MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

DOCUMENT
MACEDONIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
– starting bases –

MARCH 2013

Members of the working group for the preparation of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework

MES – Natasa Janevska
MES – Nada Stoimenova
MES – Aspasija Haxisce
MES – Borco Aleksov
MES – George Nikolov
MES – Daniela Graorovska
MES – Dana Biskovska
MES – Aneta Trpevska
EDB – Rajmonda Neziri
EDB – Blaga Paneva
CVET – Laste Spasovski
CVET – Liduska Vasilevska
CVET – Elizabeta Jovanovska Radanovik
CVET – Branko Aleksovski
CEA – Maja Krstevska
CEA – Maja Korubin
MLSP – Maja Papatolevska
MLSP – Orhan Serifi
EARM – Biljana Delovska
EARM – Violeta Stojanovik
SSB – Violeta Krsteva
MISA – Jasminka Galevska
OR – Svetlana Ristovska Antik
SKM – Lence Zikova

Preamble

The document has been prepared by the working group formed by the Minister of Education and Science based on the document prepared within the EU project **"Technical support for the Ministry of Education and Science for lifelong learning" Contract number: 06MAC01/11/102** and based on European documents, the Copenhagen Declaration, the Bologna Declaration and the Decree for the National Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for the Republic of Macedonia. In the preparation of the document several principles were followed:

- inclusion of all interested parties from the very beginning;

- inclusion of international experts;

- development of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework on the national level, while ensuring its comparability on the international level;

- establishment of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework in accordance with national legislation and practice;

- comprehensiveness of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework, i.e. acceptance of all types and levels of qualifications, and

- basis for descriptions of learning levels and results of learning.

The document "Macedonian Qualifications Framework – starting bases" provides the concept, structure of the national framework and structure for the management and implementation of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework. The development of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework will continue with the full compliance of the principles provided at the beginning of the document.

Great gratitude to the members of the working group for their dedication and their hard work, as well as for their proposals, ideas and suggestions given to reach the final results of such an important document.

Special gratitude to (Anne-Marie Chéreau) from the Board of National Skill Certification from France, and to Eduarda Castel Branco and Arien Deille from the ETF for their valuable remarks, practical advice and recommendations in the area of qualifications frameworks.

Gratitude also to the representatives of the chambers and associations of employers who gave their contribution to the development of this document with specific examples from practice, to the individuals who got actively involved with their comments and recommendations for improving the text and for the final shape of the document, particularly to professor Elizabeta Bahtovska for her selfless engagement in the shaping of the descriptions from the fifth to eighth level and for the suggestions she gave us for the higher education qualifications, and to Milka Masnikosa, head of the legal department in the Ministry of Education and Science for the legal advice that she provided.

And finally, great thanks to the Minister of Education and Science, Mr. Pance Kralev, and to the state secretary in the Ministry of Education and Science, Ms. Elizabeta Todorovska, for the trust they gave us in the preparation of this significant document, and for the support and

the directions they gave us in the course of the entire work put into the preparation of the document.

CONTENTS:

ABBREVIATIONS

EDB – Education Development Bureau
STC – State testing centre
SEI – State Education Inspectorate
EQAR – European Quality Assurance Framework in higher education
EQF – European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning
ECTS – European Credit Transfer System
ECVET – European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EQARF - European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training
EU – European Union
MQF – Macedonian Qualifications Framework
NQF – National Qualifications Framework
VET – Vocational Education and Training
CEA – Public institution Centre for Adult Education
CVET – Centre for vocational education and training

INTRODUCTION

The creation of a competitive European Economic Area requires the mobility of competencies and their clear recognition and use by individuals, employers and the entire social community. That, among other things, requires the establishment of a new European system of values and a new attitude towards education that will be widely acceptable for member countries of the EU, as well as for the countries that wish to join the European family. The achievement of these strategic goals in EU countries has contributed to the treatment of education and training as two of the key factors for their implementation.

Starting from the said strategic goals, in April 2008 the European Parliament and the Council of the EU adopted the European Qualifications Framework. This document, as the common referent European framework, imposed numerous requirements on all member states of the EU, and also on the Republic of Macedonia, connected, primarily, with the systematic valuation of the education and training in each country and their comparison with the education systems in other countries.

Understanding the significance of the said European document, the Republic of Macedonia undertook certain activities with the goal of preparing its own qualifications framework, based on the European framework. The result of these activities is the document "Macedonian Qualifications Framework – starting bases" prepared based on our educational tradition, the current situation in the area of education, and the needs connected with economic development, individual development and development of the society as a whole, and in compliance with the provisions of the European Qualifications Framework and the relevant European and international recommendations and regulations.

The document creates the preconditions for determining the Macedonian Qualifications Framework that needs to connect the previous, current and future results of learning and place them in mutual relations within the country, but also within the European Qualifications Framework and the European education area. As a document, the "Macedonian Qualifications Framework – starting bases" constitutes, primarily, directions for harmonization of the regulations that regulate the subsystems of primary, high school and higher education, as well as the grounds for the better connection to the changes and needs of the labour market.

The Macedonian Qualifications Framework represents an instrument that enables the classification, comparison, development and understanding of qualifications. It displays a clear connection between the different types and levels of qualifications, and enables a clear view of the manner of acquiring qualifications with the goal of meeting the needs of the labour market and society and supporting lifelong learning. We see the Macedonian Qualifications Framework as a possibility for reform in the education and training system, and we take it as a reference point for such reform.

The document constitutes the basis for planning and programming the future activities related to the establishment and regulation of the entire system of qualifications in the Republic of Macedonia.

GLOSSARY

Skills
Skills constitute the ability to apply knowledge, perform tasks and solve problems. The skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, creative and intuitive thinking) and practical (manual work and use of methods, instruments, tools and materials).

Dublin descriptors
The Dublin descriptors are general statements on the typical expectations from the achievements and capabilities related to the degrees awarded at the end of a single Bologna cycle.

Lifelong learning
Lifelong learning includes activities of formal, non-formal and informal learning throughout the whole life, aimed at improving knowledge, skills and competences for personal professional and social needs.

European Qualifications Framework
The European Qualifications Framework represents a common reference framework which links the qualifications systems in different countries and is an instrument for the recognition and understanding of qualifications.

Knowledge
Knowledge is a set of acquired and systematised information, that is, a set of theoretical and factual information.

Institution
The term Institution is a facility, organization or another body that is verified/accredited to educate, train and assess participants who acquire the qualifications. The institutions offer formal and non-formal programmes that lead to qualifications and issue public documents for them.

Informal learning
Learning resulting from everyday life activities related to work, family or leisure time. It is not structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support.

Qualifications
Qualification is a formal result of the evaluation and confirmation process that is acquired when the responsible institution certifies that an individual has achieved learning results in accordance with the established standards.

Competencies
Competencies are a set of acquired knowledge and skills, that is, proven capability to use the knowledge and skills in situations of learning or work. Competencies apply to responsibility and independence.

Key competencies
Key competencies are a set of competencies on a certain level, required to satisfy the personal, social and professional needs of the individual in the process of lifelong learning. There are

eight key competencies: communication in one's mother tongue, communication in a foreign language, mathematical, technical and scientific competence, civic awareness, information technology, entrepreneurship, learning how to learn and cultural expression.

Credit systems
A credit system is a system of accumulation and transfer of credits based on the transparency of learning results and learning processes.

