



Referencing Report of the
Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
and the
National Qualifications Framework of Bahrain (NQF)

June 2018

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1. Referencing Principles

Principle 1:

The roles and responsibilities of the relevant bodies and authorities are clear and transparent.

Principle 2:

Comparison of the NQF and the SCQF demonstrates matching between the levels of the two frameworks

Principle 3:

The NQF and the SCQF are based on learning outcomes and, where these exist, credit systems and the recognition of credit.

Principle 4:

The policies and processes for the inclusion of qualifications on the NQF and the SCQF are clear and transparent.

Principle 5:

Both qualifications frameworks are underpinned by quality assurance and are consistent with international quality assurance principles.

2. Preface and Foreword

Preface

The SCQF Partnership (SCQFP) started discussions with colleagues in Bahrain back in 2010 when work was at a very early stage of developing a National Qualifications Framework for Bahrain. In November 2010 a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the *Bahrain Qualifications Framework Project Steering Committee* was signed. That MoU included the fact that the SCQF Partnership would provide advice and comment to the BQF Steering Committee on aspects of framework development and governance and provide final comment and opinion on the way forward for the Bahrain NQF. This was the start of eight years of close collaboration where in addition to regular contact and discussion on general aspects of Framework development we have also focussed on key areas of Framework Development.

Then in 2015 we updated and signed a new MoU between the SCQFP and the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA). As part of that MoU we agreed to consider the benefits of formally referencing our two Frameworks. So in autumn 2017 the SCQF Partnership and the Bahrain Education & Training Quality Authority agreed to undertake this work to support the mobility and recognition of both students and employees.

SCQFP and BQA

2018

Foreword

The goal of all exercises that reference one qualifications framework (QF) to another is enhanced trust for the users of qualifications who may be internationally mobile or those that use qualifications for international recruitment. In a referencing process, trust comes from a clear and authoritative explanation of how qualifications levels in one jurisdiction relate to those in another jurisdiction.

Mutual recognition has to be more than referencing. However the referencing of the QF level in one region to another provides a starting point for a process of recognition which an organisation in one region can use to give formal value to the status of a qualification coming from another region. This referencing exercise between Kingdom of Bahrain and Scotland provides such a starting point.

The process of relating the two frameworks in this report is based on a robust, tried and tested approach. The principles are based on the referencing criteria for the European QF and on the criteria and processes that are used in self-certification of higher education frameworks to the Bologna cycles. Scotland has experience of referencing their Framework to the EQF and also to another regional Framework and has used this experience to agree a process with Bahrain.

The linking of the levels in the two frameworks has involved a technical approach that has taken account of, for example, the words in the level descriptors and the meanings of the learning outcomes in each framework. In addition sampling of qualifications in both Frameworks was undertaken to verify this from both perspectives. This work was carried out by an independent expert Dr Mike Coles, to provide some externality to this process. The referencing process is also based on contextual information in Bahrain and Scotland - such as the extent of engagement of stakeholder groups and the learning arrangements for achieving the qualifications in levels. Furthermore the report takes account of the quality assurance arrangements that qualifications in Bahrain and Scotland are expected to meet.

The report has been shared with stakeholders in both countries to ensure the process is robust and the outcome is validated. There is now a greater awareness of the need for qualifications systems to have high international credibility, as governments accept that qualifications play a part in facilitating competitiveness and economic growth. At the same time international companies and international organisations, including owners of international qualifications, are increasingly asking for transparency of national systems so that transnational business can be facilitated through the recruitment of employees with the requisite qualifications. We see this report as part of this wider picture which will add to the international comparability of qualifications and systems.

3. Acronyms & Abbreviations

ANQAHE	Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
AUQA	Australian Quality Assurance Agency
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority of Bahrain
BTI	Bahrain Training Institute
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
CATS	Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
CLD	Community Learning and Development
CSB	Civil Service Bureau (Bahrain)
DAC	Directorate of Academic Cooperation and Coordination (Bahrain)
DFO	Directorate of National Framework Operations (Bahrain)
DGS	Directorate of Government Schools Reviews (Bahrain)
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (Bahrain)
DNE	Directorate of National Examinations (Bahrain)
DPS	Directorate of Private Schools and Kindergarten Reviews (Bahrain)
DVR	Directorate of Vocational Reviews (Bahrain)
EQF	European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCI	Global Competitiveness Index
GDQ	General Directorate of National Qualifications Framework (Bahrain)
GDR	General Directorate of Education and Training Institutes Reviews (Bahrain)
HEC	Higher Education Council (Bahrain)
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HNC	Higher National Certificate (Scotland)
HND	Higher National Diploma (Scotland)
IL	Institutional Listing
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IQA	Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World
LO	Learning Outcomes
MLSD	Ministry of Labour and Social Development (Bahrain)
MoE	Ministry of Education (Bahrain)
MQA	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
NAC	NQF Advisory Committee
NPA	National Progression Awards
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority Ireland
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment

PR	Periodic Review
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK)
QAA Scotland	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (Scotland)
QF	Qualifications Framework
QP	Qualification Placement
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SCET	Supreme Council for the Development of Education and Training
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SCQFP	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SSPU	Self-financed Sub-degree Programme Unit
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WEF	World Economic Forum

4. Executive Summary

The referencing activity within this report is based on 5 principles which are detailed on page 3. These principles are based on the referencing criteria for the EQF and on the criteria and processes that are used in self-certification of higher education frameworks to the Bologna cycles. Both Bahrain and Scotland have agreed that this would be a useful basis for referencing.

