate. Teachers are formal and professional educators who consider informal learning as an added value to their classroom paradigm. More and more teachers acknowledge that:

- Teachers are formal and professional educators who consider informal learning as an added value to their classroom paradigm. More and more teachers acknowledge that:
  - Young learners may not have the time to spend exchanging and learning with others in the way they wish within formal education and therefore resort to other means to achieve other forms of skills and competences;
  - Pressures that national curricula often put on teachers and learners transform education into a formal rather than an enjoyable activity - learning becomes a duty rather than a pleasure.
- The validation of informal learning places formal education as the meeting point for:
- sharing of skills and competences outside schooling
  - widens the context of learning to include other centres, social, cultural and sport activities, community life, religious activities
  - exploration and enlargement of experiences
  - building active citizenship
  - new learning tools with an emphasis on group work
  - intergenerational participation in the formal process of learning – outside school educators can be invited to school to attract more learners to informal activities.
  - for information on community development and community action, outdoor and adventure activities, arts and cultural work and youth work.

## Conclusion

Teachers should act as promoters of informal learning and ensure that all learning experiences are valued and documented within the Secondary School Certificate and Profile.

The scope of these guidelines is to acknowledge informal learning as a value within the Secondary School Certificate and Profile (SSCP). Teachers play an important role in verifying such learning and ensuring that these experiences add to the general evaluation of a learner at the end of compulsory education.

A system of marking has been designed by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education and the Secondary School Certificate and Profile offers a space where teachers can place their evaluation from Form I to Form V.

Informal learning can be verified in many ways. But for the purpose of the SSCP specific procedures have to be respected by the organisations and individuals awarding the certificate, by the teachers who fill in the required information and by the administrators of the schools and colleges that ensure that such information is correct, transparent and archived professionally.

## Appendix 1

DQSE Secondary School Certificate and Profile Handbook\*

Informal Education

This refers to students' participation in activities outside school hours.

Up to twenty (20) marks are allotted to this section for every year of Secondary schooling. So a maximum of 100 marks may be awarded over the five-year period. Students are awarded the twenty marks if they actively participate in a voluntary organisation after school hours. The students' participation has to be guaranteed by the competent authority.

Computation of marks

Add together the marks awarded in this section during Secondary schooling.

\* Extract taken from the Handbook concerning the validation of Informal Learning

## Appendix 2

DQSE Specimen Informal Education Forms.



DIRECTORATE FOR  
QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN EDUCATION  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND THE FAMILY



## Informal Education: Courses

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ who lives at

\_\_\_\_\_

is doing a course in \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Name of Course and Address)*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Stamp if available*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Registration Number*

The student has been following this course for  weeks/months/years and attends around:

ATTENDANCE	MARK WITH AN X
80% - 100%	
60% - 79%	
30% - 59%	
10% - 29%	

Mention some achievements of this student:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Declaration Form

I \_\_\_\_\_ with the ID number \_\_\_\_\_,  
guide \_\_\_\_\_ in the above mentioned course, and  
declare that all the information provided is true.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Name and surname of parent/guardian of student \_\_\_\_\_

ID Number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_



DIRECTORATE FOR  
QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN EDUCATION  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND THE FAMILY



## Informal Education: Organisations

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ who lives at

\_\_\_\_\_

is a member of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Name and Address of Organisation)*

*Organisation's Stamp*

*Registration Number*

He/She has been a member of this organisation for  weeks/months/years and attends around:

ATTENDANCE	MARK WITH AN X
80% - 100%	
60% - 79%	
30% - 59%	
10% - 29%	

Mention some activities in which the student actively participated within the organisation:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Declaration Form

I \_\_\_\_\_ with the ID number \_\_\_\_\_,  
who holds the position of \_\_\_\_\_ within the above mentioned  
organisation, declare that the information provided is true.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Name and surname of parent/guardian of student \_\_\_\_\_

ID Number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_





# Conclusion

The objective of this report is two-fold: on the one hand to reference the Malta Qualifications Framework to two overarching European frameworks - The EQF and the QF-EHEA and on the other to illustrate how the process itself is a means to reform and innovate the education system through wider stakeholders' involvement. The Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) represents national reform, commitment and investment in Malta's most important resource – its human capital.

The MQF records and encourages the individual's assessed learning whether this is defined as formal, informal or non-formal from pre-school to compulsory education to further and higher education including adult learning. This report is a toolkit for quality assured qualifications which have a national, European and international value.

The challenges to establish a knowledge-based society are embedded in education, research and innovation. These indicators are part of the progressing levels of the MQF with an emphasis on the achievement of key competences at the lower levels as foundation for more complex learning in further education and eventually to higher education which includes research and training. Education, research and innovation within the MQF are given value when the MQF is attributed a currency and compared to other regional or international frameworks.

This report highlights the comparability process of the MQF Level descriptors to the level descriptors of the EQF and the QF/EHEA. The level descriptors describe the workload and are easy to use. Furthermore such referencing is also meant to increase the individual's achievement within the context of international recognition. The rationale behind the referencing process is that of setting standards. Through learning outcomes-based level descriptors and a workload system based on credit values the system of qualifications becomes transparent transferable and supports lifelong learning without bureaucratic frontiers. Such a transparent system offers the possibility of accumulation and transfer of credit and supports lifelong learning in an increasingly competitive labour market.

The results of this report are endorsed by stakeholders as they have been involved in the design of the MQF. The direct involvement of stakeholders particularly of

education and training providers and employers is an important aspect of this process. This will reflect itself in a forthcoming process of consultation on CPDs (Continuous Professional Development) and how this learning experience can also be measured more accurately and referenced to the Malta's Qualifications Framework. The implementation of the MQF will largely depend upon those who will determine the value that such Framework has in increasing skills, competitiveness as well as a culture of lifelong learning. Qualifications Frameworks address primarily the market's skills needs and add greater possibilities to individuals to retain their employment or to seek new challenges within the labour market.

The setting up of a European Qualifications Framework comes at a time when the culture of qualifications frameworks is engulfing educational systems worldwide. Referencing a relatively new Malta Qualifications Framework to a regional Framework such as the EQF is a major step towards linking Malta's educational system with at least 27 other Member States of the European Union. Such referencing process took the 'EQF indicators for Referencing' as key sign posts of an evolving development. Table 28 illustrates how each criterion has been applied in referencing the MQF to the EQF.

Beyond the regional context lies an emerging system of qualifications frameworks at regional levels (such as the one being developed by the Commonwealth, the Gulf States, Canada and others) which will gradually transform education into a global system of learning and mobility.

Referencing qualifications frameworks is a major step in meeting the challenge to harmonise cultures and systems of education and training.

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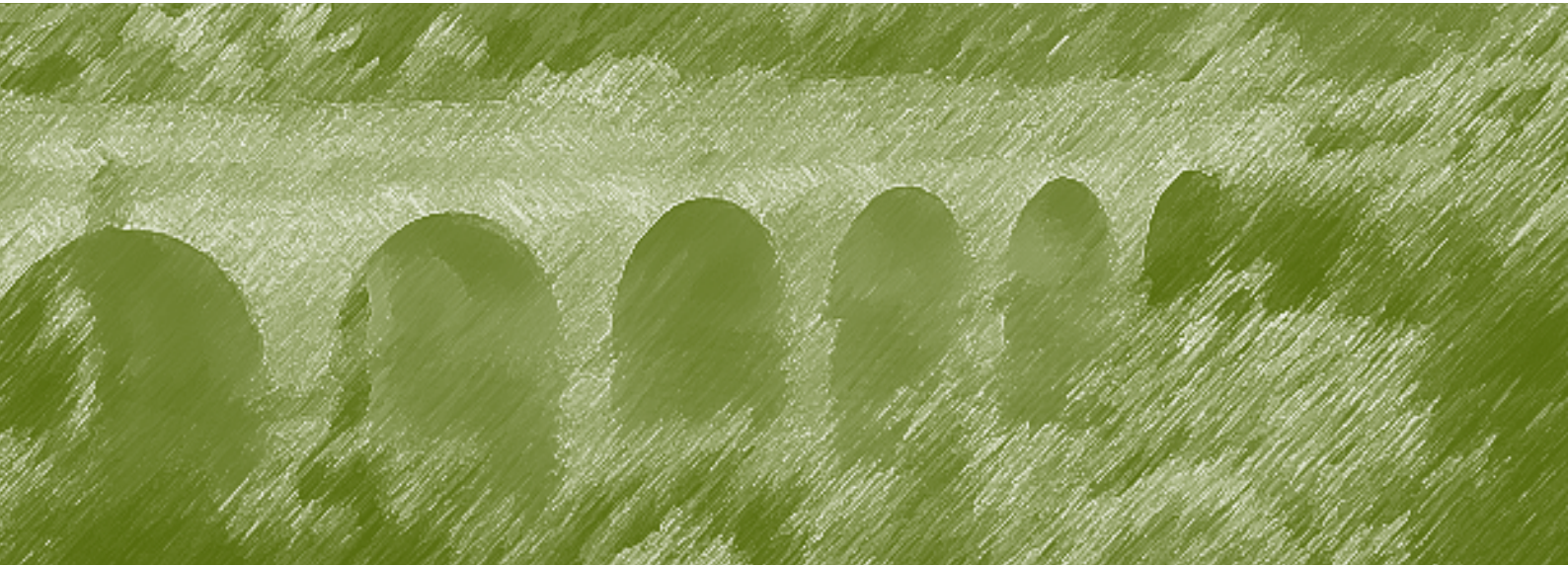
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Reviews of  
National and International Experts

September 2009





# 1. Reviews of National Independent Experts

## 1.1 Mr Felix Borg Independent Consultant, General Manager Operations, Employment and Training Corporation



The promulgation of LN347 of 2005 creating the Malta Qualifications Council and establishing eight levels of competence, replaced LN215 of 2000 in force at the time and which established five levels of competence primarily based on the British NVQ system. This means that Malta already then had the foresight of establishing level descriptors which not only endow those who demonstrate competence in any particular

vocational area with a local qualification but which would also facilitate the pegging of such qualifications with other European frameworks. This first experiment was then improved and reinforced through the establishment of the eight levels of competence/level descriptors by means of LN347 of 2005 and which were wisely based on the European Qualifications Framework which had to serve as the European model.

The transportability of qualifications within the European Union has long been an objective of the Union. Guideline 24 of the Employment Guidelines states that European Union Member States should respond to new occupational needs, key competences and future skill requirements by improving the definition and transparency of qualifications, their effective recognition and the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Commission Communication COM(2008) 868/3 on New skills for new jobs states under the heading 3.4 Mobilising Community Instruments “... The implementation of the European Qualifications Framework should increase the transparency of qualifications and facilitate access to further learning. The Copenhagen process on cooperation in VET will include a new priority to improve the links with the labour market”. The key words here are ‘improve the links with the labour market’. Any learning outcomes derived from formal or informal, academic or vocational education, on or off-the-job training will not enjoy any currency in the labour market unless they address the human resources needs of such market. Consequently, qualifications attesting such outcomes may not enable beholders to secure employment or take up a satisfying career in the labour market.

The level descriptors drawn up by the Malta Qualifications Council are carefully drawn up to distinguish between the knowledge, skills and competences required at each level of the MQF and how they relate to the EQF Level descriptors. The learning outcomes have been classified under six categories which clearly show the differences in learning

outcomes for the eight levels. The differences between each of the elements for the various levels have been carefully crafted out; they may seem minimal but are significant in determining the level of competence of individuals. They address one of the flexicurity measures mentioned in the National Reform Programme for Malta 2008-2010 i.e. “Launch occupational standards of competence and define the basis for their accreditation with a view to validating all forms of learning including non-formal and informal learning.”

Level descriptors and standards of knowledge, skills and competences reflecting such descriptors that will eventually be developed by MQC will help employers in identifying the skills necessary for a sustainable economy. Such level descriptors assist employers in:

determining the competences possessed by holders of qualifications at the various levels be they potential new recruits or current employees; drawing up job descriptions and specifications as level descriptors and standards specify the knowledge, skills and competences that the person to be recruited or already in employment must possess; providing opportunities for career and personal development, improving motivation of employees and enhancing their performance; supporting personnel management functions, from appraisal and promotion systems, to career planning, job enrichment and multi-skilling initiatives.