Credit
Credit is a quantitative measure for expressing the volume of learning, based on the volume of work that is required for the participants, so that they can achieve the expected results of the learning process at a given level.

Credit transfer
Credit transfer is the process by which the value of the results of learning achieved in a system or institution can be determined in another system or institution.
In Europe there are two main credit systems in use: the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

Macedonian Qualifications Framework
Macedonian Qualifications Framework is an obligatory national standard that regulates the acquisition and use of qualifications in the Republic of Macedonia and an instrument for establishing a system of qualifications acquired in the Republic of Macedonia that provides the bases for transparency, access, transfer, acquisition and quality of qualifications.

Module
Module is an independent unit of learning that is complete or part of an educational programme.

National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
National Qualifications Framework is an instrument for establishing a system of qualifications acquired in a particular country, which provides a basis for gaining qualifications, transfer and quality of qualifications.

Non-formal learning
Non-formal learning signifies organised learning activities in order to improve knowledge, skills and competencies for personal, social or professional needs and most frequently does not lead to the issuing of a public document.

Levels within the framework
The levels present a series of successive steps of learning, expressed in terms of a series of general results, structured according to a set of descriptions.

Descriptions of qualifications
Descriptions of qualifications are measurable indicators of learning results relating to the acquired knowledge, skills and competencies.

Assessment

Assessment is a process of evaluation of knowledge, skills and competencies according to predefined criteria and learning results, which includes written, oral and practical tests, exams, projects and a portfolio.

Quality assurance
A process or set of processes adopted on national and/or institutional level with the goal of ensuring the quality of the education process, education programmes and qualifications.

Learning results
Learning results are statements about what the participant knows, understands and is able to do, as a result of the formal, non-formal or the informal learning process. Learning results are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies (independence and accountability).

Programme (educational/ study)
A programme is a set of educational components, based on learning results, which are recognised for the award of a specific qualification.

Formal learning
Formal learning is an activity provided by an educational institution or training facility, which is conducted in accordance with certain approved programmes, in order to advance knowledge, skills and competencies, wherefore a public document shall be issued.

1. QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

1.1. National Qualifications Framework

The term "National qualifications framework" appears at the end of the 20th century in certain countries (England, Scotland, the Republic of Ireland, Denmark, etc.) based on the contemporary understanding of the term qualification. In these countries qualification becomes a basic measure of achievements, based on learning results, which enables everybody who is within the education system or who acquires knowledge through work with greater independence, to plan their own way of improvement and acquisition of qualifications as In this manner begins the process of favouring the education and training systems, based on the interests and needs of the users of the systems, thus beginning the process of development of national qualification frameworks.

Every country has its own national qualifications framework. The establishment and development of a national qualifications framework depends on specific social-political, economic and cultural circumstances and goals of development of each country. Due to these reasons, there is no universal solution for all countries and systems; however the common denominator for all national qualifications frameworks is their general goal: on a national, i.e. systematic level, to give a clearly arranged presentation of all existing qualifications to enable easy comparison with other qualifications frameworks (national, departmental and the European Qualifications Framework). In addition to the general goal, the national qualifications frameworks have specific goals:

- raising awareness of citizens and employers in relation to the qualifications on the national and international level;
- improvement of the availability of qualifications;
- better opportunity for recognition of qualifications and mobility on the national and international level;
- recognizing alternative ways of acquiring qualifications;
- enabling a better view of advancement through the credit transfer system;
- enabling the rational creation and development of qualifications, etc.

In the recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council on the establishment of a European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, a National qualifications framework is defined as an **instrument for classification of qualifications in accordance with a series of criteria for the individual levels of acquired knowledge and skills, which has the tendency to integrate and coordinate the national subsystems of qualifications and improve the transparency, availability, advancement and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.** Such a definition within itself contains several elements that are important for understanding the essence of National qualifications frameworks:

1. A National qualifications framework presents a unique, complete and systematically arranged structure for systematization, description and development of qualifications.

It contains a set of principles that present the value of qualifications and enable interested users to see whether a qualification gives them the possibility for further education and training or employment, or both.

2. A National Qualifications Framework enables the comparison of qualifications from different areas of education and training.

3. A National qualifications framework contains all the existing qualifications within a single system (country) that are acquired on all levels of education and training in a formal manner (primary, secondary or higher education), as well as in non-formal and informal manners. The formally recognized qualifications are placed in clearly defined relations and in a clear structure.

4. A National qualification framework covers all levels of qualifications that can be acquired through all types of education and training, which enables a close connection between education and training and the labour market. The number of levels that a National qualifications framework has depends on the national system itself, but they have to exist and be arranged in such manner that the process of advancing from one level of qualification to another is transparent, as well as the descriptions of each level of qualification. The descriptions determine the level of complexity of the knowledge, skills and competencies (independence and responsibility).

5. The descriptions of qualifications are based on the results of learning. In this sense, qualifications are a set of certified and documented learning results (knowledge, skills and competencies) in accordance with given standards, regardless of the fact how and where they were acquired.

6. A National Qualifications Framework is a basis for improving the quality, availability and connectivity of qualifications. It provides mobility between levels, different paths for acquiring qualifications and their public recognition in the labour market. It is an instrument for communication between different parts of the education and training system and has a developmental and regulatory role.

7. A National qualifications framework will contribute to the realistic modelling of the educational profile that reflects societal needs and socio-economic stability, as well as the vision for creating new profiles.

1.2. European Qualifications Framework

The EQF[1] is a reference tool for the comparison of the levels of qualifications of various qualification systems, which promotes lifelong learning and equal opportunities in a society based on knowledge, skills and competencies, as well as further integration in the European labour market, while in compliance with different national education and training systems[2].
It makes qualifications clearer and more easily understandable between different countries and systems in Europe, and has two main goals:
- to promote and ensure mobility, and

---

[1]   Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council, for establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning dated 23rd April 2008

[2]   http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc1143_en.htm

- to facilitate lifelong learning.

The EQF consists of eight levels, which cover the types of qualifications acquired in general, vocational, higher and adult education. The levels of national frameworks or systems are compared to the eight levels of the EFQ in order to make an easier connection between the qualifications on national and international levels.

The levels are based on learning results (knowledge, skills and competencies). The attention within the framework has been directed towards the output, i.e. what the participant knows, what he/she understands and what he/she can do after the completion of the learning process. The focus towards the output supports the connection of the needs of the labour market with the required education and training. It also facilitates the recognition of the results from non-formal and informal learning, and the transfer and acceptance of qualifications between countries and systems for education and training.

The EQF describes the levels of qualifications in relation to learning results, but it does not confirm qualifications. This is the task of the national bodies responsible for National qualifications frameworks, which use the descriptions of levels of the European Qualifications Framework as a basis for the preparation of descriptions of levels within their own national qualifications frameworks.

1.3. European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training and European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET and EQARF)

The bases for European cooperation in education arise from the Copenhagen Declaration on Vocational Education and Training and from the Bologna Process[3].

In the Copenhagen Declaration attention is paid to the development of common European frameworks and tools for strengthening the transparency, recognition and quality of competencies and qualifications, and facilitating mobility. The instruments used are the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF).