Summary Outcome of Referencing Activity

In carrying out the analysis a best fit approach has been used to find the most appropriate match between levels. This means the descriptors above and below the level descriptor which seems to be a good fit have also been analysed. This is reported in the final column in the table included in Annex 1 (page 57).

When considering the match between descriptors at specific levels, it is useful as part of a best fit process, to highlight significant differences in descriptors as well as significant similarities. These points are also made in the last column of the same table in Annex 1 (page 57).

Referencing summary between Bahrain NQF and SCQF Levels

Bahrain National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
10	12
9	11
9 (with a significant match to 8)	10
8	9
7	8
6	7
5	6
4 (with some match to level 5)	5
3	4
2	3
1 (with some match to level 2)	2
No match	1

There is a correspondence between the levels of the NQF and the SCQF for all levels in the frameworks except for SCQF level 1 which finds no match with the Bahrain NQF. The SCQF levels sometimes match more than one level in the Bahrain framework, this may be a consequence of the fact that the SCQF has more levels than the Bahrain framework.

In reaching the decisions on the level to level matching it was necessary in many cases to make professional judgements to arrive at a 'best fit' between the levels in the two frameworks.

As part of the process of arriving at the most reliable correspondence between levels in the two frameworks two further processes were completed. The first was to have experts in the two countries examine the logic of the proposed relationships. The second was to select three similar types of qualifications from different parts of the education systems, from each country a school graduation

qualification, a skilled worker qualification and a Masters level qualification was chosen and compared in detail. Both this exercise and the expert scrutiny confirm the correspondence shown in the table above. The detail on this is provided in Annexes 1 and 2 (pages 57 & 63).

5. Country Report of Scotland

This report sets out the evidence that the SCQF meets the five principles which form the basis of the referencing between the SCQF and BQF.

To provide a context for the reader, the report describes the nature of the SCQF, explains the nature of education and training in Scotland insofar as it relates to the SCQF, and describes the different kinds of qualifications in the Framework. In particular, we (Scotland) have borne in mind that the report will have an international readership and therefore, we have tried to avoid national familiarities, such as abbreviations and acronyms, and we have adopted a “neutral” terminology where possible. For example, we have used the term “approve” when talking about quality assurance in broad terms, rather than get caught up with the distinctions between “approve”, “validate” and “accredit” where the distinctions do not add anything to an understanding of the Scottish system. Also, we have tried to include explanations of matters such as the legal basis of our institutions and agencies, the non-statutory basis of Scottish vocational qualifications and our private education and training institutions, as they tend to be important features of systems in other countries. The SCQF Partnership’s processes and plans for monitoring and further developing the Framework are also set out in this report.

The SCQF Partnership (SCQFP) is a company limited by guarantee and is a Scottish registered charity. The Partnership has a Board of Directors which comprises nominees of the following organisations:

- College Development Network;
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education;
- Scottish Qualifications Authority;
- Universities Scotland.

In addition the Board has a co-opted Director representing employer interests. The Board also has an independent Chair. Scottish Government has observer status.

The SCQFP embodies a fully collaborative approach by bringing together employers, colleges, universities, providers of learning and public agencies in order to maintain and promote a Framework that helps to promote opportunity and reduce inequality. All of those bodies represented on the Board have a significant interest and involvement in, and influence on, learning in Scotland. The Partnership also works closely with a wide range of stakeholders, to help the company to achieve its goals.

This partnership model is seen as having a number of advantages; the resources of the Partnership are limited and the partners, which share the common goal of wishing to see the Framework succeed, make many contributions in kind, using their resources to support the Framework and by undertaking activities which promote it.

Terms specifically relating to the Scottish context

Articulation: refers to a student gaining entry into either the second or third year of a university degree course after completing an Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND) at a further education college.

Articulation Hubs: colleges and universities clustered around a lead university that had a high level of articulation activity.

Awarding Body: in this report, the term “awarding body” means any organisation or institution which awards qualifications. It includes Universities and other higher education institutions along with more commercial organisations such as City and Guilds. Some colleges also act as awarding bodies for some qualifications or learning programmes.

Credit Rating: the process of allocating SCQF Level and Credit Points to qualifications and learning programmes, whether formal, non-formal or informal.