Jobseekers, employees, guidance personnel and others also stand to benefit from level descriptors by:

being aware of the competence levels;  
being guided by the level descriptors in mapping their career paths;  
enjoying labour market accreditation of competences they possess;  
offering recognition of the skills that individuals already possess and use in their day-to-day work or that they may be working towards obtaining through learning initiatives;  
ensure that efforts exerted in training and development will result in recognised certification;  
provide evidence of an individual’s ability to do a job and to have transferable skills thereby improving a person’s employability and career prospects.

The Employment and Training Corporation welcomes both the Malta Qualifications Framework and also the level descriptors drawn up by the Malta Qualifications Council and their referencing to the European Qualifications Framework.

As Malta’s public employment service and hence responsible for managing the European Employment Services network (EURES) in Malta, the level descriptors and their referencing to the EQF will facilitate the mobility of workers and jobseekers to address areas of labour and skills shortages that EU Member States may have. They empower

individuals by the latter having portable and recognised qualifications opening the European labour market to all those Maltese wishing to further their employment or personal development prospects within the European dimension.

## 1.2 Dr Jennifer Cassingena Harper

**Independent Consultant, Commissioner National Commission for Higher Education and Director Policy, Malta Council for Science and Technology**



The author was asked to review the Report and in particular to focus on the level descriptors and how the proposed referencing framework affects students in Higher Education and Higher Education institutions. This review addresses both the structure and content of the Report since both are important in communicating clear messages on the referencing approach being used by policy-makers, the management of higher education institutions, and students.

The Referencing Report represents a rigorous effort on the part of MQC to develop a comprehensive referencing of qualifications in Malta to Bologna guidelines. MQC are to be commended for the approach they have taken in involving a complementary team of foreign and local experts, in recognition of the need to garner a range of different expertise, insights and perspectives in tackling this complex task. This Report provides a very good basis for launching a consultation. As this is work in progress, the review has suggested ways of improving content and presentation.

### Proposed Review Framework

It is helpful to clarify what the terms of reference of the review are at the outset.

From Page 11 (First Draft), one can extract a tentative review framework for this work which however would need to be confirmed:

### Review Framework for the Handbook

The extent to which:

- the responsibilities and legal competencies of the key players are clarified and accepted
- the direct links between the qualifications levels in the NQF to the EQF Level descriptors are specified and clear
- the NQF system and qualifications are based on learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for the validation of informal and non-formal learning and credit systems
- the transparent inclusion of qualifications in one of the levels of the framework has been implemented
- the national quality assurance system and policy conforms to European principles

It would be useful to set out in the introductory pages the review framework on the basis of which this work is being carried out.

### Main Findings

In this section an overview of the main strengths and shortcomings is

presented. The main emphasis is on a number of recommendations for improving structure and content with a view to maximising overall impact of the Report.

### The Report's main strengths are:

- The Report provides a clear overview of the proposed national quality assurance system and policy and how this conforms to EU principles.
- The rationale and objectives of the study have been clearly formulated and highlight an effort to combine attention to both EU principles and national needs and realities.
- The approach is grounded in a sound analysis of referencing work underway/completed in other countries as evidenced by the engagement of experts from these countries in this Review.
- A conscious effort has been made to take appropriate account of Malta's particular economic, political and socio-cultural context in the definition of the level descriptors. It is important to note that level descriptors were already in place in Malta in 2005. This approach is very much in line with current trends at EU level to move away from one-size-fits-all approaches and to encourage more tailored and targeted national approaches which take proper account of national context.
- The Report draws on the results of a number of ongoing ESF projects which grounds the approach more firmly in practice rather than theory.

### The Report's shortcomings:

In the current global political and economic climate characterised by sudden economic, financial and security crises, there is a growing emphasis on the need to develop skills at all levels in coping with unpredictability and sudden change. These challenges also highlight the need for skills in strategy development and strategic approaches. In Malta these skills are often not sufficiently developed and evident in our labour force and this affects the country's competitiveness and the flexibility and speed for shifting to the knowledge-based society. Competencies should also make a specific reference to taking the lead in research contexts demonstrating innovation in the development of new processes. It is important that these skills and competencies are given higher priority and appropriately targeted in the level descriptors.

### General Comments about Presentation

In finalising the structure and presentation of the Report, it is important to consider who will be the primary entities and persons consulting the document and for what purpose. Will the Report serve as a reference for Maltese or also for those abroad interested in our system? The document will need to be reframed accordingly in a second iteration.

In order to facilitate reading and to ensure its use as a reference document, definitions or statements of reference or fact could be put in quotation marks or in boxes. This way it will make clearer where reference is being made to a general definition and where you are explaining your interpretation of it in the local context.

The Report is initially referred to as a 'handbook'. It is recommended that this idea is given serious thought since the handbook could serve as an important tool for stimulating and supporting the peer learning process at European and national level. It would also give Malta an edge at European level in taking this initiative.

Relevant extracts of this Report could be adapted to form the basis of the handbook. Careful thought would need to go into identifying the target audience and targeting the content and presentation accordingly. The experts could be invited to a workshop to discuss this in more detail. The eventual publication of this handbook as an interactive guide posted on-line could increase its use and consultation. It could also encourage feedback and updates.

### 1.3 Dr Suzanne Gatt Independent Consultant and Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, University of Malta



Having read through the document in detail and reflected on the issues raised within the document, the following comments include the reactions and feedback provided with reference to the overall implications and with special emphasis on Higher Education.

Overall Structure: The document is well structured. The first part provides the international backdrop within which the referencing exercise is set and how the document fits in with the next step envisaged following the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Framework. The second part provides the local context. It revisits the Malta Qualifications Framework as well as key developments since the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Council. This local context leads to the third part which deals directly with the referencing exercise and shows how the Malta Qualifications Framework is compared to both the EQF and the QF/EHEA. The last part (four) then tackles the different stakeholders involved in the process as well as the target groups on which the referencing exercise has an impact. The overall structure thus follows a logical development of argument from international and national obligations to the actual referencing exercise in itself, as well as its impact on the different interest groups. There is thus coherence throughout the whole document.

It is also evident that the major publications and official international and national documents have been consulted and the referencing document has been developed in the knowledge of these changes and obligations. It is well set in the context and fits in with the general trend being taken across Europe for the comparison and harmonisation of qualifications.

There are only two main comments with respect to the general development of the document. In the case of Part 3, I believe that it would be easier for the reader to be first presented by the official Malta Qualifications Frameworks with its specific level descriptors, and only afterwards are these compared to the EQF and the QF/EHEA. As presented, it is difficult for the reader to identify which are those tables which actually represent the Malta Qualifications Framework. Part 3 should thus start from the official framework and then move on to the referencing to the other frameworks. The specific examples provided can either come right after the Malta Qualifications Framework to illustrate how these fulfil the level descriptors or else after the comparison to the other frameworks.

One particular comment to be made with respect to the whole framework, but specifically with respect to Higher Education (Levels 6-8), the document states that the MQF provides more detail than the present EQF and EHEA/Dublin Descriptors. The impression given is that these levels (6-8) for Malta tend to be more demanding than the International levels. If this is not the case, but just that the descriptors for the MQF are just more comprehensive (in that they do not ask for more but just describe in more detail and identify more types of skills and competences), then this is to be stated clearly in the beginning of the section dealing with the level descriptors and particularly with respect to the comparison to the EHEA. This is to be considered important as the descriptors will have an impact on the type of tertiary courses being offered, particularly in the area of skills and 'making judgements'.

Otherwise, there are only a number of small specific issues which will be listed below for MQC to consider in its aim to improve the document for publication.

As a concluding comment, I can say that I have found the document to be overall comprehensive and a very good piece of work. I hope and auger that MQC will achieve its aim in having all qualifications in Malta referenced to the MQF and consequently with a European and global currency.

### 1.4 Mr Emmanuel Zahra Independent Consultant and Director, Institute of Mechanical Engineering, Malta College of Arts Science and Technology



The referencing process of all National Qualifications Frameworks to the European Qualifications Framework is a very valid step in the right direction. It aims at bringing all Europeans speaking and understanding the same language in relation to levels of qualifications.

In Malta, the introduction of our National Qualifications Framework coincided with the birth of the European Qualifications Framework. Thus, the Legal Notice founding the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) tied the future National Framework to the 8 point scale of the EQF. Thus, our referencing and comparative exercises are more direct and lack complications. The domains of the EQF are the Knowledge, Skills and Competences. This can be verified as very generic and flexible; however it is the objective of every NQF to adopt the national level descriptors according to the best fit principle. A key element in all the levels of the MQF is the provision of detail which makes it more user-friendly, easier to understand and to relate with irrespective of diverse cultural systems.

The Malta Qualifications Framework levelling all forms of qualifications was something lacking and sought after for ages. This was mentioned in all reports commissioned by the Maltese Education Authorities in the late 1990s, namely: *Proposals for Improvement in Technical and Vocational Education* 1997, *The White Paper* 1998, *The Trade Schools Report* 1999, *The ETF Report* 2000 to mention a few. All these reports

served as a catalyst for the publication in 2005 of Legal Notice 347 governing the Malta Qualifications Framework and the level descriptors of the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

As a small country and due to its political and cultural ties with Britain, Malta had an educational system formatted, for nearly two centuries, on the British systems. The academic and university educational routes were always formal and well known and accredited to British-based awarding bodies. Some forms of vocational education existed but were not well organised and did not enjoy the same parity of esteem as the academic programmes. With the introduction in 2001 of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), Vocational Education obtained a new dimension and left a positive impact on our population. Now we are also experiencing a culture shift from exclusive academic education to vocational education and training. So the need for a National Qualifications Framework combining both streams and giving them the same parity of esteem was a very positive milestone in Malta. Such a process could be possible through the work of MQC.

As an evaluator of this document I shall refer more to the Vocational aspect in this referencing review. The Vocational qualifications offered were, either home-grown and certified locally (Master Builders License, Electricians License,) or UK-based Awarding Bodies such as those of City & Guilds, or Foreign-based qualifications and certified in conjunction with local institutions – a double-badging process (MCAST/BTEC).

So the majority of all vocational qualifications were based on the British levelling of qualifications namely the previous 5 point scale:

Level 5	First Degree	Professional
Level 4	HND	Advanced Technician
Level 3	National Diploma	Technician
Level 2	Craft Diploma	Craftsman
Level 1	Foundation	Semi Skilled

The process of referencing was not that difficult on paper although I appreciated the enormous work which was undertaken to ensure that the referencing of the Maltese level descriptors match those of the European Qualifications Framework and that such referencing serves as guidelines for the design of qualifications and assessment processes.

In reality this process will help to standardise all programmes and courses according to the requested areas of both the EQF and the MQF. This was a very interesting process. In a way it had already been concluded within those institutions that had finalised the formal Protocol with the MQC or are in the process of formalising hence in the process of discussing a draft Protocol.

The examples shown in the document on (First Draft) pages 51 to 60 are clear examples of the work of each working programme at each Level in relation to the MQF. It was noted in the document, and in fact it is really so, that the descriptors of the MQF are broader and more defined than the EQF. Moreover it includes also the learning outcomes which is an

innovative aspect of the referencing process and which would assist training providers in no small measure. I am also aware that the shift to learning outcomes led to an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders, particularly the private industry so that the MQF will create adequate space to demand-driven qualifications which have their programmes constantly maintained. Learning outcomes are also a guidance tool for all stakeholders which include teachers, students, parents, guidance and career officers as well as policy-makers.

The referencing process of the existing levels was clearly based on the 8 point scale of both the MQF and EQF. Thus all the above mentioned Levels moved one number up from the previous British-based scale. The Bachelor's degree is on Level 6, the Masters Degree is on Level 7 and the PhD or Doctorate is on Level 8. Thus the Bologna process has been fully respected including the credit system which makes it easier for learners to transfer their knowledge from one level to another or from one higher education institution to the other. Level 1 now incorporates the Secondary School Leaving Certificate. The four VET levels illustrate a progressive and hierarchical scale which matches the Malta VET system. All levels are designed on learning outcomes and all lead to progression to further higher levels. Another positive issue is the capability of exchanging the local qualifications into Transferable Credits using both the ECTS and the ECVET credits systems. An important aspect of this referencing process has been the integration of the Copenhagen and the Bologna Processes into one over-arching Framework which facilitates mobility, transferability and progression while establishing the much-needed claim for parity of esteem between vocational and academic programmes of studies.