1.3.1. The European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)[4]

is a system developed by the countries of the EU and the European Commission for the purpose of facilitating the recognition of knowledge, skills and competencies that have been acquired by individuals through learning or during a period of vocational education and training in their home country or abroad. In accordance with the recommendations given by the European Council and European Parliament, the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training is a decentralized and voluntary mechanism whose purpose is to create a European space for lifelong learning, which will facilitate the manner of recognizing, transferring and accumulating the learning of individuals that leads to qualifications.

---

[3]   http//ec.europe.eu/education/higereducation /doc 1290_ek.htm

[4]   Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council for establishment of the European Credit System for vocational education and training dated 18th June 2009.

The ECVET defines qualifications as units of learning results that will be assessed and evaluated. Each qualification needs to be worth a certain number of ECVET credits. The results of learning that were acquired within one year of regular formal vocational education and training will receive 60 ECVET credits. This approach encourages individual paths of learning where the participants can accumulate the desired learning units for a certain qualification in the course of time, in different countries and in different situations of learning.

The European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) in higher education belong to a series of initiatives for the recognition of the results of learning between different countries and different institutions. It is also possible to acquire Europass[5] documents. The Europass introduces a portfolio of documents that are used by individuals to describe their qualifications and competencies, but does not compare the levels of qualification.

1.3.2. The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF)[6]

was developed by the member states and the Commission for the purpose of serving as a referent instrument that helps to achieve the continuous improvement of vocational education and training. The goal of the EQARF is to encourage mutual trust in national vocational education and training systems, within lifelong learning.

The EQARF supports strategies for lifelong learning and integration into the European labour market, and promotes a culture of improving quality on all levels, while simultaneously respecting differences in national education systems and supporting initiatives for policies in vocational education and training.

The EQARF has been designed to help member states promote, follow and improve the quality of vocational education and training. It provides a common basis for the principles of quality, reference criteria and indicators. It helps policy creators and those who apply it get a better picture of how the current quality assurance models function, identify the areas where improvement is needed and make decisions on how they can be improved based on the usual quantitative and qualitative references.

The EQARF is applied on the systemic level and on the level of training providers. It consists of a model and methodology that put emphasis on self-evaluation in combination with external evaluation, a monitoring system and multiple reference indicators for system monitoring and evaluation. The framework puts specific stress on improving and evaluating the "results" of vocational education and training, in the sense of increasing employment, better matching supply and demand, and promoting a better approach to lifelong learning and training, particularly for persons from vulnerable categories.

1.4. Bologna Process

The Bologna Process[7] strives for the creation of a higher education area where the standards of academic diplomas, degrees for higher vocational education and quality assurance standards are more comparable and compatible.

---

[5] Resolution no. 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and the Council on the single framework of the Community for transparency of qualifications and skills (Europass).

[6] Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council for establishment of the European Quality Assurance Framework in vocational education and training dated 18th June 2009.

The framework for the higher education area contains three cycles of higher education qualifications, defined from the aspect of the qualifications of the European Credit Transfer System and the Credit Accumulation System. Within the first cycle there is a shorter cycle.

One academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS credits. An academic year usually consists of between 1500 and 1800 hours of study of various types.

The naming of degrees varies from one country to another.

• Short cycle within the first cycle: 120 ECTS credits - this leads to a qualification that is lower than a degree and corresponds to level five.

• First cycle: 180 – 240 ECTS credits – a degree for undergraduate studies is received and it corresponds to level six.

• Second cycle: 90 – 120 ECTS credits (minimum of 60 in the second cycle) – a Master's degree diploma is received and it corresponds to level seven.

• Third cycle: 180 ECTS credits – a doctorate diploma and it corresponds to level eight.

For all four cycles there are descriptions called "Dublin descriptors"[8]. The short cycle has its own special descriptions – and they are related to the top four levels in the EQF. Countries issue certificates according to the Framework, following the criteria set up by the Bologna working group for the Framework. The Bologna Declaration also recommends the provision of quality in higher education, with the development of comparable criteria and methodologies. The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAR), supported by the European Commission, prepared the "Standards and directions for quality assurance in the European higher education area".

---

[7]   http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION1.pdf

[8]   Http://www.jointquality.nl/

## 2.	MACEDONIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The Macedonian Qualifications Framework is an instrument for the development, classification, recognition and acknowledgement of qualifications acquired through learning results.

The Macedonian Qualifications Framework is based on the traditional education system, current situation in education, training and system of qualifications, development of society, needs of the labour market, needs of individuals, directions of the European Qualifications Framework and international regulations accepted by the Republic of Macedonia.

The purpose of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework is to integrate and coordinate the education subsystems and improve the transparency, approach, advancement and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.

The MQF sets clear criteria for the quality of qualifications that a participant can acquire following the completion of education and training on a certain level. Qualifications that are included in the Macedonian Qualifications Framework apply to general education, formal vocational education and training, non-formal education and training and higher education.

The introduction and implementation of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework achieves the following results:

1. **Qualifications become clearer, with clearly defined goals, which will result in:**
- defined results from learning and evaluation criteria;
- reflecting the needs of the employers and the society;
- achievements through formal and non-formal studying and through evaluation and recognition of previous studying, and
- professional qualifications that are connected with the labour market.

2. **Facilitation of the recognition of learning results and improving mobility on the national and international level, which will result in:**
- a register of qualifications that will be transparent for stakeholders;
- multiple methods of acquiring qualifications – through the recognition of previously acquired knowledge, skills and competencies, and
- multiple paths for advancement and the possibility for horizontal and vertical mobility within the national system.

3. **Possibility for recognition and accreditation of non-formal learning, which will result in:**
- comparability between national qualifications and qualifications acquired abroad;
- clear connection with the European Qualifications Framework and other relevant systems in the EU, and
- students/persons who are studying will have the opportunity to continue their education and training or find employment in other countries.

4. **Equalizing the quality of programmes and service providers, which will result in:**
- transparency and trust in the system;
- focussing education and training on the learning results;
- the implementation of qualifications acquired through various educational and study programmes and non-formal education and training;
- ensuring confidence in national qualifications with quality systems.

2.1. Normative grounds of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework

- Law on Primary Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 103/2008; 33/2010; 116/2010; 156/2010; 18/2011; 42/2011, 51/2011; 6/2012 and 100/2012).
- Law on Secondary Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 44/1995; 24/1996; 34/1996; 35/1997; 82/1999; 29/2002; 40/2003; 42/2003; 67/2004; 55/2005; 113/2005; 35/2006; 30/2007; 49/2007; 81/2008; 92/2008; 33/2010; 116/2010; 156/2010; 18/2011; 42/2011; 51/2011 and 6/2012).
- Law on Vocational Education and Training (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 71/2006; 117/2008; 148/2009 and 17/2011).
- Law on Adult Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 7/2008; 17/2011; 51/2011 and 74/2012).
- Law on Higher Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 35/08, 103/08, 26/09, 83/09, 99/09, 115/10, 17/11, 51/11 and 123/12).
- Law on Open Civil Universities for Lifelong Learning (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 36/2011).
- Law on Education Development Bureau (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 37/2006; 142/2008 and 148/2009).
- Law on State Education Inspectorate (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 52/2005, 81/2008, 148/2009, 57/2010 and 51/2011).
- Law on Recognition of Professional Qualifications (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 175/2010).
- Law on Labour Relations (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 62/2005; 106/2008; 161/2008; 114/2009; 130/2009; 149/2009; 50/2010; 52/2010; 124/2010; 47/2011; 11/2012 and 39/2012).

