

Council of Europe

Forum on Qualifications
Frameworks
DRAFT Report by
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1. Issues from presentations (1)

- **NQFs – different shapes, sizes (5, 8, 10,12), guises**
- **HE, vocational, lifelong learning/integrated**
- **QFs are not about forcing uniformity, but explaining diversity – qualifications, profile, title, purpose, etc.**
- **Drivers: reform (v description) of qualifications, social reform, flexible pathways/no ‘dead ends’, efficiency, transparency, better informed recognition decisions**
- **national qualifications frameworks (NQF) - massive effort & time to develop & implement**
- **Time to consider purpose, aims and nature of your NQF = time well spent**
- **Major change succeeds if stakeholders believe in the change and in benefits of change**
- **There is no single ‘correct’ way to develop a NQF**

2. Issues from presentations (2)

- EHEA framework sets the parameters within which NQFs develop and operate
- LO's and descriptors operate at different levels, the more local the level, the greater the detail
- Countries must make own decisions about levels and descriptors
- Qualifications can have credits at several levels
- Integrated/LLL frameworks need to accommodate degrees

3. Issues from Presentations: 3

- EQF-LLL & QF-EHEA co-exist - both here to stay
- Frameworks meet – NQFs, SQFs, combined support from CoE and EC, networks of officials, and in advisory groups
- LOs pointless if they don't impact on relationship between teaching, learning & assessment
- 'Fitness for purpose' more important than uniformity, 'best fit' - not absolute precision
- Real examples from Peter & Frances re how QFs can offer new career directions

4. Issues from Workshops (1)

- 2 main purposes for NQF: documenting the system and reforming the system
- Need political will – HEIs, academics and politicians
- Do you need to distinguish between vocational and academic HE?
- In many countries – ministry has to take the lead – institutions don't have the resource
- Lots very new concepts in many systems
- Possible impact on job market – rights to jobs/salaries
- Timescales –enormity of task, time for legislation

5. Issues from Workshops (2)

- Need clarity/shared understanding of basic concepts and terminology – if they are to be translated & used in national context
- All stakeholders need to be engaged – will all have to work/live with the outcomes
- Should there be self-certification of HE frameworks, or VET/LLL together
- ‘soft’ approaches, e.g. Tuning, Benchmarks etc
- We need to share information and experience – good or bad!
- Scotland & Ireland can help us!! (careful now!)

6. Difficult areas

- Countries can opt for separate NQFs for HE/VET/LLL or integrated, or linked
- Links/relationships between EQF and FEHEA
- ECTS – Meta-system?
- Local rules for accumulation – within agreed parameters of ECTS
- Short cycle – what place does it have in national/European QFs?

7. Conclusions: 1

- Outcomes-based NQFs a paradigm shift – a change of focus, from teacher to learner – not a cosmetic exercise
- NQFs are a new way of describing qualifications and systems and how they relate to each other
- Implementation takes a lot of time and effort and is ongoing – need for review
- ‘Ownership’ is crucial – HEIs *and* learners – if full benefits are to be achieved
- Negotiation of NQF needs balanced relationships between HEIs and national authorities

8. Conclusions: 2

- Need to clarify & strengthen the roles and relationships between credit & NQFs
- Workload is approximate & notional, but must also be realistic and checked/reviewed
- Quality Assurance of credit allocation and assessment is essential
- Need to ensure ECTS & ECVET articulate

9. Conclusions: 3

- Countries with NQFs already in place can learn from those who develop NQF with a knowledge of QF-EHEA
- Experience suggests that NQFs will develop levels within cycles – more practical benefits for learners/academics
- Need a common language which is clear, simple, and accessible to many audiences
- NQF needs to be generic enough to cover diverse profiles and/or allow bridges

10. Recommendations: national authorities

- Develop NQFs compatible with QF-EHEA and, where relevant, EQF-LLL
- Make explicit roles/responsibilities of various actors in development of NQF
- When developing NQFs, take due account of related developments like credit systems, quality assurance, etc
- engage actively and flexibly with HE institutions, students, staff and other stakeholders in the development of their NQF
- make information on the development of their NQF available on their website
- provide the Council of Europe and the Bologna Secretariat with information on the web sites and on significant updates so that relevant information is shared with other countries;
- Make clear the scope of the NQF and its relationships with QF-EHEA and as appropriate, with EQF-LLL
- Appoint Qualifications Frameworks Correspondent to liaise with CoE and share/disseminate information with other countries

11. Recommendations: HEIs, Rectors' Conferences, EUA

- Be explicit about how they estimate and use workload for curriculum planning
- Engage with national authorities and other partners to develop and implement NQFs
- Support and develop use of ECTS and in particular accumulation function and proper use of LO's and workload at institutional level
- Develop and deepen the use of learning outcomes across all aspects of learning, teaching and assessment

12. Recommendations: Student Unions & ESU

- Engage with other key players to encourage/support proper use of LO's and workload
- Raise awareness among students of the roles and functions of qualifications frameworks and the importance of learning outcomes

13. Recommendations: Council of Europe

- develop a section of its HE web site dedicated to sharing of experience in the development of NQFs and through this web site make pertinent information available to a wide audience;
- establish a mailing list of “framework correspondents” comprising all Bologna members, upon nomination by the competent public authorities, and disseminate information regularly through this mailing list;
- establish a base of experts that may assist the members of the Bologna Process, on request, in the development of their national frameworks and that, together, represent a diversity of national and institutional experiences;

14. Recommendations: BFUG & Secretariat

15. Recommendations: European Commission

- that the European Commission, in its support for the development of national frameworks compatible with the EQF, ensure sufficient emphasis on compatibility with the overarching framework of the EHEA
- Work to influence development of ECVET such that it is compatible with ECTS
- Ensure that the coordination group for the overarching framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area is represented in the coordination structures for the EQF for Lifelong Learning

16. Recommendations: quality agencies

- When developing/reviewing national quality systems, ensure that these encompass arrangements for review of use of QFs, learning outcomes and allocation of credits

17. Recommendations: ENIC & NARIC Networks

- Make full use of the potential of qualifications frameworks in facilitating the recognition of qualifications
- As far as possible base recognition on the assessment of learning outcomes

18. Recommendations - ALL

- Focus on the learner at all times!