One of the major aspects that the MQC took into account was not to repeat the mistakes of other countries' Qualifications systems. As a member of the MQC and as director of a public vocational training centre I was very familiar with the UK system especially the NVQs. The first decisions were to include the practical sectoral competences, relative underpinning knowledge and the key skills relative to each level of the Framework particularly in vocational qualifications. This is clearly shown in the tabulation in the table of the number of credits and minimum number of hours per year where it has been clearly documented.

The only shortcoming in this referencing process is the absence of a Sectoral skills area. It is mentioned and it is being considered that it will be implemented in the near future. The sectoral qualifications framework will also include all formal, non-formal and informal qualifications. This sectoral qualifications framework must also be aligned to the Malta Qualifications Framework which will act as the national Framework of qualifications. Hopefully all the 9 identified sectors will have the occupational standards and a sectoral framework in place by 2012.

By having a flexible and needs-responsive qualifications framework, we will be putting lifelong learning on sound foundations for all Maltese citizens and for European citizens who choose to study and/or work in Malta.

# 2. Reviews of International Experts

## 2.1 Mr Tom Bain Independent Consultant and Former Assistant Director, Scottish Qualifications Authority



### Introduction to Review

The terms of reference, provided by the Chief Executive of the MQC in an e mail dated 22 April 2009, are to give a view on whether the referencing procedure adopted by MQC illustrates, in a transparent and informative way, the connection between the two frameworks (EQF/QF/EHEA and MQF) at all levels of the framework. This review is

based on an assessment of the extent to which the referencing process has been transparent and informative for the first six of the ten criteria and procedures agreed by the EQF Advisory Group, based on the explanatory note on context and intentions provided in the Annex to Note 14499 of 6 November 2008. This Annex also contains the criteria and procedures for self certification of the MQF to the QF/EHEA, but without further elaboration on context or intentions.

A referencing process is not as straightforward as might appear on the surface, given that the EQF is a meta-framework with overarching aims and objectives, designed to facilitate recognition and movement across national boundaries, whereas the MQF is concerned with the specifics of internal qualifications and their operation. However, it is obvious from the Report that the construction of the MQF has been influenced by the format of the EQF, and the descriptors at the higher levels take advantage of the Dublin Descriptors with the addition of autonomy and responsibility. This, together with the inclusion of key competences, has undoubtedly aided the referencing process for the MQF, which in a highly creditable way encompasses - in a single credit and qualifications framework - compulsory education certificates, and academic and vocational qualifications whether gained through formal, non-formal or informal routes.

### Preface to the Report

In the preface, which sets the scene well for the Report with the inclusion of the overarching principles for referencing, there is an analogy with designing and furnishing a house. This is useful for an audience that is coming to terms with the concept of frameworks for qualifications and how they are populated. It is a useful device for promoting the MQF with those stakeholders and social partners who are unfamiliar with such constructs, but it might not be needed for an international audience. Also the phrase 'learning block' is used. This phrase might be added to the glossary to ensure that it is not misinterpreted as a 'hurdle' in translation internationally, as a 'learning block' in classical educational

psychology was the term used for a barrier to learning.

### Introduction to the Report

The introduction is informative - it sets out the criteria on which the MQF is based and MQC's role in implementing the framework, together with the criteria on which referencing to the EQF will be carried out.

### Part One – Malta's Response to European Reform

The European reform initiatives and processes are well presented. There is scope in this section to elaborate more fully on Malta's contribution and achievements in a relatively short period of time in respect of the projects, processes and conferences linked to the reforms eg; BFUG, EQAR, EURASHE, Non- Formal and Informal Learning, VQ-FRAME and VQPACK.

### Part Two – The Malta Qualifications Framework

The basis of the MQF, the drivers for its establishment, the components, maintenance and development via a quality-assured approach, are all well documented in an informative way. The QA approach is reflected in protocols defining criteria for placing qualifications in the MQF. The level descriptors in particular provide good detail to assist users.

Transparency has already been achieved with the publication of the four volumes in the 'Valuing All Learning' series covering the MQF, Guidelines, QA Policy and Non-Formal/Informal Learning. Proposals for going online with details of formal qualifications will enhance transparency.

### Part Three – Referencing the MQF to the EQF and the QF/EHEA

The review that follows has been carried out with reference to each of the following criteria and procedures for the EQF with the equivalent for self certification of QF/EHEA in parentheses, all shown in italics.

1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities. (Csc1)

It would be helpful to an international audience if an early statement in the Report contained relevant details of MQC being set up by the Maltese Government in December 2005 via Legal Notice 347/2005 to steer the development of the NQF, and included other formal responsibilities such as its designation as the National Coordination Point for all matters concerning referencing.

2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the National Qualifications Framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework. (Csc2)

The methodology used by MQF for describing level descriptors reflects that of the EQF, with additional detail in the MQF version. There is a clear tabular comparison and exposition of the two sets of descriptors for each of the 8 levels in each framework, with explanatory text for each level that elaborates on the salient features of that level.

3. The National Qualifications Framework or system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems. (Csc3)

The tabular comparison mentioned above has an additional feature - at the foot of each table a list of learning outcomes identifies the extent of knowledge, skills and competences identified with that level of the MQF. MQC protocols require providers to base their submissions for accreditation of qualifications on learning outcomes and credits and will in future include arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning. By way of illustration, three examples of units written in learning outcomes format are provided at levels 2, 4 and 6 respectively. The third example includes a credit value - if available, perhaps this could be included in the other two cases, given that credit at these levels is defined in the report.

4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent. (Csc4)

Procedures are published in vol 2 of *'Valuing All Learning'* (Guidance for a Vocational Education and Training System) and the report refers to these in some detail, reproducing the nine steps required of providers to have a qualification placed at the appropriate level in the MQF. Protocols between MQC and public and private training providers capture the principles of transparency and transferability of qualifications

5. The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the National Qualifications Framework or system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation). (Csc5)

One of the three 'pillars' on which the MQF is founded is a set of Quality Assurance criteria which are to be found in Vol 3 of *'Valuing All Learning'* (A Quality Assurance Policy for Vocational Education and Training). In the HE system, QA is also one of the strategic priorities of the NCHE which will feature in Malta's forthcoming Further and Higher Education Act. In that context, it is understood that NCHE has a submission pending to EQAR. Under the same Act, non-formal and informal learning is to be assessed, quality assured and certified for inclusion in the MQF. The role of DQSE is not mentioned in the report in the context of QA, although qualifications gained in the compulsory education system populate the MQF at low to mid levels of the framework. The proposed online database is to list in a register all formal qualifications accredited by MQC.

References to QA occur at regular intervals throughout the Report in a variety of contexts, and it might help benchmarking against the above criterion if these were brought together in a discrete section.

6. The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies. (Psc2)

Presumably formal statements will be included to this effect once the Report has gone through the full consultative processes.

#### Part 4 - Beyond Referencing

The final section very usefully reminds readers of the extent to which the MQF has been the outcome of a very full and comprehensive exercise that has involved all relevant stakeholders and social partners, also of the added value that the referencing process will provide.

#### Conclusion from Review

The conclusion from this review is quite simple - in my view the Report has, in a comprehensive way, achieved its aim of demonstrating, through the referencing process, the connection between the EQF/QF/EHEA and the MQF at all levels of the framework

### 2.2 Dr James Keevy Independent Consultant, Director International Liaison, South African Qualifications Authority

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) welcomes this opportunity to support the Malta Qualifications Council in its attempt



to reference the MQF to international standards, in this case the EQF and QF/EHEA. In turn, SAQA's involvement in this initiative, will undoubtedly also contribute to the development of the South African NQF and the Southern African Development Community Regional Qualifications Framework (SADCQF). As requested, this response has been limited in its extent, but has nonetheless attempted to address the

brief in a comprehensive manner, namely whether or not the referencing procedure adapted by MQC illustrates, in a transparent and informative way, the connection between the two frameworks (EQF/QF/EHEA and MQF) at all levels of the framework.

My review of the report on the Referencing of the Malta Qualifications Framework to the EQF and QF/EHEA (May 2009) (henceforth referred to as "the report") included the following:

- A detailed reading of the MQC report (May 2009)
- A brief comparison of the MQC report (May 2009) with similar reports developed for England and Northern Ireland (QCA & CCEA October 2008), Ireland (NQAI April 2009) and Scotland (Hart 2008)
- Interactions with South African and international qualifications framework partners
- Consideration of the initial CEDEFOP report on European reference levels

#### Main observations

1. The report is well written and offers a comprehensive description of the referencing process of the MQF to the EQF and QF/EHEA.
2. Referencing between qualifications frameworks is a relatively new and unexplored area of development that is being prioritised as the global distribution of qualifications frameworks continues

unabatedly; the report has therefore been considered within this broader context wherein tried and tested referencing methodologies are yet to be developed. In this regard MQC has shown strategic foresight by actively participating in this initiative and contributing to the development of improved referencing methodologies.

3. Considering Point 2 above, namely the need for strengthening referencing methodologies, the report can be greatly improved by including a more thorough description of the referencing methodology developed and employed during the referencing of the MQF to the EQF and QF/EHEA. While it is acknowledged that the overarching methodology is suggested/prescribed by the EQF Advisory Group, the application and refinement of the national procedure remains the prerogative of the MQC (therefore the request to reviewers to consider the extent to which such a procedure adequately illustrated the links between the frameworks). While the report does include a valuable description of the 'methodology of writing the MQF Level descriptors' (First Draft) page 50, the referencing methodology remains by and large implied, rather than explicitly described. A meta-reflection of the application of the methodology beyond the apparent uncritical technical application, added value and potential impact, as the report currently reads, will further contribute to the broader understanding of referencing of qualifications frameworks in Europe and further afield.

4. Emerging literature on qualifications framework referencing suggest that referencing takes place on at least two levels:

- a. Primary – direct cross-referencing of level descriptors and domains, and in some cases, also the treatment of knowledge and management activities; and
- b. Supplementary (external, secondary) – through mapping specific qualifications to both frameworks, and in some cases, through cross-referencing with third party frameworks.

In the case of the MQF referencing to the EQF and QF/EHEA it appears that the emphasis has been placed on primary referencing, but also with some supplementary referencing (at least in mapping specific qualifications to all three frameworks). This approach is in line with emerging thinking and can be further complimented with referencing to third party frameworks (i.e. other than the EQF and QF/EHEA).

5. The primary role of level descriptors in the MQF referencing process, admittedly as is also the case also in other countries that have participated in the EQF referencing process (e.g. England and Northern Ireland, Ireland and Scotland), is of concern. Interpretations of level descriptors, often using the similar, if not identical, terminologies is fraught with difficulties and open to valid criticism. In cases where the national set of level descriptors, such as for the MQF, were by-and-large based on the EQF descriptors in the first place, the comparison becomes even more complicated. In this regard the use of domains that organise different categories of outcomes in level descriptors is useful and has been adequately employed by the MQC to strengthen the referencing process.

6. In conclusion, it is my view that the referencing of the MQF to the EQF and QF/EHEA is on par with the referencing conducted by other participating countries. The referencing procedure adapted by MQC illustrates the connection between the two frameworks (EQF/ QF/EHEA and MQF) using available, albeit limited, technologies, but stops short of contributing to the further development and interrogation of such technologies. The weaknesses in the referencing methodology/procedure, as pointed out, cannot be ascribed to the work of the MQC only, but is rather due to a general need for more research and empirical testing of the best available methodologies. It is for this very reason that, while it is apparent that MQC has been thorough in applying available technologies, greater interrogation of the methodology employed, as well as the inclusion of critical reflections on the results of the referencing process, is strongly recommended

### 2.3 Mr Vincent McBride Senior Specialist, Planning Monitoring Evaluation, European Training Foundation



Many thanks for the opportunity to look through this second draft referencing report of the MQF against the EQF and the EHEA framework. It was very interesting to reflect on the report since there are - as yet- few examples of the process to consider. It was made even more interesting because, by including the EHEA framework, it is a sort of 'double referencing'. I had considered these

processes, ie, the Bologna and EQF referencing processes, although compatible, as largely separate exercises, but having looked at the report, I can see that it is a possible approach.