2.1.1. Institutions competent for education and training are:

- The Education Development Bureau is in charge of primary, secondary, secondary art school and the general education area from secondary vocational education:
- The Centre for vocational education and training is in charge of vocational education and training;
- The Centre for Education of Adults is in charge of the formal and informal education and training for adults;
- The State Testing Centre is in charge of the preparation and implementation of evaluations in formal education;
- The State Education Inspectorate is in charge of the coordination of procedures for ensuring the quality in primary schools, secondary schools and higher education institutions.

The Macedonian Qualifications Framework is not mentioned in any of the current laws on primary, secondary, vocational education and training or the education of adults that were adopted before the preparation of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework, except in the Law on Higher Education, Article 99, since in 2010 the National higher education qualification framework in the Republic of Macedonia was prepared, and the last amendments to the Law on Higher Education were made in 2011. Therefore, there is a need to modify the laws on primary, secondary, vocational education and training and the education of adults that would provide a connection with the Macedonian Qualifications Framework, and the need to adopt a Law on the

National Qualifications Framework that would regulate the Macedonian Qualifications Framework.

2.2. Goals of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework

The Macedonian Qualifications Framework has the following goals:
1. to make qualifications clearer, with a clearly defined goal;
2. to facilitate the recognition of the results of learning;
3. to ensure international recognition and acknowledgement of qualifications;
4. to ensure mobility of the participants on the national and international level;
5. to create a single system for quality management, and
6. to balance the quality of service providers.

2.3. Types of qualifications and documents
The Macedonian Qualifications Framework regulates the following types of qualifications:

- qualifications on the level of education (education level), and
- vocational qualifications.

Qualifications on the level of education are acquired by completing education for publicly adopted education programmes and by achieving the learning results thereof, following an examination prescribed by law. Qualifications provide evidence that the required and prescribed standards have been achieved on a certain education level. Qualifications, according to the range of general and vocational knowledge and competencies, enable personal and professional development, i.e. the possibility to continue one's education or join the labour market (employment). The evidence of an acquired qualification on the level of education is a **certificate, degree and diploma**.

Vocational qualifications are acquired for part of a publicly adopted education programme (modules, courses, etc.) or by completing a special education programme, after completing an examination in accordance with the law. These qualifications represent a formally recognized capability to complete the operations within one or more occupations at a certain level of requirement. Professional qualifications provide proof that smaller groups of results of study or combinations of results of study have been achieved, which do not meet the requirements for the qualifications of an education level (level of education). Primarily, they contain professional competencies from one or more standards of occupations and they directly apply to the labour market, i.e. they enable employment. Vocational qualifications acquired in an informal manner will be evaluated and certified by a professional commission formed by a departmental committee. Professional evaluation means evaluation of the evidence and practical skills and knowledge. The evidence of an acquired professional qualification is a **certificate**.

2.4. Departments of qualifications
Qualifications are grouped according to the department to which they belong. The departments of qualifications contain sub-departments, areas and sub-areas. In this manner the classification of all qualifications is enabled in four groups: department, sub-department, area and sub-area. They are defined by departmental committees.

The system for the classification of qualifications will ensure the transparency of the procedures when determining the qualifications according to the contents of the operation, in

accordance with the needs of the labour market, economy, society and in line with education, as well as transparency when grouping qualifications that have the same or similar contents from the aspect of knowledge and skills, i.e. study results. At the same time, this system will enable the easier assignment of a unique identification code for each classification within the Macedonian Qualifications Framework.

The departments of qualifications in vocational education are:

01	Geology, mining and metallurgy
02	Civil engineering and geodesy
03	Graphic industry
04	Economy, law and trade
05	Electrical engineering
06	Healthcare and social protection
07	Agriculture, fishing and veterinary medicine
08	Personal services
09	Mechanical engineering
10	Traffic, transport and storage
11	Textile, leather and similar products
12	Food service industry and tourism
13	Chemistry and technology
14	Forestry and wood processing
15	Sport and recreation
16	Arts

For higher education qualifications, the international Frascati classification applies.

Each department of qualifications has its own framework within which the qualifications are distributed according to type and level. The framework of the qualification department enables comparison between the types and levels of qualifications in the department. It shows the possibility for mobility and advancement within the department and for acquiring the same qualification in a different manner (e.g. upon the completion of an education programme, following an examination of previously acquired knowledge, skills and competencies, etc.).

The qualification frameworks of the departments are prepared based on an analysis of the conditions in the department, i.e. the area of labour in the labour market, possibility of

acquiring qualifications, tendencies in the development of the industry, international comparisons, etc.). They have a developmental concept and are open for supplementing with new qualifications in accordance with needs and changes in the labour market.

2.5. Scope of qualifications/credits

The scope of qualifications, i.e. their credit value, is determined by the number of credits. A credit represents a measuring unit for evaluation of the work that needs to be performed by the participant in order to achieve the goal. The scope measures the load of the participant by taking into consideration the time required to acquire a single qualification, i.e. to accomplish the goal of studying results. In this sense, for each educational programme, module, teaching subject or other unit of studying a certain number of credits is allocated.

Each credit in primary and secondary education and training, as well as in informal learning, is equivalent to 25 hours of studying, and in higher education 30 hours. This includes lectures, independent studying, practical work, working experience[9] and demonstration of the content learned for the purpose of testing the results from learning.

In the formal education system, one school year or academic year comprises a minimum of 60 credits.

In the Macedonian Credit Transfer System there is one type of credit that applies on all levels and for all types of qualifications, which is equivalent to ECTS or ECVET credits. The credits are transferable, which means that once acquired, credit(s) can be used for acquiring more qualifications on the same level that contain a common unit of learning or module. They are recognized at the time of recording and advancing. If someone achieved credit(s) that constitutes a part of the next qualification (i.e. on a higher level) that the person wishes to acquire, then such credit(s) is recognized. This avoids the need for repeated studying and proving competencies that have already been certified. This is a process that enables the results of studying achieved in one context to be recognized in another context. It is based on the procedures of examination, verifying and recognizing the results of learning.

2.6. Users and benefits of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework

The users who will have benefits from the establishment of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework are:
- Employers and Chambers – to view the types of qualifications that exist in Macedonia and have confidence in the diplomas, credentials and certificates that are issued for the qualifications required for employment.
- Enterprises – to use the qualifications from the Macedonian Qualifications Framework to improve the skills of their employees and/or prepare the qualification training programmes that are included in the framework and would be verified according to certain criteria.
- Employment agency of the RM – to use the qualifications from the Macedonian Qualifications Framework to improve the skills of unemployed persons, through the creation of active programmes/measures improving preparation for employment, for the purpose of increasing their competitiveness in the labour market and more quickly finding employment.

---

[9] Working experience – refers to informal education (education for adults)

- Institutions that offer education and training, and conduct evaluations which results in qualifications from the Macedonian Qualifications Framework – to work in accordance with the national qualification standards and get support for the improvement of their experience and work.

The institutions that offer formal and non-formal education and training, study programmes and courses that lead to qualifications from the Macedonian Qualifications Framework are: primary and secondary schools, faculties, institutes, establishments and institutions for the education of adults, open civil universities for lifelong learning, accredited providers of trainings and services, centres for formal and informal education and training (including training centres within companies), NGOs, chambers, employment agencies and licensed trainers.

