

EUROPEAN LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK
(report from QCA to be discussed and approved in Maastricht 13-12-2004)

Vertical dimension of the qualification framework

<u>LEVEL</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION OF THE QUALIFICATIONS</u>	<u>SUB LEVELS</u>
<u>1 General</u>	Learning normally acquired during compulsory education and considered as contributing to a general knowledge and development of basic skills. Learning is not usually contextualised in work situations.	partial/modal/exceeds
<u>2 Entry</u>	Completion of compulsory education which includes an induction to work. Basic knowledge of work can be acquired at an educational establishment, in an out-of school training programme, or in an enterprise. Generally it is not occupation specific. The range of knowledge, skills and competence involved is limited. Qualification at this level indicates a person can perform basic tasks and exercise repetitive skills in a controlled environment. All action appears to be governed by rules defining allowable routines and strategies.	partial/modal/exceeds
<u>3 Foundation</u>	Completion of a basic vocational training qualification introducing the idea of job competence. It is normally considered part of upper secondary education. This qualification shows a person has basic skills suitable for many job functions and the capacity to carry out tasks under direction. Most action of people at this level of qualification is deliberate repetitive application of knowledge and skills	partial/modal/exceeds
<u>4 Technician</u>	Qualification at this level normally includes upper secondary education and a work based training programme in an alternance or apprenticeship scheme and involves developing knowledge linked to a specific occupational sector. People qualified at this level are able to work independently on tasks and have the capacity to apply specialist knowledge, skills and competences. They will have extensive experience and practice in both common and exceptional situations and be able to solve problems independently using this experience.	partial/modal/exceeds
<u>5 Expert technician</u>	Completion of a main vocational training qualification such as apprenticeship or higher education training. This form of qualification involves significant theoretical knowledge and involves mainly technical work that can be performed independently and entail supervisory and coordination duties. Qualification at this level indicates a person can deal with complex situations and their performance can be a benchmark for others. They will have considerable experience and practice across a wide range of work situations. This qualification level often bridges secondary and tertiary education and training.	partial/modal/exceeds
<u>6 Expert</u>	Qualification at this level covers a high level of theoretical and practical knowledge, skill and competence, entailing a mastery of the scientific basis of an occupation. Qualification at this level means a person can deal comfortably with complex situations is generally autonomous and can assume design, management and administrative responsibilities. They are equivalent to the first Bologna cycle of higher education . Study for these qualifications outside work takes place mostly in Higher Education institutions.	partial/modal/exceeds
<u>7 Master</u>	These qualifications recognise specialist theoretical and practical learning that is required for work as (senior) professionals and managers. People qualified at this level will have a wide breadth and depth of knowledge and be able to demonstrate high levels of specialist competence in an area. They will operate independently and supervise and train others where they can be inspiring. These qualifications are equivalent to the second Bologna cycle of higher education . Study for these qualifications outside work takes place in specialist Higher Education institutions.	partial/modal/exceeds
<u>8 Specialist</u>	These qualifications recognise people as a leading expert in a highly specialised field dealing with complex situations and having the capacity for long-range strategic and scientific thinking and action. Such experts develop new and creative approaches that extend or redefine existing knowledge or professional practice and often teach others to be experts and masters. They are equivalent to the third Bologna cycle of higher education . Study for these qualifications outside work takes place mostly in Higher Education institutions.	partial/modal/exceeds

The horizontal dimension of the qualification framework

It is important to define the horizontal component of the proposed matrix approach so that all kinds of VET learning and achievement can be allocated to a level or sub level.

-The horizontal or qualitative dimension is the key area of responsiveness that will add specificity to the levels. It has to include the qualitative descriptors that will allow a person making use of the framework to identify where any kind of recognised VET learning is appropriately located. It will govern accessibility, flexibility and the notions of benchmarks and quality assurance. The further definition of the horizontal dimension is an important task for the TWG.

-Of critical importance is to anticipate what kind of qualification it is that users of the reference level framework will want to find a level for. It is suggested, for the first phase of a reference level framework that only two qualitatively different dimensions are used:

A. Full qualification, partial qualification and units of assessment. This includes successful completion of a training programme or a distinct part of it.

B. Experience of work in an occupation covering a specified minimum period of time.

These two dimensions can be extended or sub-divided at a later stage in the development of European reference levels.

Three criteria should be developed to signal to users the nature of qualification that is expected to be matched to reference levels - these are broadly defined as follows:

* that it is described in terms of learning outcomes;

* it is capable of being assessed; and

* is quality assured.

-These dimensions are intended to be national system related, within each dimension we might anticipate elements that relate to the building blocks of these national systems. For example for a training programme we might expect a specification to include details of knowledge and understanding to be learned, skills to be practiced, competencies to be acquired. Within the experience dimension we might expect to see a job profile, details of level of autonomy required and responsibility for the work of others.

-These kinds of detailed specifications of knowledge, skills and competences have been researched lightly as part of this project and are the subject of a forthcoming CEDEFOP research contract. In the next phase of this work each dimension could be defined in terms of these specifications.

- It is now possible to create a matrix with the two qualitative dimensions as columns in the reference level framework. In each column of the horizontal component it should be possible to produce a specific descriptor for each level to correspond with and extend the general descriptor for each level. It is proposed that the specific descriptors should include, as a minimum, the following four components at each level or sub-level.

1. A description of the knowledge, skills and competences normally included in qualifications, e.g. outcomes of training programmes and corresponding generic job profiles.

2. An indication of significant contextual features of qualifications and work such as complexity of sphere of application and level of initiative/creativity/problem solving required, the level of independence in learning (managing learning, autonomy), roles in relation to others (managing others and teamwork skills).

3. Competencies generally required by the qualification, training or work.

4. The quality assurance processes normally associated with the assessment and verification of the qualification, training and work.

The fourth point is of a different kind to the first three, the latter are associated with content of qualification, training or work. The fourth point is included because it signals that the qualifications to be matched should also have some kind of quality assurance processes associated with it. Without such a signal it might be difficult to develop a ZMT(zone of mutual trust) because users might sense that using the reference levels to equate qualifications across countries might carry too much risk. The quality assurance specification should leave scope for individual countries to define the detail - it should be specified in broad detail in relation to the reference level framework.