I note that this is a draft report and is intended to provide the basis for further discussion as part of an ongoing process of consultation, so in that respect the referencing is still a work that is underway. In this respect, my impression from the report is that it is building towards a complete review of how Malta's framework will reference to both the EQF and the EHEA. I looked at the report entirely from the perspective of the EQF referencing procedures and criteria - I didn't think that it was useful for me to consider the Bologna criteria and procedures. Although both sets of procedures and criteria are compatible, I think there are people closer to the Bologna process and more competent in that area than I who could look at referencing from that perspective.

I think the report is abundant in that it contains a great deal of information and reflects extensive dialogue and consultation. It is very useful to have the schedule of dialogue as one can track the various discussions and stages of the process. It gives a general and at times quite detailed picture of the approach to lifelong learning and emerging links between different education sectors in Malta as well as the different stakeholders involved. In looking through the report, I basically compared it with the 10 criteria from the EQF Advisory Group. It is a very complex report to prepare; as this is still going through a process, it might be worthwhile to see if each criterion could have a specific section in the final report. I hope that you find this useful feedback and I would be happy to comment further on subsequent drafts.

EQF Advisory Group Criteria	Comments
1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.	This criteria is being addressed. The finalisation of the Further and Higher Education Act will provide additional information on the roles of the various agencies and authorities.
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualification levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework.	Clearly addressed and covers the criteria. The comparison of descriptors follows the pattern being used elsewhere.
3. The national qualifications framework or system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.	Clearly addressed and covers the criteria
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.	Clearly addressed and covers the criteria, in the sense that I can see what qualifications are included in the framework in Malta and how they are constructed.
5. The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer (s) to the national qualifications framework or system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).	The QA approach is described in section 2 of the report. I think there could be some more information on higher education, but additional information will presumably be available in the autumn following the new legislation.
6. The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.	As with criteria 5
7. The referencing process shall involve international experts.	Clearly addressed and covers the criteria.
8. The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point, and shall address separately each of the criteria.	From the report I see that this will be concluded in the autumn.
9. The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.	Being addressed
10. Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of nation.	Being addressed



## 2.4 Dr Jim Murray

Chief Executive, National  
Qualifications Authority of Ireland



### General Observations

The report gives a very comprehensive and convincing demonstration of the link between the descriptors of the MQF and the EQF and the cycles of the QF/EHEA (Part 3 of the report) that the MQF is based on learning outcomes and linked to a credit system and arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Parts 2

and 3 of the report) and that the procedures for inclusion of qualifications in MQF are transparent (alignment process and use of protocols).

I think that more needs to be said on quality assurance to demonstrate that criteria 5 and 6 are being met, and also the similar criteria in relation to the Bologna Framework. How is Malta linked in to ENQA and ENQA VET? Has work been done on implementing the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, the Common Quality Assurance Framework for European vocational education and training or the principles on quality assurance in the annex to the Recommendation on EQF? There is a need to describe the quality assurance systems for higher education and training, vocational education and training and the schools sector as they operate in Malta and how they reference MQF. How many quality assurance bodies are there? Is MQC the only one? On (First Draft) page 28 there is a reference to accreditation 'by institutions such as MQC', which suggests that other bodies operate in this space. Have they all stated their agreement to the referencing report (criterion 6)? Can anything more be said about the new quality assurance arrangements that are to be introduced?

Part One of the report is intended to provide an overview of Malta's response to European Education Reform. In many respects, this section is an extended description of policy developments at the European level and does not say very much about the Maltese response to each of the developments described. All of this comes later in the report. Perhaps the section should be renamed and simply called European Education Reform. It could then be clearly stated that this is the European policy context for the development of the MQF and its relationship to EQF and QF/EHEA.

It would be helpful for the external reader if the report began with a short introductory overview of the Maltese education and training

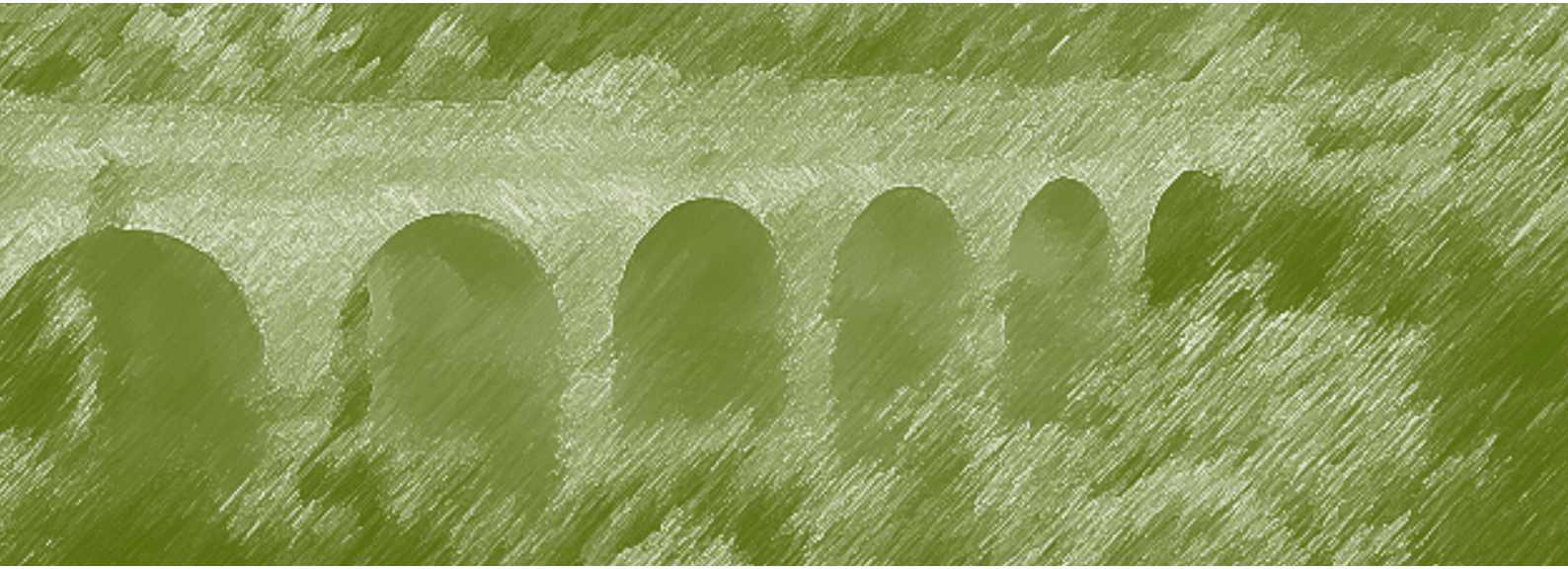
system. This should describe the different sectors of education and training, the awarding bodies operating there and the awards they make, and the various institutions that provide education and training. In the Irish referencing report we included such a section at the suggestion of the international experts, as they did not know our system as well as the national stakeholders participating in the referencing process. Communicating with an international audience is an important requirement of the referencing report.

Part Two on the Malta Qualifications Framework – I think more needs to be said about the structure of the MQF in this introductory section i.e. more about the levels, qualification types (and information on who makes them) and quality assurance criteria. Maybe, something could be said about the type of Framework it is using the Jens Bjernevald/Mike Coles typology. You mention elsewhere in the document that MQF is an overarching framework and that it will link to sectoral frameworks. I think all of this material on the nature and structure of MQF should be brought together in this section for the sake of clarity, and should include a full set of references to the existing documentation on the development and structure of MQF.

It would be helpful, particularly in demonstrating compliance to criterion 1 - EQF and Bologna Framework (legal competence of relevant national bodies)- if more information was given about the Malta Qualifications Council. This might be done by extending section 2.1 or maybe a separate section could be included in Part 3 as a separate heading related to criterion 1. Areas that could be covered would include more information on the manner of its establishment by the Maltese government, and its roles and responsibilities: in particular, what is its relationship with the different sectors of education - schools, vocational and higher education? How does it relate to the bodies that make awards and those institutions across the sectors that deliver education and training in Malta? What is its relationship with other quality assurance and regulatory bodies? Again, much of this material is scattered throughout the report. Bringing it together and amplifying it would strengthen the report.

Part 3: Although you are referencing MQF to EQF and QF/EHEA in a single process and report, you might be advised to make more explicit reference to the QF/EHEA verification criteria and procedures and to reference at different points where the same pieces of work are fulfilling both sets of criteria and procedures. This could be important in terms of building up trust and confidence in your national higher education system amongst peers in the Bologna signatory states.





# Annexes

1. Abbreviations;
2. Glossary of Selected Terminology Associated with Qualifications Frameworks;
3. Compulsory Education School Timetable;
4. Sample of a Protocol Document;
5. Trans-National Qualifications Framework and Dublin Descriptors; and
6. Specimen of the Europass Diploma Supplement used by the University of Malta and Specimen of the revised Europass Certificate Supplement;
7. About MQC

# 1 Abbreviations

APQRU	Academic Programmes Quality and Resources Unit	ITS	Institute for Tourism Studies (Malta)
BFUG	Bologna Follow-Up Group	IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training	KC	Key Competences
CQAF	Common Quality Assurance Reference Framework	LLL	Lifelong Learning
DES	Directorate for Education Services	MQA	Malaysia Qualifications Authority
DQSE	Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (Malta)	MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System	MCCEI	Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry
ECVET	European Credit Vocational Education and Training	MCST	Malta Council for Science and Technology
EHEA	European Higher Education Area	MQC	Malta Qualifications Council
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education	MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
ENQA-VET	European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training	MQRIC	Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register	MUHC	Malta University Holding Company Ltd.
EQF	European Qualifications Framework	NCHE	National Commission for Higher Education (Malta)
EQARF	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework	NQA	Namibia Qualifications Authority
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance for Vocational Education and Training	NQF	National Qualifications Framework
ESF	European Social Fund	NZ NQF	New Zealand National Qualifications Framework
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area	NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
ESU	European Students' Union	OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ETC	Employment and Training Corporation (Malta)	PLM	People in the Labour Market
ETF	European Training Foundation	QCA	Qualifications and Credit Authority
ETSE	Empowerment of transparency in the Vocational Framework of Security Employees	QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
EUA	European Universities' Association	QF/EHEA	Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area
EUPA	European Union Programmes Agency	R&I	Research and Innovation
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education	SA NQF	South African National Qualifications Framework
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment	SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
FHRD	Foundation for Human Resources Development	SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
HE	Higher Education	SEC	Secondary Education Certificate
HR	Human Resources	SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
ICMCH	Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage	SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
INFQ	Irish National Framework of Qualifications	SS	Sectoral Skills
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education	TQF	Trans-National Qualifications Framework (Commonwealth)
		VET	Vocational Education and Training
		VETPRO	Vocational Education and Training Professionals
		VUSSC	Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth
		UK	Underpinning Knowledge
		UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation

# 2 Glossary of Selected Terminology Associated With Qualifications Frameworks

## **Accumulation and transfer of qualifications<sup>91</sup>**

Accumulation and transfer of qualifications means that training programmes or parts [units] of programmes are interchangeable or can replace each other and that validated learning outcomes can exempt a person of whole or part of a training programme. Accumulation and transfer of qualifications require that learning outcomes acquired in different contexts and at different times are compared as regards equivalence and relative value.

## **Accreditation of programmes and institutions**

The process of accrediting an institution of education and training, a programme of study, or a service, showing it has been approved by the relevant legislative and professional authorities by having met predetermined standards.

## **Apprenticeship<sup>92</sup>**

Apprenticeship is the systematic, long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an educational institution or training centre. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation.

## **Assessment**

The sum of methods and processes used to evaluate the attainments (knowledge, know-how, skills and competences) of an individual, and typically leading to certification.

## **Awarding body**

An awarding body issues qualifications (certificates or diplomas) formally recognising the achievements of an individual, following a standard assessment procedure.

## **Bologna process**

The Bologna process initiated by the Bologna Declaration of European Ministers of Education in 19th June 1999 is a commitment by all EU Member States to harmonise the architecture of the European higher education system by improving external recognition and facilitating student mobility as well as employability.

## **Certificate/Diploma**

An official document issued by an awarding body, which records the achievements of an individual following the successful completion of a training programme or a course of studies.

## **Certification (of knowledge, skills and competences)**

A formal record of achievement based on a standard assessment of knowledge, skills and competences. Certificates or diplomas are issued by accredited awarding bodies.