- Individuals – to view the relation between the type and level of a qualification;
- Persons who study – to have access to the relevant education and training throughout their lives, so that they can fulfil their personal, social and economic goals;
- Holders of qualifications – qualifications from the Macedonian Qualifications Framework will be recognized on national level and to constitute a solid basis for international recognition;
- The creators of education policies – to get data and information in formats that are common for all spheres of education and training;
- The economy and society - the qualifications in the Macedonian Qualifications Framework will be harmonized with the socio-economic and cultural needs of the country, and be part of the system in correlation with the development of the activities of the European Qualifications Framework.

2.7. Scope and structure of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework

The qualifications that are included in the Macedonian Qualifications Framework apply to all levels of education and training, regardless if they were acquired through formal or non-formal learning. The Macedonian Qualifications Framework shall also include the qualifications acquired before the introduction of the framework.

When preparing the Macedonian Qualifications Framework, current qualifications for higher education, general education, formal education, vocational education and training, and the basic informal trainings for education of adults were used.

In the Macedonian Qualifications Framework, the qualifications are comprised of eight levels, which are in correlation with the eight levels of the European Qualifications Framework and with the cycles of the Bologna Process in higher education. In this manner, the qualifications of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework can be more easily compared to international qualifications.

Three of these levels contain sub-levels (a total of six sub-levels) for the purpose of harmonizing with the current education and training system in the country. This structure is based on the current qualifications in Macedonia.

The top four levels of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework are on the same level as the three Bologna cycles and the Bologna short cycle, i.e. vocational studies from the shortest cycle within the first cycle are on level five, sub-level A, vocational and university studies are on level six, master studies are on level seven, and doctorate studies are on level eight.

The second sub-level, from level five, applies to post-secondary education that includes the specialist and craftsman exam.

The qualifications that enable direct access to higher education are on level four. The main qualification in this category is the state graduation and acquisition of a diploma.

Other qualifications from vocational education and training are on level three (vocational education for professions lasting three years) and on level two (vocational training lasting one or two years), while level one is primary education.

Image 1
Proposed Macedonian Qualifications Framework that shows the proposed levels of qualifications in the four areas and their correlation with the EQF

MQF Level	Sub-Level	General education	Formal vocational education and training	Informal education and training	Higher education	EQF level
VIII					III Study cycle **Doctorate studies**	8
VII	VII A				II Study cycle **Master of Science academic studies** (from 60 to 120 credits)	7
	VII B				II Study cycle **Specialist studies** (60 – 120 credits)	
VI	VI A				I Study cycle **University studies** (240 credits) **Vocational studies** (240 credits)	6
	VI B				I Study cycle **University studies** (180 credits) **Vocational studies** (180 credits)	
V	V A				**Vocational studies** (from 60 to 120 credits) **Short cycles** within the first	5

22

				cycle	
V B		Post-secondary school education (specialist education and craftsman exam) (from 60 to 120 credits)	Post-secondary school education (specialist education and craftsman exam)	**Post-secondary school education**	
IV	Secondary education (240 credits)	Four-year technical Education (240 credits)	Informal education for acquiring a qualification or part of a qualification (level of complexity 4, in accordance with the standards of the profession)	**Secondary education**	**4**
III		Vocational education for professions (lasting three years) (180 credits)	Informal education for acquiring a qualification or part of a qualification (level of complexity 3, in accordance with the standards of the profession)	**Secondary education**	**3**
II		Vocational education lasting up to two years (from 60 to 120 credits)	Informal education for acquiring a qualification or part of a qualification (level of complexity 1 and 2, in accordance with the standards of the profession)	**Vocational training**	**2**
I	Primary education		Functional literacy and numeric skills	**Primary education**	**1**

> Level I applies to completed primary education and the participants receive a certificate, while in informal education and training it applies to knowledge and skills for functional literacy and numeric skills and the attendants receive a certificate.
> Level II applies to vocational education lasting up to two years and the participants receive the credentials of vocational education, while in informal education and training it applies to trainings to acquire qualifications or part of qualifications (level of complexity 1 and 2 in line with the standards of the profession) and the participants receive a certificate.

- Level III applies to vocational education for professions lasting three years and the participants receive a diploma, while in informal education and training it applies to trainings to acquire qualifications or part of qualifications (level of complexity 3 in line with the standards of the profession) and the participants receive a certificate.
  Students with special educational needs for level III are educated for 4 years and they receive a diploma.
- Level IV applies to secondary education, technical education and arts education lasting four years, and the participants receive a diploma, while in informal education and training it applies to trainings to acquire qualifications or part of qualifications (level of complexity 4 in line with the standards of the profession) and the participants receive a certificate.
  Students with special educational needs for level IV are educated for 5 years and they receive a diploma.
- Level V, sub-level VB applies to post-secondary school education (specialist education and craftsman exam) and the participants receive a diploma for specialist education and a diploma for craftsman exam.
- Level V, sub-level VA applies to short cycles in higher education and the participants receive a diploma.
- Level VI, sub-level VIB applies to three-year undergraduate studies and the participants receive a diploma.Level VI, sub-level VIA applies to four-year graduate studies and the participants receive a diploma. Level VII, sub-level VIIA applies to specialist studies and the participants receive a diploma.Level VII, sub-level VIIB applies to master studies and the participants receive a diploma.
- Level VIII applies to doctorate studies and the participants receive a diploma.

Image 2
Qualifications in the Macedonian Qualifications Framework and documents for evaluated qualifications

MQF Level	Sub-Level	General education	Formal vocational education and training	Informal education and training	Higher education	EQF level
VIII					Bologna cycle 3 **Diploma for scientific degree – doctor of science**	8
VII	VII A				Bologna cycle 2 **Diploma for master of science**	7
VII	VII B				Bologna cycle 2 **Specialist Diploma**	7
VI	VI A				Bologna cycle 1 University studies Vocational studies **Diploma** (four years)	6
VI	VI B				Bologna cycle 1 **Diploma**	

					(three years)	
V	VA				Bologna short cycle **Credentials**	5
	VB		**Diploma for specialist education** **Diploma for craftsman exam**	**Certificate**	**Post-secondary school education**	
IV		State graduation and school graduation/ **Diploma**	State graduation and school graduation (technical education) **Diploma**	**Certificate**	**Secondary education**	4
III			**Diploma for completed exam** (vocational education for professions)	**Certificate**	**Secondary education**	3
II			**Credentials for vocational training**	**Certificate** (basic working qualifications)	**Vocational training**	2
I		**Credentials**		**Certificate of functional literacy and numeric skills**	**Primary education**	1

The Macedonian Qualifications Framework enables organizations and individuals to connect the qualifications, taking into consideration the levels, but not the manners through which the qualifications were achieved.

Image 3
Comparison of higher education levels before and after the Decree[10]

Level in the National Framework of Higher Education Qualifications	VIII	VII		VI		V	
		VIIA	VIIB	VIA	VIB	VA	VB
Former levels	VIII	VII/2		VII/1		VI	

2.8. Description of the levels of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework

The levels of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework are defined by descriptions that stipulate the learning results specific for that level. The descriptions are expressions for levels that enable the comparison of learning results.

The descriptions of levels in the Macedonian Qualifications Framework are in correlation with the description of levels in the EQF, and include the terms from the descriptions given in the EQF. They contain the learning results from each level with reference to knowledge, skills and competencies (or independence and accountability in the more narrow sense).

Image 4
National Qualifications Framework – levels and descriptions

Lev el	Knowledge and understanding	Skills	Competencies
8	Demonstrates a systematic understanding of the field of research and perfect knowledge of research methods and skills within this field in accordance with the highest international standards; Possesses knowledge gained with their own research or work, thus significantly contributing to the professional and scientific field of research, and also in the related fields.	Displays the ability to interpret, design, apply and adapt the essential subject of the research with scientific integrity; Uses own knowledge as a basis for original ideas and researches that exceed the current boundaries of knowledge, developing new knowledge, valued on the level of national and international peer-reviewed publications; Ability for critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas, necessary for solving complex problems in the field of research; Ability for independent initiation and participation in national and international research networks and events with scientific integrity; Ability for independent initiation of research and development projects, through which new knowledge will be generated as well as skills for development in the field of research; Expected to be capable of promoting themselves in academic and professional frameworks and in the technological, social or cultural development in a knowledge-based society; Capable of communicating with their colleagues, the wider academic community and society as a whole within their field of expertise;	Takes maximum responsibility for the results of their own work, but also for the work of the others in the group. Takes responsibility for managing complex processes, while simultaneously ensuring the professional development of themselves and the group as a whole;
7	Displays knowledge and understanding of the scientific field of study (or learning) that is built upon the first cycle, by applying methodologies appropriate for resolving complex problems, both in a systematic and creative manner, which provides the basis	Capable of critical, independent and creative problem-solving with certain originality in new or unknown environments and in multi-disciplinary contexts, connected with the field of study; Capability to synthesize and	Displays significant responsibility for own and mutual results, for leading and initiating activities Capability for solid evaluation even of incomplete and limited information, which includes the

	or the possibility for originality in the development and/or application of autonomous ideas in the context of the research; Displays a high level of professional competence in one or more specific scientific fields; Possesses knowledge from one or more subject areas which, in the given scientific fields are based on renowned scientific researches in that scientific field, as well as the capability to connect wider and deeper knowledge in related professions or fields of science.	integrate the knowledge and to handle complex issues, in a systematic and creative manner; Capability to evaluate and select scientific theories, methodologies, tools and general skills from the subject areas, and to put forward new analyses and solutions on a scientific basis. Capability to recognize the personal need for further knowledge and capability for independent and autonomous actions when acquiring new knowledge and skills in social framework; Capability to exchange conclusions and proposals by arguing and rationally substantiating thereof, both with experts and non-experts clearly and unambiguously;	personal, social and ethical responsibilities in the application of the acquired knowledge and evaluation thereof; Capable of taking responsibility for further professional development and education, both for themselves and for the group with which they cooperate.
6	Displays knowledge and understanding in the scientific field of study that is built upon previous education and training, including the domain of theoretical, practical, conceptual, comparative and critical perspectives in the scientific field according to the relevant methodology; Understanding of a certain area and knowledge of current issues in relation to scientific researches and new sources of knowledge; Displays knowledge and understanding of different theories and methodologies necessary for the wider area of research.	Is able to apply knowledge and understanding in a manner that reflects a professional approach to the work or profession; Displays the ability to identify, analyse and solve problems; Capability to find and support arguments within the profession or the field of study; Capability to collect, analyse, evaluate and present information, ideas and concepts from the relevant data; Capability to assess theoretical and practical issues, provide explanations for the reasons and select an appropriate solution. Takes initiative to identify the problems for acquiring further knowledge and study with a high degree of independence. Capability to communicate and discuss information, ideas, problems and solutions, when the decision criteria and the scope of the task have been clearly defined, both with	Takes responsibility for own results and divided responsibility for collective results; Capability for independent participation, with a professional approach, in specific scientific and interdisciplinary discussions. Makes the relevant judgement by taking into consideration the personal, social, scientific and ethical aspects;

		experts and the non-expert public;	
5	Displays knowledge and understanding in the field of study or work that is built upon general secondary education supported with professional literature; Possesses specialist theoretical and professional knowledge and understanding of individual basic theories from the narrow scientific and expertise area; Possesses limited knowledge of contemporary developments in the area of work or study that provides support in the field of work or the industry, potential for personal development and basis for further studies to complete the first cycle.	Applies skills that are based on understanding of theoretical principles and their application in solving problems and in the execution of complex and specific tasks in the field of work and study, with the selection and use of relevant data, methods, procedures, techniques, instruments, devices, tools and materials; Possesses the skills to study in order to become able to take over further researches with a certain degree of independence; Possesses the ability to communicate and discuss with target groups from the narrow profession or area of study, with colleagues, superiors and clients.	Has a high degree of personal and business responsibility and ability to evaluate own work and the work of the group based on criteria in the field of work; Capability to transfer knowledge to others, organize, communicate and control own work and the work of others. Takes responsibility for own results, but also shares responsibility for the activities, results and work of others in the group.
4	Knows the concepts, principles and processes from the study subjects and areas; Possesses systematic theoretical and professional knowledge within the determined area of work or study that includes analysing and connecting facts and theoretical principles when performing the work, while at the same time enabling further studying.	Possesses various cognitive, practical and creative skills, based on theoretical knowledge and principles, necessary for studying, working and solving problems in changeable conditions in a certain field of work or study; Trained to collect, analyse, select and use relevant information from various sources, tools, methodologies, techniques and materials in the area of study; Trained to perform complex procedures and use methods, instruments, tools, plants and materials in the operation; Communicates and cooperates with the group in changeable conditions.	Independently plans, organizes and runs their own work and conducts supervision of the mutual work; Independently performs complex tasks and solves problems, adjusting their behaviour, in accordance with the provided instructions, in changeable conditions; Responsible for own work and the work of the group, for the purpose of evaluating the results of the work and improving the quality, in accordance with predefined standards and criteria.
3	Possesses theoretical and systematic adopted professional knowledge, facts, principles, processes and general concepts for a certain area of work or study, while at the same time enable further studying.	Possesses practical and creative skills that enable the solving of known (predictable) and less known (unpredictable) situations; Performs work and tasks of medium complexity, less standardized and relatively transparent; Uses various devices, tools, equipment and materials in the	Plans, prepares, organizes and values their own work, based on predetermined authorizations, within the scope of their work; Performs work that is not always defined in advance, with a certain degree of independence and responsibility.

		process of production and in the services; Communicates and cooperates with the group.	
2	Possesses basic theoretical and professional knowledge, necessary for knowledge of the work, which can be applied when performing simple working tasks, while at the same time enabling further studying.	Possesses practical and creative skills for solving simple or less complex and predefined work in known conditions and predictable situations. Uses simple methods, tools, instruments, devices and materials based on detailed instructions; Communicates and cooperates with certain persons.	Works independently under known conditions and under intermittent supervision and with limited responsibility for performing working tasks; Establishes simple communication and cooperation with some employees in known situations.
1	Possesses basic knowledge of the function of certain objects and occurrences with the possibility to apply the knowledge in practice and other disciplines, while at the same time enabling further studying	Possesses basic skills for performing simple operations; Uses simple methods, tools and instruments with instructions and under supervision; Possesses general rules of communication.	Performs simple tasks under direct supervision; Takes responsibility for performing working tasks.

3. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality Assurance applies to the quality of qualifications in the Macedonian Qualifications Framework, the processes that lead to acquiring qualifications and the public documents that are awarded to the participants who have acquired the qualification. Veracity and transparency are achieved through the introduction of quality processes by which qualifications are verified and the institutions are verified/accredited[11].