## **Competence**

'Competence' is the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and other abilities to perform a function against a given standard in work or study situations and in professional and/or personal development. In the EQF, 'competence' is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

## **Comparability of qualifications**

The extent to which it is possible to establish parity of esteem between the level and content of all formal qualifications at sectoral, regional, national or international levels.

## **Continuing education and training**

Education or training after initial education or entry into working life aimed at helping individuals to: improve or update their knowledge and/or skills; acquire new skills

for a career move or retraining; continue their personal or professional development.

### **Copenhagen Declaration**

The Copenhagen Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training and the European Commission convened in Copenhagen on the 29th and 30th of June 2002 is a declaration on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training.

### **Credits**

Credits are one of the tools designed to facilitate the implementation of credit transfer systems at national and European level. They are used by authorities, education and training providers, competent bodies and learners to support arrangements for accumulation and recognition of learning outcomes towards a qualification and for Trans-National mobility. Credits [credit points] are allocated to the qualifications and to the units of which a qualification is made up.

### **Curriculum**

A set of actions followed when setting up a training course: it includes defining training goals, content, methods (including assessment) and material, as well as arrangements for training teachers and trainers.

### **Distance Learning**

Education and training imparted at a distance through communication media: books, radio, TV, telephone, correspondence, computer or video.

### **Employability**

The combination of factors which enable individuals to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and to progress during career.

### **EQF**

EQF stands for the European Qualifications Framework which is a meta-Framework to support translation and communication between national qualifications systems and Frameworks.

### **Formal learning**

Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (in a school/training centre or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to certification.

### **Human Capital**

Knowledge, skills, competences and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate personal, social and economic well-being.

### **Informal learning**

Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification.

### **Initial education/training**

General or vocational education carried out in the initial education system, usually before entering working life.

### **Key Competences**

The knowledge, skills and competences needed to function in contemporary society, e.g. listening, speaking, reading, writing, digital competence and mathematics among others.

### **Knowledge**

'Knowledge' is the outcome of the collection and assimilation of information through learning. In the EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.

### **Knowledge Society**

A knowledge society's processes and practices are based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge.

### **Learning**

'Learning' is a process by which individuals acquire and assimilate information, ideas and values as well as practical and cognitive skills and other personal and social competences. They learn through personal reflection and reconstruction and through social interaction. This process takes place in formal, non-formal and informal learning settings.

### **Learning Outcomes**

'Learning outcomes' are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process.

### **Level Descriptors**

Level descriptors express the level of knowledge, skills and competences in relation to higher or lower levels of achievements by the individual.

### **Lifelong Learning**

The rationale behind lifelong learning is continuous personal and professional development, with no age limit.

### **National Qualifications Framework**

A National Qualifications Framework is a common reference point to all nationally recognised qualifications indicating level of education and training and progression from one level to another.

### **National Qualifications System**

Qualification systems include all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and operationalizing national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, quality assurance processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems may be more or less integrated and coherent.

### **Meta-Framework**

A meta-Framework' like the EQF is a classification instrument for levels of qualifications designed to act as a translation device between different national and sectoral qualifications systems. For this purpose, the criteria for levels in a meta-Framework are written in a highly generalised form and the EQF does not take over any of the established roles of national systems.

### **Mutual trust**

Mutual trust is a term used in the context of qualifications to indicate quality assurance support measures and accountability in the awarding of certificates, diplomas and degrees.

### **Non-formal learning**

Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It normally does not lead to certification.

### **Programme (of education and training)**

An inventory of activities, learning content and/or methods implemented to achieve education or training objectives (acquiring knowledge, skills or competences), Organised

in a logical sequence over a specified period of time.

### **Quality Assurance**

A transparent and clearly defined process to assure that quality education and training and quality deliverables will be built in institutions, training programmes and programmes of studies before the work is done.

### **Qualification**

A 'qualification' is achieved when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. A qualification is a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process.

### **Qualifications Framework**

A qualifications Framework provides a system of coordination and for comparing qualifications by relating qualifications to each other, for promoting the quality of education and training provisions, for establishing standards of knowledge, skills and wider competences and for introducing and maintaining procedures for access to learning, transfer of learning and progression in learning. The scope of Framework may be comprehensive of all learning achievement and pathways in a country or may be confined to a particular sector.

### **Recognition**

Formal recognition is the process of granting official status to skills and competences either through the award of certificates or through the grant of equivalence, credit units, validation of gained skills and/or competences. Social recognition is the acknowledgement of the value of skills and/or competences by economic and social stakeholders such as employers or national or international institutions.

### **Referencing Process**

The referencing process involves the alignment of the levels of the NQFs to the EQF. This alignment involves the comparison of the level of difficulty established by the learning outcomes detailed in the level descriptors of the two (or more) frameworks with which the NQF is aligned.

### **Regulated profession**

Professional activity or group of professional activities access to which, and the practice of which (or to one of its forms) is directly or indirectly subject to legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions concerning the possession of specific professional qualifications.



### **Retraining**

Retraining is a kind of training that enables the individuals to acquire new skills giving access either to a new occupation or to new professional activities.

### **Sector**

A 'sector' is a range of professional activities on the basis of their main economic activity, product, service or technology (e.g. chemicals) or as a transversal professional category (e.g. marketing).

### **Sectoral qualifications system**

A 'sectoral qualifications system' is concerned with the qualifications process confined to a specified sector and may exist at national and international level.

### **Sectoral qualifications Framework.**

A 'sectoral qualifications Framework' is defined as the structures and processes established by a sector for the development and implementation of qualifications, including institutional arrangements, quality assurance, assessment and awarding procedures, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market.

### **Skills**

A skill is the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the EQF, skills are described as cognitive (use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).

### **Social Partners**

Social partners include employers' associations and trade unions forming the two sides of social dialogue.

### **Translation Device**

In the context of qualifications, the term is used to denote the language or methods of verifying the equivalence between one qualification and another. A NQF for example is a translation device to verify whether one qualification carries the same weight of another in terms of content, level of education and training and assessment.

### **Transparency of qualifications**

Qualifications are transparent if their value is readable by, comparable and transferable to other Frameworks: sectoral, regional, national or international. Transparency gives Trans-National value to qualifications.

### **Transferability of Learning Outcomes**

The degree to which knowledge, skills and competences can be used in a new occupational or educational environment, and/or to be validated and certified.

### **Upskilling**

Short-term targeted training typically provided following initial education or training, and aimed at supplementing, improving or updating knowledge, skills and/or competences acquired during previous training.

### **Validation (of non-formal and informal learning)**

The process of assessing and recognising a wide range of knowledge, know-how, skills and competences, which people develop throughout their lives within different environments, for example through education, work and leisure activities.

### **Valuing learning**

All learning is valued when there is the recognition of achievement in formal, informal or non-formal learning.

91 MQC, Glossary of Terminology Associated with Qualifications Framework.

92 CEDEFOP, (Luxembourg 2008), *Terminology of European Education and Training Policy: A Selection of 100 Key Terms.*

# 3 Compulsory Education School Timetable

## Scholastic Year 2009-2010

	2009 SEP	2009 OCT	2009 NOV	2009 DEC	2010 JAN	2010 FEB	2010 MAR	2010 APR	2010 MAY	2010 JUN	2010 JUL	2010 AUG	2010 SEP
Monday	1			1	1		1			1			1
Tuesday	2			2	2		2			2			2
Wednesday	3	1		3	3		3	1 Easter		3	1 Marking		3
Thursday	4	2		4	4		4	2 PH		4	2 Marking		4
Friday	5	3		5	5		5		1 PH	5	3		5
Saturday	6	4		6	6		6		2	6	4		6
Sunday	7	5	2 M Term	7	7	1	7	5 Easter	3	7	5 Marking	2	7
Monday	8 PH	6	3 M Term	8 PH	8	2	8	6 Easter	4	8	6 Marking	3	8
Tuesday	9	7	4	9	9	3	9	7 Easter	5	9	7 INSET	4	9
Wednesday	10	8	5	10	10	4	10		6	10	8 INSET	5	10
Thursday	11	9	6	11	11	5	11		7	11	9 INSET	6	11
Friday	12	10	7	12	12	6	12		8	12	10	7	12
Saturday	13	11	8	13 NH	13	7	13		9	13	11	8	13
Sunday	14	12	9	14	14	8	14		10	14	12	9	14
Monday	15	13	10	15	15	9	15		11	15	13	10	15
Tuesday	16	14	11	16	16	10	16		12	16	14	11	16
Wednesday	17	15	12	17	17	11	17		13	17	15	12	17
Thursday	18 INSET	16	13	18	18	12	18		14	18	16	13	18
Friday	19	17	14	19	19 PH	13	19		15	19	17	14	19
Saturday	20	18	15	20	20	14	20		16	20	18	15	20
Sunday	21 NH	19	16	21	21	15	21		17	21	19	16	21
Monday	22 INSET	20	17	22	22	16	22		18	22	20	17	22
Tuesday	23 INSET	21	18	23	23	17	23		19	23	21	18	23
Wednesday	24	22	19	24 Ch.mas	24	18	24		20	24	22	19	24
Thursday	25	23	20	25	25	19	25		21	25	23	20	25
Friday	26	24	21	26	26	20	26		22	26	24	21	26
Saturday	27	25	22	27	27	21	27		23	27	25	22	27
Sunday	28	26	23	28	28	22	28		24	28	26	23	28
Monday	29	27	24	29 Ch.mas	29	23	29		25	29	27	24	29
Tuesday	30	28	25	30 Ch.mas	30	24	30		26	30	28	25	30
Wednesday		29	26	31 Ch.mas	31 NH	25	31		27		29	26	
Thursday		30	27			26			28	30 Marking		27	
Friday		31	28			27			29		31		
Saturday			29			28			30				
Sunday			30			31							
Monday													
Tuesday													

Total School Days - 179 days • Total Schooling Hours - 942.5 hours

# 4 Sample of a Protocol Document

## PROTOCOL

### BETWEEN THE INSTITUTE OF TOURISM STUDIES AND THE MALTA QUALIFICATIONS COUNCIL ON THE MALTA QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK.

1. The Institute of Tourism Studies [ITS] is an autonomous and self-regulating institute responsible to the Ministry of Education, Youth and employment. The Institute of Tourism Studies is governed by a Board of Governors nominated by Government. The Institute provides vocational education and training of a high standard. It seeks to identify customer needs and monitor customer satisfaction and it is responsible for providing the tourist industry with personnel trained to international standards. In order to achieve these goals, the Institute:
  - provides relevant and required training needs by the industry as well as opportunities for work experience in the industry;
  - recreates actual working environments on campus;
  - provides training in a comprehensive range of practical skills;
  - develops and enhances the intellectual ability of its students through a wide range of academic subjects;
  - teaches generic skills essential for a smooth transition into the world of work.
2. The Malta Qualifications Council [MQC] is a national accrediting agency for the development, assessment, certification and accreditation of qualifications other than those in compulsory education and degrees. It is responsible to the Ministry of education, Youth and Employment. The overall objective of MQC is to steer the development of the National Qualifications Framework and to oversee the training and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework and which is not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies. MQC also promotes and facilitates life-long learning access, transfer and progress and fosters the recognition abroad of professional and vocational certificates awarded in Malta under these regulations. MQC is governed by a Council nominated by the Minister of Education, Youth and Employment.
3. In the wake of the European Commission and European Parliament's adoption of the European Qualifications Framework and the launching in June 2007, by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment of the National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, it has been agreed by ITS and MQC that:
  - qualifications at ITS will reflect Legal Notice 347/2005 and the EQF as defined in the Legal Notice mentioned-above and the Grid of Statements defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework and the Dublin descriptors for Higher Education;
  - all ITS qualifications are based on learning outcomes and the Tourism Competence Guidelines published by the Malta Tourism Authority on Food and Beverage Service and Housekeeping Operations to be updated in 2008 and further strengthened by the publication of occupational standards which the MTA, the Malta Standards Authority and MQC will provide in line with and updated to the current/future – forecasted trends and needs of the tourism industry.
  - the Prospectus and Programmes of Studies of the ITS will reflect the National Qualifications Framework by the start of the Academic Year 2008-2009;