The quality assurance system includes the following:
1. verification of qualifications;
2. verification and re-verification of teaching/study programmes and special programmes for adult education;
3. defining the competencies of the involved bodies and institutions;
4. verification/accreditation of institutions that provide educational/study programmes, i.e. special programmes for the education of adults;
5. evaluation of pupils/students/participants in the programmes;
6. evaluation of pedagogical and educational, i.e. higher education, work;
7. issuing of public documents (degrees, credentials, certificates and diplomas);
8. procedures and standards for the recognition and certification of prior learning;

---

[11] The term accreditation is used in higher education

9. evaluation of programmes and institutions, self-evaluation, external evaluation or external auditing and publication of the results;
10. procedures for the verification12/recognition and equivalency of public documents acquired abroad,
11. and international participation, cooperation and networking in European/worldwide networks for the recognition of qualifications and assurance of quality.

The operational role in quality assurance of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework is performed by:
- The ministry competent for issues in the areas of education and science;
- Centre for Vocational Education and Training;
- Centre for the Education of Adults;
- Higher Education Accreditation Board;
- Education Development Bureau;
- State Testing Centre;
- State Education Inspectorate;
- Institutions that operate as providers of education and training.

3.1. Verification[13] of the qualifications

The verification of qualifications is a process of quality assurance that is applied to new, revised or modified and supplemented qualifications, with the purpose of determining that they have clear and relevant targets and that they are designed in a manner that meets the said targets.

All qualifications to be entered into the Macedonian Qualifications Framework must be verified. The minister competent for issues in the areas of education and science shall verify the qualification at the proposal of the National Board for the Macedonian Qualifications Framework, based on a report submitted by the departmental committee. Higher education qualifications are entered into the register based on the accreditation and evaluation of the study programme, in accordance with the law that regulates this issue.

The verification determines the fulfilment of the verification criteria, the need for a certain qualification and the achievement of the goal for which it was designed.
The verification of qualifications is important because it provides the following:
- identification of the need for qualifications supported by the users;
- preparation of the qualification based on the relevant standards;
- confirmed and verified evaluation, and
- meeting other requirements for entering into the Macedonian Qualifications Framework.
The verification leads to recognition of qualifications for five years. Upon the expiry of this period, they can be verified again if they meet all the requirements for entering into the

---

[12] The term verification is used for the recognition of qualifications in accordance with the current laws on primary and secondary education.

[13] The term verification applies to approval.

Macedonian Qualifications Framework. External evaluation will be performed by the relevant departmental committees.

Criteria for the verification of qualifications are the following:

1. There is a societal and economic need for the qualification;
2. The qualification has been designed to meet the societal and economic need;
3. The qualification includes the goals, competencies, learning results and evaluation criteria;
4. The qualification meets the structural requirements of the body in charge of the verification;
5. The qualification is on the appropriate level, and has an appropriate credit value and code;
6. The qualification offers horizontal and vertical movement to further learning and the possibility for re-qualification and additional qualification, and
7. For the implementation of the qualification it is necessary to fulfil the norms for personnel, space, equipment, materials, and such needed for the evaluation of the participants in accordance with the learning results.

3.1.1. The measurements and procedures for referencing the levels in the Macedonian Qualifications Framework with those in the European Qualifications Framework.

The Republic of Macedonia follows a methodology for referencing the levels of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework that is in accordance with the methodology established by the European Qualifications Framework:

1. The responsibilities and legal competencies of all significant national bodies included in the referencing procedure, including the national coordination point, have been clearly determined and published by the competent bodies;
2. There is a clear and provable connection between the qualification levels in the Macedonian Qualifications Framework (or the national system of qualifications) and the description of levels in the EQF;
3. The Macedonian Qualifications Framework (or the national system of qualifications) and its qualifications are based on the principles and goals of the learning results and connected with the established order for certifying non-formal and informal learning and with the credit system where available.
4. The procedure for inclusion of qualifications in the Macedonian Qualifications Framework (MQF) and for describing the placement of qualifications in the national system of qualifications is transparent;
5. The national quality assurance system for education and training refers to the Macedonian Qualifications Framework (or the national system of qualifications) and is consistent with the relevant European principles and instructions (as stated in annex 3 to the Recommendation);
6. The referencing procedure needs to include the stated consent of the competent authorities for quality assurance;
7. The referencing procedure needs to include international experts;
8. The competent national bodies need to officially publish the referencing of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework (or the national system of qualifications) with the EQF. The competent authority needs to prepare a report for self-referencing that would confirm the reference and the evidence that proves it, include the national coordination point and take each of the criteria into consideration individually;
9. The official platform of the EQF maintains a public list of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the procedure for referencing, and where the filled-in reports can also be found; and
10. In accordance with the referencing procedure and the instructions in the schedule included in the recommendations, all new certificates of qualification, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference

from the national system of qualifications to the appropriate level in the Macedonian Qualifications Framework.

The national report for the Macedonian Qualifications Framework will be prepared by a special body, which will be defined by the minister competent for issues in the areas of education and science.

3.2.   Verification/accreditation of institutions

The verification of institutions is a formal process, which confirms that the institutions meet the prescribed criteria for quality necessary for the awarding of a certain qualification from the Macedonian Qualifications Framework and/or for the evaluation of individuals who are seeking to acquire such qualifications.

Verification of the institution means that the quality of the grading and certification awarded by the institution satisfies certain accepted and recognized standards.

The criteria for the verification/accreditation of institutions are the following:
1. appropriate education and study programmes and other programmes for education and training;
2. appropriate norm for the faculty and/or trainers;
3. required spatial, material and technical conditions, and
4. financial sustainability for the completion of the entire process of acquiring qualifications.

The verification of institutions that offer formal and informal education and training is performed by the ministry competent for issues in the areas of education and science. Institutions that have not been verified cannot offer qualifications included in the Framework. The verification/accreditation of an institution needs to be renewed every five years, after the implementation of the processes of self-evaluation and external evaluation. Confirmation of study results (knowledge, skills and competencies) in informal education and training is conducted by a committee comprised of one representative from the provider of education and training, employers and institutions from the field of education, and is formed by the president of the departmental committee.

Supervision of the operation of the institutions that carry out the education and training is performed by the State Education Inspectorate in accordance with the laws that regulate the relevant area.

3.3.   Recognition and certification of prior learning

The recognition and certification of prior learning is a process closely related to the understanding of qualifications, and serves the function of ensuring quality in education.

The Macedonian Qualifications Framework will enable the recognition of results from prior learning acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning. The goal of recognizing prior learning is to enable individuals to acquire nationally recognized qualifications that have public validity and the same value as those acquired within formal education, if they are based on the same professional standards. The procedure for the recognition of prior learning will enable individuals to receive a certificate of qualification for competencies without entering the system of vocational education and training. In this manner, a comprehensive and unique system of qualifications will be created (acquired in formal, non-formal and informal

education), the needs of young people, adults and the labour market will be satisfied, and the principles of lifelong learning will be supported.

The qualifications that will be acquired based on parts of educational programmes (modules), special programmes for education and training, and direct testing of previous studies (knowledge, skills and competencies), will be confirmed with a certificate and will enable inclusion in the labour market. These qualifications will be acquired based on testing at institutions competent for external testing. The standard of testing will be defined based on a special catalogue of standards of knowledge and skills (test catalogue) for checking the qualifications through certification. The test catalogues for testing or verifying national qualifications through certification will be prepared based on the standards of the profession/ standards of testing. The test catalogues will contain the entry conditions for acquiring qualifications, methods of testing, criteria for grading and the material conditions required for performance of the testing. The test catalogues will be prepared by the Centre for Vocational Education and Training, the Centre for Adult Education and the Education Development Bureau. Qualification is proved with a certificate that enables access to the labour market and education programmes. Based on the certification, the professional capabilities (qualifications) will be formally and officially recognized, i.e. the successful achievement of the defined study results will be recognized. Through the certification process, candidates will finish prescribed programmes and pass the phase of final evaluation of achievements.

- In the development and establishment of the system for the recognition and certification of prior learning, the competent authorities should be guided by the following programme commitments: certificates are acquired based on accredited programmes/modules in accredited institutions; knowledge, skills and competencies acquired outside of the education and training system can be recognized and certified; certificates are awarded by accredited institutions based on accredited programmes/modules;
- the certification of qualifications is achieved based on an objective and consistent procedure of final evaluation; evaluation is based on professional standards, i.e. competencies turned into evaluation criteria; certificates are issued for an education programme, set of modules, combination of modules or modular units or for each module or modular unit individually; certificates are a reflection of the requirements of the labour market.

The determination of the type of certificate needs to correspond with the demands of the labour market, i.e. the standards of the profession/standards of qualifications.

The certification and certificate system will enable the following:
1. recognition of learning results on the national level in secondary vocational education and training;
2. mobility of individuals in the labour market, education system and their employment;
3. the connection and integration of the interests of institutions for education and training, employers, i.e. enterprises and their associations, and individuals;
4. flexibility in the organization of education and employment;
5. the motivation of individuals to advance within separate and higher levels of education, by improving their competencies and achievements, etc.

4. AUTHORITIES AND BODIES IN CHARGE OF DEVELOPMENT, REVISION, ADOPTION, RECOGNITION AND CLASSIFICATION OF THE QUALIFICATIONS IN THE MQF

4.1. Identification of needs for new qualifications and review of current qualifications

The identification of needs for new qualifications and review of current qualifications is performed by **Departmental qualification committees**.

Competencies of Departmental qualification committees:

- to analyse the condition and tendencies of the labour market;
- to propose qualifications for the department, i.e. sub-department of qualifications from level I to level VIII;
- to analyse the current qualifications;
- to evaluate the current qualifications;
  to identify (define) the needs for all types of qualifications in line with the needs of the labour market and society as a whole;
- to review proposals for the introduction of new qualifications;
- to propose priorities in the development of new qualifications and supplementation of current qualifications;
- to prepare basic profiles of qualifications;
- to give their opinion on the harmonisation of the standards of professions/ standards of qualifications with the test programmes;
- to promote the qualification departments and the possibilities for employment in them, and such.

Departmental committees are comprised of representatives from:

- The relevant ministry
- The ministry competent for issues in the areas of education and science;
- Association of employers from the relevant department (at the proposal of chambers);
- Representative union of the employees from the relevant department; universities;
- Centre for Vocational Education and Training;
- Centre for Education of Adults;
- Education Development Bureau, and
- The bodies competent for regulated professions (bar association, medical association, chamber of engineers, etc).

Departmental committees are formed by the National Board for the Macedonian Qualifications Framework.

4.2. Development of qualifications
The competent bodies for the development of qualifications from level I to level V-B are:

- Centre for Vocational Education and Training;
- Centre for Education of Adults;
- Education Development Bureau;

Higher education institutions are competent for the development of qualifications from level V-A to level VIII.

4.3. Approval of qualifications

The approval of qualifications is granted by the National Board for the Macedonian Qualifications Framework. (Alternative: National Qualifications Agency).

The competencies of the National Board for the Macedonian Qualifications Framework (Alternative: National Qualifications Agency) are:

- to evaluate policies on education, employment, lifelong professional directions and regional development with respect to the development of human potential;
- to give recommendations on improvements to be made for connecting education with the needs of the labour market;
- to adopt decisions for the distribution of the qualifications in the Macedonian Qualifications Framework;
- to propose the development and improvement of qualifications to the competent institutions;
- to adopt decisions for the harmonization of current qualifications with the Macedonian Qualifications Framework;
- to monitor the development of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework as a whole;
- to develop and adopt methodological documents;
- to determine the relevant criteria for the operation of bodies, authorities and committees and give directions for their operation;
- to decide on the definition of the sub-departments, areas and sub-areas within the qualification departments;
- to review and adopt reports submitted by departmental qualification committees;
- to submit reports on its operation to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

The National Board for the Macedonian Qualifications Framework is comprised of representatives from:

- The ministry competent for issues in the areas of education and science;
- The ministry competent for issues in the areas of labour and social policy;
- Professional chambers;
- Representative associations of employers;
- Universities (at the proposal of the Inter-university conference);
- Centre for Vocational Education and Training;
- Centre for the Education of Adults;
- Education Development Bureau;
- Representative union for education, science and culture;
- National Agency for education programmes and mobility.

The National Board for the Macedonian Qualifications Framework is appointed by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

4.4. Register for qualifications

Approved qualifications are entered into the Register of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework. The procedure for introduction and arrangement of the qualifications in the Register

of qualifications is regulated with a rulebook. Each approved qualification is assigned a code according to the type, level, scope, qualification department and the institution where the qualification was acquired. The register consists of four sub-registers:

1. Sub-register of general education qualifications;
2. Sub-register of vocational qualifications;
3. Sub-register of higher education qualifications;
4. Sub-register for qualifications acquired from informal education;

The Sub-register of vocational qualifications up to level VB is run by the Centre for Vocational Education and Training, the qualifications in informal education are run by the Centre for the Education of Adults, and the Sub-register of higher education qualifications is run by the Higher Education Department within the Ministry competent for issues in the areas of education and science.

5. Used documents:

1. National programme for development of education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005 – 2015, with accompanying programme documents, Skopje 2005.
2. Draft Strategy for vocational education and training in the context of lifelong learning 2013-2020, Skopje 2013.
3. Strategy for education of adults 2010-2015, Skopje 2010.
4. Concept for nine-year primary training and education, Skopje, February 2008.
5. Concept for vocational education lasting up to two years, Skopje 2010.
6. Concept for vocational education for professions, Skopje, April 2010.
7. Concept for nine-year primary training and education, Skopje, February 2011.
8. Concept for graduation and final exam in secondary education lasting four years in the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje 2009.
9. International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 1997 (there is an ongoing revision ISCED 2011)
10. National classification of professions (NCP 2008)
11. National framework for higher education qualifications – guide, Elizabeta Bahtovska, Gordana Janeva, Ratka Neskovska, Bitola 2011.
12. National qualifications framework, Bojan Komnenik, Predrag Lazetik, Martina Vukasovik, Belgrade 2010.
13. Croation Qualifications Framework, group of authors, Zagreb, 2009.
14. Convention on the Recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European region, Lisbon, 11.IV.1997
15. Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region, United Nations Educational , Scientific and Cultural Organization Paris, 21 December 1979
16. ETF (2012): Skills Needs Forecast and Qualifications System, March, 2012
17. COM (2008) 868, 16.12.2008. Council conclusions of 9.3.2009 and 7.6.2010 New Skills for New Jobs: Action Now Expert Group Report, Feb. 2010