- all qualifications at ITS will be classified under the eight-level system as detailed in Legal Notice 347/2005;
  - qualifications at Levels 1 to 3 of the Framework should be backed by study programmes in Key Competences as defined in MQC Descriptors of Key Competences in the National Qualifications Framework (April 2007);
  - Level One of the Qualifications Framework will be represented by a Level One Certificate as part of the Extended Skill Training Scheme [ESTS] geared towards the attainment of Key Competences at Level One as detailed in MQC Level Descriptors for Key Competences;
  - Level Two will be represented by the ITS Foundation Course Level 2 and the completion of the Extended Skill Training Scheme programme;
  - Level Three will be represented by courses leading to a certificate level as follows:
    - Certificate in Accommodation Operations,
    - Certificate in Hotel Operations,
    - Certificate in Travel Agency Operations,
    - Certificate in Craft and Supervisory Skills
    - and the Intermediate Craft Certificate.
  - Level Four will be represented by a Diploma level of certification as follows:
    - Diploma in Accommodation Operations
    - Diploma in Hotel Operations
    - Diploma in Travel Agency Operations
    - Diploma in Tour Guiding
    - Diploma in Culinary Arts
    - Diploma in Food and Beverage Service
  - Level Five will be represented by a Higher Diploma level of certification as follows:
    - Higher Diploma in hospitality and Tourism Management.
  - Levels Six to Eight will be represented by full-time and/or part-time Degree Courses at the First, Second and Third Cycle in the National Qualifications Framework which correspond to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area corresponding to the learning outcomes for EQF Levels 6, 7 and 8 and the Dublin Descriptors for Higher Education.
4. Levels of qualifications are determined by the Exit points as detailed in the National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning for each course. Programmes of Studies and Quality Assurance Support Mechanisms are those published in the ITS Prospectus and in the Quality Assurance Manual [2002] which may be revised and updated in accordance with MQC policy as published from time to time.
  5. ITS and MQC agree to promote a more visible reference to the NQF and the appropriate reference level on certificates and all related publications including MQC Transcript Format when published.
  6. ITS to use MQC Passport on a voluntary basis for the academic year 2007-2008 and subsequently when the use of such Passport becomes mandatory for all VET training programmes.
  7. ITS obliges itself to adhere to a learning-outcome based approach when developing and describing qualifications and promote the validation of informal and non-formal learning according to the principles agreed at EU level in 2004.

8. ITS and MQC agree to set up a permanent technical working committee composed of ex-officio the Executive Chairman and the Registrar or his/her representative on behalf of ITS and ex-officio the Chairman and Chief Executive on behalf of MQC to review this Protocol every one calendar year.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman  
Malta Qualifications Council

\_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Chairman  
Institute of Tourism Studies

Witnessed by Minister of Education, Youth and Employment.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Annexes:

- Legal Notice 347/2005
- Grid of Statements defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework and the Dublin Descriptors for Higher Education
- MTA Tourism Competence Guidelines 2004
- ITS Prospectus 2006-2007
- ITS Quality Assurance Manual [2002]
- Profile of the teaching staff at ITS
- Profile of the Management and Support Staff
- Profile of Executive Chairman and Governors of ITS
- Profile of Chairman, Members and Chief Executive of MQC.

# ADDENDUM TO PROTOCOL

## SIGNED BETWEEN THE INSTITUTE OF TOURISM STUDIES AND THE MALTA QUALIFICATIONS COUNCIL ON THE MALTA QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK.

1. Addendum to the Protocol signed on the 29th of November 2007 between the Institute of Tourism Studies and the Malta Qualifications Council establishing the Level-Rating of all qualifications within ITS.
2. Having regard to the articles in the Protocol and in particular to Article 3;
3. Having regard to the developments of the Malta Qualifications Framework and in particular to the decision taken by MQC on 11th January 2008 Council Meeting 02/2008;
4. Having regard to the agreement reached between MQC and ITS to the effect that the same Institute of Tourism Studies [ITS] shall adjust the format of the certification of ITS;
5. Acting in accordance with Legal Notice 347/2005 and in agreement with the ITS Board of Directors and the Malta Qualifications Council, it is hereby being further agreed that:
  - 5.1 ITS Certificates at MQF Level 1 carry MQC's logo as well as the following statement:  
The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 1 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework of Lifelong Learning.
  - 5.2 ITS Certificates at MQF Level 2 carry MQC's logo as well as the following statement:  
The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 2 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework of Lifelong Learning.
  - 5.3 ITS Certificates at MQF Level 3 carry MQC's logo as well as the following statement:  
The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 3 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework of Lifelong Learning.
  - 5.4 ITS Diplomas at MQF Level 4 carry MQC's logo as well as the following statement:  
The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Diploma to be at Level 4 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework of Lifelong Learning.
  - 5.5 ITS Higher Diploma at MQF Level 5 carries MQC's logo as well as the following statement:  
The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 5 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework of Lifelong Learning.

6. It is further being agreed that ITS promotes and adopts MQC Passports Vocational Qualification Levels 1, 2 and 3 for programmes of studies and training at MQF Level 1 to 3 respectively. Such “cumulative” Passports will be provided by MQC and distributed by ITS to students following courses at MQF Levels 1 to 3 and serve as passports to lifelong learning. ITS agrees to the General Information governing MQC Passports and printed on every copy of the Passport Vocational Qualification MQF Levels 1, 2 and 3..
- 6.1 ITS will use MQC Passport on a voluntary basis for the academic year 2008-2009 and subsequently when the use of such Passport becomes mandatory for all VET programmes.
7. ITS and MQC further agree to include this Addendum as part of the Agenda of the technical working committee composed of ex-officio the Executive Chairman and the Registrar or his/her representative on behalf of ITS and ex-officio the Chairman and Chief Executive on behalf of MQC to review this Protocol every one calendar year

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman  
Malta Qualifications Council

\_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Chairman  
Institute of Tourism Studies

Witnessed by the Hon Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# 5 Transnational Qualifications Framework & Dublin Descriptors

## VUSSC's TQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Levels	Descriptors Holders of this Qualification Will:	Illustrative Examples of Qualifications
10	<p>Acquire and possess a systematic understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice.</p> <p>Be able to create and interpret new knowledge at most advanced frontier of a field of work or study through original and advanced research of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend to the forefront of the discipline and merit publication.</p> <p>Possess the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques to be able to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge or to solve critical problems or to refute or redefine existing knowledge.</p> <p>Demonstrate authority, innovation, autonomy, integrity and personal responsibility to the production or development of innovative ideas or processes in the context of an academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice.</p>	<p>Doctoral degrees</p>
9	<p>Have a logical understanding of a body of highly (seek another term) specialised knowledge some of which is at the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice, as a basis for original thought and/or the conduct of research and/or enquiry.</p> <p>Have a comprehensive understanding of the research skills and/or relevant established techniques applicable to their own research or to advanced scholarship that can be used to create and interpret knowledge.</p> <p>Demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge to solve problems, together with practical understanding of how knowledge can be managed to transform work or study.</p> <p>Possess a conceptual understanding of how to analyse and critically evaluate current research in their academic discipline, field of study or work and apply here appropriate to solve problems.</p>	<p>Masters degrees</p> <p>MA</p> <p>MSc</p> <p>M.Phil</p> <p>MBA</p> <p>MEngineering/ME</p>
8	<p>Have systematic, extensive and comparative knowledge of the key aspects of their academic discipline, field of study or work.</p> <p>Possess an ability to deploy accurately established analytical tools and/or techniques and enquiry within their academic discipline, field of study or work.</p> <p>Be able to use their knowledge, understanding and skills of a wide range of concepts, ideas and information to devise and sustain arguments and or to solve problems.</p>	<p>Bachelor's (Hons)</p> <p>Postgraduate Certificates</p> <p>Postgraduate Diplomas</p>



Levels	Descriptors Holders of this Qualification Will:	Illustrative Examples of Qualifications
	<p>Display a critical understanding of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge and how it is developed.</p> <p>Possess the ability to manage their own learning and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (e.g. refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).</p>	
7	<p>Have advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of the well-established principles and including an understanding of some advanced aspect(s) of their area(s) of their field of work or study; where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context.</p> <p>Have an understanding of the limits of that knowledge and how this influences analysis and interpretation based on that knowledge.</p> <p>Possess advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in their specialised field of work or study.</p> <p>Be able to manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision making in unpredictable work or study contexts</p>	<p>Degree</p> <p>BA</p> <p>BSc</p> <p>BE</p> <p>BNursing</p>
6	<p>Possess an in-depth knowledge and critical understanding of the ideas, concepts and principles in their field of work or study</p> <p>Have knowledge of the methods of enquiry in the subject and use a range of techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, proposing solutions to problems arising from that analysis.</p> <p>Demonstrate an ability to critically evaluate and apply the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems.</p> <p>Apply those concepts and principles more widely</p> <p>Have an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations.</p> <p>Effectively communicate information arguments and analysis, in a variety of forms to specialists and non specialist audiences and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively.</p> <p>Have the qualities necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.</p>	<p>Advanced Diploma of Higher Education</p> <p>Associate Degrees</p> <p>National Vocational Qualifications</p> <p>Regional Vocational Qualifications</p>
5	<p>Have broad knowledge and understanding of the main underlying ideas, concepts and principles in a field of work or study</p> <p>Be able to use their knowledge understanding and skills to critically evaluate and determine appropriate methods and procedures to respond to a range of problems of a generally routine nature.</p> <p>Display qualities and transferable knowledge and skills necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.</p>	<p>Diploma of Higher Education</p> <p>Associate Degrees</p> <p>National Vocational Qualifications</p> <p>Regional</p>

Levels	Descriptors Holders of this Qualification Will:	Illustrative Examples of Qualifications
	<p>Communicate the results of their field of study or work accurately and reliably using a range of different modalities.</p> <p>Identify and articulate their own learning needs within defined context and undertake guided further learning in new areas.</p>	Vocational Qualifications
4	<p>Have a broad knowledge and understanding of the main underlying concepts and principles in a field of work or study.</p> <p>Demonstrate a basic understanding of the major theories, principle, ideas and concepts of their particular area of study.</p> <p>Be able to use different approaches to identify, evaluate and solve problems of a generally routine nature.</p> <p>Be able to use their knowledge, understanding of a particular subject area to communicate accurately and reliably with structured and coherent arguments,</p> <p>Use their knowledge, understanding and skills to undertake further learning within a structured and managed environment.</p> <p>Possess the qualities and transferable skills needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility</p>	Certificates
3	<p>Demonstrate a knowledge of basic concepts and principles in a field of work or study;</p> <p>Have command of analytical interpretation of information</p> <p>Express informed judgment</p> <p>Be able to display a range of known responses to familiar problems</p>	<p>Upper Certificate III National</p> <p>Vocational Qualifications</p> <p>National Certificates</p>
2	<p>Demonstrate a narrow range of applied knowledge and basic comprehension in a field of work or study</p> <p>Display a narrow a range of skills in a field of work or study</p> <p>Be able to use known solutions to familiar problems</p>	<p>Lower Secondary Education:</p> <p>Certificate II</p> <p>National Vocational Qualification</p> <p>National Certificates</p> <p>Adult Basic Education and Training</p>
1	<p>Demonstrates basic literacy and numeracy skills.</p>	<p>Entry Level 1</p> <p>Certificate 1</p> <p>Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) awards</p>

Draft 1.31 working document on JQI meeting in Dublin on 23/03/2004PC

## Shared 'Dublin' descriptors for the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral awards

*A report from a Joint Quality Initiative informal group (contributors to the document are provided in the Annex).*

23 March 2004

### 1 INTRODUCTION

This note proposes a shared 'Dublin' descriptor for the doctoral award. The descriptor extends the existing Dublin descriptors for Bachelor's and Master's awards that have been published previously through the Joint Quality Initiative<sup>i</sup>.

In keeping with the Dublin Descriptors for the Bachelor's and Master's awards, the doctoral descriptor is a general statement of the expected attributes of a doctoral student that is independent of the precise nature of the educational process. The descriptor draws upon other sources some of which are associated with national frameworks of qualifications including:

Quality Assurance Agency Framework for higher education qualifications<sup>ii</sup>

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework<sup>iii</sup>

Irish National Framework of Qualifications<sup>iv</sup>

Danish Qualifications Framework<sup>v</sup>

The note also considers the sequence of three Dublin Descriptors that relate to completion of the first, second and third Bologna cycles and indicates the progression steps between the cycles.

### 2 BACKGROUND

#### 2.1 The Berlin Communiqué

In September 2003 the Berlin Communiqué 2003 added a third cycle to the Bologna process to include doctor education and promote links between the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area.

Moreover, in relation to qualifications frameworks the Communiqué mentions:

*Ministers encourage the member States to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. They also undertake to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.*

*Within such frameworks, degrees should have different defined outcomes. First and second cycle degrees should have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. First cycle degrees should give access, in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to second cycle programmes. Second cycle degrees should give access to doctoral studies.*

#### 2.2 On formulating a doctoral descriptor

The various types of doctorate in use across Europe include three broad types: the doctorate that is predominantly research based (often awarded PhD), the professional doctorate, and the so-called 'higher doctorates'.

The professional or practitioner doctorate is a relatively new and still evolving practice in European higher education. Many professional doctorates in UK, where they are well established in some fields such as Psychology, require that the candidate completes a substantial piece of original research that is comparable "*in standard if not in scale*"<sup>vi</sup> to a supervised PhD.

The 'Higher doctorates', that are available for example in Ireland, the United Kingdom and Denmark, require attributes that are different in character from those required for PhDs or professional doctorates.

Following discussion the JQI group consider that a shared Doctoral descriptor should encompass the outcomes of research-based and professional doctorates, but that it should not refer to particular forms of study.

### **3 DUBLIN DESCRIPTORS FOR BACHELOR'S, MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL AWARDS**

#### **3.1 'Dublin' Descriptors**

The JQI Dublin descriptors for Bachelors and Masters were first proposed in March 2002 (see: [www.jointquality.org](http://www.jointquality.org)). It is proposed that for a better understanding of the 'Dublin descriptors' in the context of the Berlin communiqué and their possible future usage, alternative headings, as indicated below, may be more appropriate:

#### **Bachelor's degrees are awarded to students who:**

alternative

#### **Qualifications that signify completion of the first cycle are awarded to students who:**

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

can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional<sup>1</sup> approach to their work or vocation, and have competences<sup>2</sup> typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;

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

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

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

#### **Master's degrees are awarded to students who:**

alternative

#### **Qualifications that signify completion of the second cycle are awarded to students who:**

have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with Bachelor's level, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research<sup>3</sup> context;

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

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

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

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

#### **Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who:**

alternative

#### **Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:**

have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;

have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;

have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;

are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;

can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;

can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society;

### Glossary

1. The word '**professional**' is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, relating to those attributes relevant to undertaking work or a vocation and that involves the application of some aspects of advanced learning. It is not used with regard to those specific requirements relating to regulated professions. The latter may be identified with the profile / specification.
2. The word '**competence**' is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, allowing for gradation of abilities or skills. It is not used in the narrower sense identified solely on the basis of a 'yes/no' assessment.
3. The word '**research**' is used to cover a wide variety of activities, with the context often related to a field of study; the term is used here to represent a careful study or investigation based on a systematic understanding and critical awareness of knowledge. The word is used in an inclusive way to accommodate the range of activities that support original and innovative work in the whole range of academic, professional and technological fields, including the humanities, and traditional, performing, and other creative arts. It is not used in any limited or restricted sense, or relating solely to a traditional 'scientific method'.

### Differentiating between cycles

Cycle	Knowledge and understanding:
1 (Bachelor)	[is] supported by advanced text books [with] some aspects informed by knowledge at the forefront of their field of study ..
2 (Master)	provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing or applying ideas often in a research* context ..
3 (Doctorate)	[includes] a systematic understanding of their field of study and mastery of the methods of research* associated with that field ..

	Applying knowledge and understanding:
1 (Bachelor)	[through] devising and sustaining arguments
2 (Master)	[through] problem solving abilities [applied] in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts ..
3 (Doctorate)	[is demonstrated by the] ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research* with scholarly integrity ..  [is in the context of] a contribution that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work some of which merits national or international refereed publication ..

	Making judgements:
1 (Bachelor)	[involves] gathering and interpreting relevant data ..
2 (Master)	[demonstrates] the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete data ..
3 (Doctorate)	[requires being] capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas..

	Communication
1 (Bachelor)	[of] information, ideas, problems and solutions ..
2 (Master)	[of] their conclusions and the underpinning knowledge and rationale (restricted scope) to specialist and non-specialist audiences (monologue) ..
3 (Doctorate)	with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general (dialogue) about their areas of expertise (broad scope)..

	Learning skills ..
1 (Bachelor)	have developed those skills needed to study further with a high level of autonomy ..
2 (Master)	study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous..
3 (Doctorate)	expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement ..

## Annex 1

### List of Contributors to the Dublin Meeting on the Doctorate

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Norway	Mrs. Tone Flood Strom	Ministry Ed & Res	<a href="mailto:tfs@ufd.dep.no">tfs@ufd.dep.no</a>
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Spain	José Manuel Bayod	ANECA, Professor at the University of Cantabria	<a href="mailto:bayodjm@unican.es">bayodjm@unican.es</a>
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Denmark	Mogens Berg	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation	<a href="mailto:mob@vtu.dk">mob@vtu.dk</a>
Denmark	Tue Vinther Jorgensen	EVA	<a href="mailto:tvj@eva.dk">tvj@eva.dk</a>
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Ireland	Peter Cullen	HETAC	<a href="mailto:pcullen@hetac.ie">pcullen@hetac.ie</a>
Ireland	Bryan Maguire	DLIADT	<a href="mailto:Bryan.Maguire@iadt.ie">Bryan.Maguire@iadt.ie</a>

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.jointquality.org/content/ireland/Shared%20descriptors%20Ba%20Ma.doc>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/nqf/nqf.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.scqf.org.uk>

Draft 1.31 working document on JQI meeting in Dublin on 23/03/2004PC

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iv <http://www.nqai.ie>

v <http://www.vtu.dk/fsk/div/bologna/DanishQFReport.pdf>

vi UKCGE: "The Structure of the Professional Doctorate" in "Professional Doctorates" 2002.



6 Specimen of the Europass Diploma  
Supplement used by the University of Malta

& Specimen of the Europass  
Certificate Supplement

# Europass Diploma Supplement

*This Diploma Supplement model was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international 'transparency' and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It should be free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.*

<b>1. Information Identifying the Holder of the Qualification</b>	
<b>Surname:</b>	<b>Name:</b>
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	<b>Student Code:</b>
<b>2. Information Identifying the Qualification</b>	
<b>Name of Qualification:</b>	
<b>Main areas of study:</b>	
<b>Awarding Institution:</b>	University of Malta - The University traces its origins to 1592 and was founded as a state university in 1769. It is governed by the Education Act, 1988.
<b>Institution Administering Studies (if different from above):</b>	Not applicable
<b>Language of Instruction / Examination:</b>	English
<b>2. Information Identifying the Qualification</b>	
<b>Name of Qualification:</b>	
<b>Main areas of study:</b>	
<b>Awarding Institution:</b>	University of Malta - The University traces its origins to 1592 and was founded as a state university in 1769. It is governed by the Education Act, 1988. The Università degli Studi di Perugia was founded in 1308.
<b>Institution Administering Studies (if different from above):</b>	Not applicable
<b>Language of Instruction / Examination:</b>	English
<b>3. Information on the Level of the Qualification</b>	
<b>Level of Qualification:</b>	
<b>Official Duration of Programme:</b>	
<b>Access Requirements:</b>	

SPECIMEN

**Programme  
Requirements:**

**Programme Details and  
Results:**

**Grading Scheme:**

Mark Range	Grade	Description	Mark Range	Grade	Description
95% - 100%	A+	Work of exceptional quality	45%	D*	Maximum grade obtainable following re-assessment
80% - 94%	A	Work of excellent quality	35% - 44%	CP	Compensated Pass (under certain conditions)
75% - 79%	B+	Work of very good quality	N/A	P	Pass (on Pass/Fail basis only)
70% - 74%	B	Work of good quality	0% - 44%	F	Unsatisfactory, failing work
65% - 69%	C+	Work of average quality	N/A	W	Approved Withdrawal from study-unit
55% - 64%	C	Work of fair quality			
50% - 54%	D+	Work of rather low quality			
45% - 49%	D	Marginal Pass			

**Award Achieved:**

**Classification:**

**Date of Commencement:**

**Date of Award:**

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**5. Information on the Function of the Qualification**

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**Access to Further Study:**

**Professional Status:**

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**6. Additional Information**

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**Additional Information:**

**Further Information  
Sources:**

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**7. Certification of the Diploma Supplement**

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**Date of Issue:**

**Signature:**

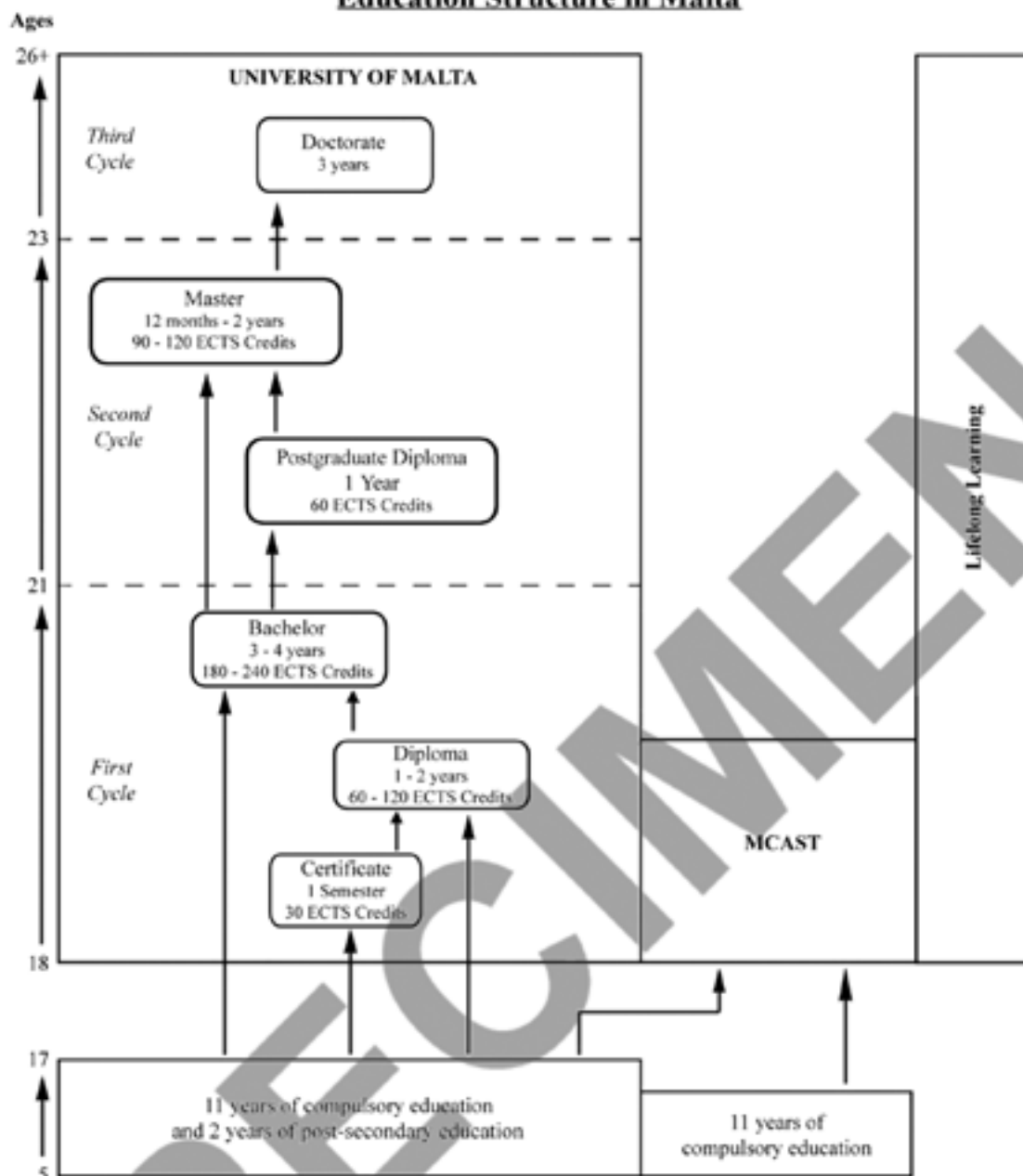
**Name:**

**Official Post:**

Registrar

**Official Stamp:**

## Education Structure in Malta





## Certificate Supplement

### Proposed Certificate Supplement

#### 2. TRANSLATED TITLE OF THE CERTIFICATE (EN)

This translation has no legal status

#### 3. PROFILE OF SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

To be awarded this certificate the holder will have demonstrated formally through a process of assessment, administered both on and off the job, an ability to:

#### 4. RANGE OF OCCUPATIONS ACCESSIBLE TO THE HOLDER OF THE CERTIFICATE

**\*Explanatory note:** This document is designed to provide additional information about the specified certificate and does not have any legal status in itself. The format of the description is based on the following texts: Council Resolution 93/C 49/01 of 3 December 1992 on the transparency of vocational training certificates, and Recommendation 2001/613/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 July 2001 on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers. More information on transparency is available at: [www.cedefop.eu.int/transparency](http://www.cedefop.eu.int/transparency)

**5. OFFICIAL BASIS OF THE CERTIFICATE**

<p><b>Name of the body awarding the certificate</b></p> <p><b>Malta Qualifications Council (MQC)</b></p> <p>MQC is the single statutory national awarding body for further education and training in Malta.</p>	<p><b>Name of the national authority providing accreditation/recognition of the certificate</b></p> <p><b>Malta Qualifications Council</b>          16/18 Tower Promenade,          St. Lucia, SLC1019,          Malta          Web: <a href="http://www.mqc.gov.mt">www.mqc.gov.mt</a>          Email: <a href="mailto:mqc@gov.mt">mqc@gov.mt</a></p>																																										
<p><b>MQF/EQF Level of the certificate</b></p>	<p><b>Grading scale/ Pass requirements</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Grade</th> <th>Range</th> <th>Description</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>A+</td> <td>95% - 100%</td> <td>Work of exceptional quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A</td> <td>80% - 94%</td> <td>Work of excellent quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B+</td> <td>75% - 79%</td> <td>Work of very good quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B</td> <td>70% - 74%</td> <td>Work of good quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>C+</td> <td>65% - 69%</td> <td>Work of average quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>C</td> <td>55% - 64%</td> <td>Work of fair quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D+</td> <td>50% - 54%</td> <td>Work of rather low quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D</td> <td>45% - 49%</td> <td>Marginal Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D</td> <td>45%</td> <td>Maximum grade obtainable following re-assessment</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CP</td> <td>35%-44%</td> <td>Compensated Pass (under certain conditions)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>Pass (on Pass/Fail basis (only))</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>0%-44%</td> <td>Unsatisfactory, Failing Work</td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>Approved withdrawal from study-unit</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade	Range	Description	A+	95% - 100%	Work of exceptional quality	A	80% - 94%	Work of excellent quality	B+	75% - 79%	Work of very good quality	B	70% - 74%	Work of good quality	C+	65% - 69%	Work of average quality	C	55% - 64%	Work of fair quality	D+	50% - 54%	Work of rather low quality	D	45% - 49%	Marginal Pass	D	45%	Maximum grade obtainable following re-assessment	CP	35%-44%	Compensated Pass (under certain conditions)	P	N/A	Pass (on Pass/Fail basis (only))	F	0%-44%	Unsatisfactory, Failing Work	W	N/A	Approved withdrawal from study-unit
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<p><b>Legal Basis</b>          Employment and Training Services Act (CAP. 343) Malta Qualifications Council Regulations 2005          Legal Notice 347/2005</p>																																											



**6. OFFICIALLY RECOGNISED WAYS OF ACQUIRING THE CERTIFICATE**

## Background to Europass

Europass was established in 2004 by a decision of the European Parliament and the Council on a single transparency framework for qualifications and competences. Europass aims to facilitate the mobility of European learners and workers by making their skills and qualifications more easily understood.

Europass consists of a portfolio of five standardized documents:

- Europass Curriculum Vitae
- Europass Language Passport
- Europass Mobility
- Europass Diploma Supplement
- Europass Certificate Supplement

Each of the documents has been designed in such a way as to help people chronicle their skill and competences in a coherent manner, whether they are planning to enroll in a programme of education and training, looking for a job, or getting experience abroad.

### What is the Europass Certificate Supplement?

The document that you are currently reading is a Europass Certificate Supplement. It is made available to individuals who hold a further education and training award certificate by the body that issued the award certificate.

The Europass Certificate Supplement aims to make the award certificate more easily understood, especially by employers and learning institutions by providing information that is additional to that provided on their award certificate. In the main, this information relates to-

- the awarding status of the body that issued the award
- the skills and competences acquired by ALL holders of the award
- the level of the award in the national awarding system
- the typical entry requirements to programmes that lead to the award
- the typical employment of learning opportunities that are accessible to

## The Malta Qualifications Council

The overall objective of MQC is to steer the development of the National Qualifications Framework and to oversee the training and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework and which is not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies.

The Council also

- Promotes and maintains the National Qualifications Framework and establish policies and criteria on which the Framework shall be based;
- Approves and ensures the publication of national standards of knowledge, skills and competences and attitudes for each development sector;
- Endorses and ensures the publication of the procedures to be implemented by training agencies offering programmes of education and training for access, transfer and progression;
- Ensures that such standards and procedures are implemented;
- Endorses vocational education and training programmes delivered by training agencies;
- Endorses certificates awarded by training agencies;
- Keeps and issues official records of certification awarded.

MQC is governed by Members appointed by the Minister of Education and comprising representatives of training providers, trade unions, employers, the Ministry of Education, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education as well as the Employment and Training Corporation.

<p><b>provided in the Europass Certificate Supplement?</b></p> <p>The information provided in the Europass Certificate Supplement will benefit award holders, employers, education and training providers and guidance counselors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• award holders will be able to communicate their qualification and competences in an effective way</li> <li>• employers will find the qualifications and competences of job-seekers easier to understand</li> <li>• education and training providers and guidance counselors will find it easier to provide accurate advice to award holders regarding suitable learning opportunities</li> </ul>	
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## The Malta Qualifications Framework

Malta launched its overarching NQF for lifelong learning in June 2007, encompassing all levels of formal, informal and non-formal education and training. It is governed by Legal Notice 347 of October 2005 which will be subsequently amended to reflect the development of the MQF.

The Malta Qualifications Framework addresses the following issues:

- Valuing All Formal, Informal and Non-Formal Learning;
- Parity of Esteem of qualifications from different learning pathways including vocational and professional degrees and academic programmes of studies;
- Access and Progression;
- Lifelong Learning; and
- Mobility

A NQF provides a solution through its referencing to the EQF, as training providers are willing to reform their system in exchange for a wider market base, social partners are involved in the design of qualifications which are learning outcomes based and demand-driven and the learners have better chances for employability and mobility.

The Malta Qualifications Council hosts a unit on Standards and Qualifications. This unit has regular

meetings with stakeholders on the required standards as pre-requisites which need to be fulfilled by a training provider to offer qualifications referenced to the MQF. When the standards are in place MQC and the training provider sign a formal Protocol outlining level-rating of all qualifications.

The key role of all stakeholders including social partners is participation in the consultation process during the design, development and implementation of the MQF. Education and Training stakeholders and labour market stakeholders are responsible for the design of demand-driven and learning outcomes qualifications.

- Malta's NQF has 8 levels of qualifications and is compatible with the European Qualifications Framework and the Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.
- Malta's NQF is based on the principle that levels of education and qualifications can be measured by what a person is capable of doing rather than by what an individual has been taught.
- The NQF is also a reference tool using the learning outcomes approach.
- The NQF is a common reference and translation device between various qualifications, qualifications systems (including sectoral qualifications frameworks) and levels.



- The NQF will place sectoral qualifications within a common agreed Framework of Qualifications.
- The National Qualifications Framework increases transparency of qualifications, recognition of learning outcomes and builds mutual trust among all stakeholders.
- Malta's National Qualifications Framework adheres to the Bologna and Copenhagen processes and aims at attracting more individuals to learning experiences and to employability.
- The descriptors for higher education short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle) developed by the Joint Quality Initiative as part of the Bologna process corresponds to the learning outcomes of Malta's NQF Level 5.
- The descriptors for the first, second and third cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area correspond to the learning outcomes of NQF levels 6, 7 and 8
- The NQF has a Vocational Education and Training Framework with five levels of qualifications from VET Level One to a VET Higher Diploma.
- Eight Key Competences (initially at Levels 1 to 3) whose level descriptors are in line with the EQF form an integral part of Malta's NQF and will facilitate mobility and progression of Malta's workforce.
- Informal and Non-formal education and training as well as the recognition of prior learning (RPL) will eventually form part of the national qualifications framework for lifelong learning.

8	Doctoral Degree		8
7	Master's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate		7
6	Bachelor's Degree		6
5	Undergraduate Diploma Undergraduate Certificate Certificate in Higher Education	Foundation Degree VET Higher Diploma	f 5
4	Matriculation Certificate Advanced Level Intermediate Level	VET Diploma	e 4
3	General Education Level 3 SEC Grade 1-5	VET Level 3	d 3
2	General Education Level 2 SEC Grade 6-7	VET Level 2	c 2
1	General Education Level 1 School Leaving Certificate	VET Level 1	b a 1

#### Annotations:

- \* The National Qualifications Framework is designed in such a way as to be able to include diverse forms of qualifications not as yet covered by this Framework.
- (a) Attainment of the Basic Employment Passport together with either the Adult Skills Certificate or MQC 8 Key Competences at Level 1 are also considered as a Full VET Level 1 qualification.
- (b) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Level 1 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as a Full School Leaving Certificate.
- (c) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 4 General Education Level 2 subjects.
- (d) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Level 3 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 6 General Level 3 subjects.
- (e) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Diploma should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 3 Advanced Level subjects.
- (f) The Certificate in Higher Education is awarded to students who do not complete a degree but have acquired minimum of 60 ECTS.



# 7 The Malta Qualifications Council

Set up in December 2005, the overall objective of the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC), as specified in Legal Notice 347/2005, is to steer the development of the National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (NQF) and to oversee the training and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework and which are not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies.

MQC is responsible for defining the levels of qualifications and competences within the NQF and for establishing standards related to qualifications within the Framework. Malta's Qualifications Framework is at the forefront of European developments, achieving as it does, the inclusion of qualifications across compulsory, vocational and academic sectors into a single framework.

MQC is committed to make the relationships between qualifications clearer and user friendly. It clarifies exit points and routes for progression within and across education and training sectors. It works towards increasing the opportunities for credit transfer. Over time, it will help accredit informal and non-formal learning, help sectors to design qualifications framework which best fit into the NQF and establish an accreditation system across all qualifications based on credit transfer.

The Malta Qualifications Council is currently leading a Leonardo da Vinci project on the testing of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. INLearning: Valuing Learning for an Inclusive Society. MQC is also a partner in a number of projects including HEQ-Bridges on permeability between VET and HE. MQC

*MQC premises*



successfully co-ordinated the EQF-FRAME project on tourism qualifications and was one of the partners in a project on the Vocational Qualifications Framework of Security Personnel. With ESF financing MQC is engaged up to September 2011 in two projects, the VQPack project to design, publish and promote competence matrices in VET.and Skills+ to design, publish and promote occupational standards related to existing VET qualifications.

MQC also stands for quality assurance (QA) in the provision of vocational education and training. In designing its QA policy, MQC will further develop guidelines to enable learners; training providers and industry achieve excellence and increase their competitiveness in an open market economy.

Since August 2008, the offices of the Mutual Recognition Coordinator and the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre have been merged into MQC.

In 2010 MQC and the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) merged into one agency aimed at licensing, accrediting, recognising and quality assuring programmes and institutions in further and higher education.

MQC is governed by Members appointed by the Minister of Education and comprises representatives of training providers, trade unions, employers, the Ministry of Education, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education as well as the Employment and Training Corporation.

NCHE is governed by a Commission appointed by the Prime Minister. The members of the Commission are persons who, in the opinion of the Ministers of Education, possess leadership qualities and have an understanding in further and higher education within the context of the general socio-economic development. NCHE was established in September 2006 by virtue of the Amendments to the Education Act (Act No. XIII of 2006).