Credit Rating Body: an organisation that carries out credit rating for the SCQF. These are Scotland's colleges; Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs); SQA; and other organisations that have been approved by the SCQF Partnership.

Credit Transfer: the transfer of SCQF Credit Points from one programme into another to minimise the duplication of learning.

Foundation Apprenticeship: Foundation Apprenticeships are a work-based learning opportunity for senior-phase secondary school pupils. Lasting two years, pupils typically begin their Foundation Apprenticeship in S5. Young people spend time out of school at college or with a local employer, and complete the Foundation Apprenticeship alongside their other subjects like National 5s and Highers.

Foundation Apprenticeships are currently available in eight subjects including civil engineering, software development and financial services. Foundation Apprenticeships are linked to growth sectors of the Scottish economy, so young people are getting industry experience which will help them kick-start a successful career in their chosen field.

Further Education College: colleges offering courses and qualifications in a wide range of vocational and academic subjects at many levels. Some specialise in particular industry sectors such as art and design, catering, engineering or finance. They often have links with companies, so that students studying vocational courses can combine classroom learning with work experience.

Higher and Graduate Apprenticeship: these provide work-based learning opportunities from level 8 to level 11 Master's degree for employees. They have been created in partnership with industry and the further and higher education sector. The apprenticeships combine academic knowledge with skills development to enable participants to become more effective and productive in the workplace.

Learning Outcomes: statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

Learning programme: a process that an individual can undertake to achieve the learning outcomes that make up a qualification.

Learning Providers: organisations across all education and training sectors that provide formal, non-formal or informal learning.

Modern Apprenticeship: unlike the systems in many other countries, these apprenticeships extend beyond training for skilled craftsmen or women and can include technical and professional level training at the top levels of the SCQF – e.g. in areas like management and social services.

Notional Learning Hours: the time required for a typical learner at a specified SCQF Level to achieve the learning outcomes. Includes all the learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes as well as the assessment.

Private training providers: offer a wide range of work-based training for students seeking to build careers in specific industries. Private training providers work with colleges and employers to provide practical training and recognised qualifications in subjects such as engineering, construction, ICT and health and social care.

SCQF Credit Points: Credit Points allocated to a qualification or learning programme indicate the typical amount of time that it would take a learner to achieve the learning outcomes of the qualification or learning programme. Ten notional learning hours equates to one SCQF Credit Point.

5.1 SCQF Aims and Development

The SCQF was formally launched in 2001. Since that time it has become the standard means of describing the level and credit value of all mainstream qualifications¹ and training programmes in Scotland, and is also used for recruitment and workforce development in some employment sectors. It is important to note that both the Framework and the SCQF Partnership were established on a voluntary basis and not by law, although the SCQF Partnership is a legal entity. This means that the Framework is voluntary and there is no requirement for any organisation to have their learning programmes included within the Framework.

The scope of the Framework has extended considerably since it was launched and it now contains a number of important local, national and international qualifications. Examples of these include: programmes to increase the capacity of volunteer workers in community learning and development, the qualifications of the Police Scotland, and Microsoft qualifications. Work continues to extend the scope, use and understanding of the Framework.

The main purpose of the SCQF is to make the Scottish system of qualifications, and the way in which they relate to each other, easier to understand and use. It is intended to:

- support lifelong learning
- clarify entry and exit points for qualifications and credit-rated learning programmes at whatever level
- show learners and others possible routes for progression and credit transfer
- show the level and credit (size) of the different types of Scottish qualification
- enable credit links to be made between qualifications and learning programmes so as to assist learners to build on previous successes

Since 2009 there have been many changes to education and training in Scotland which have affected the SCQF, and the progressive implementation of the SCQF has led to new priorities and processes and re-stated principles.

The SCQF level descriptors were reviewed and revised in 2012, a range of development work, support materials and guidance documents on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) were introduced, more than five hundred new qualifications and learning programmes were entered in the SCQF database, all culminating in the publication of a new SCQF Handbook in 2015. All of these are reflected in this referencing report.


The Framework diagram depicting mainstream qualifications in Scotland is shown in Figure 1 below.

¹ "Mainstream qualifications" mean the qualifications shown and explained on the SCQF diagram <http://www.scqf.org.uk/features/Framework.htm>

Figure 1: The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

This Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database.



SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications		Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Apprenticeships & SVQs
12			Doctoral Degree	Professional Apprenticeship
11			Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship SVQ
10			Honours Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship
9		Professional Development Award	Bachelors / Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
8		Higher National Diploma	Diploma Of Higher Education	Higher Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
7	Advanced Higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate	Certificate Of Higher Education	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
6	Higher, Awards, Skills for Work Higher			Modern Apprenticeship Foundation Apprenticeship SVQ
5	National 5, Awards, Skills for Work National 5			Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
4	National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 4	National Certificate	National Progression Award	SVQ
3	National 3, Awards, Skills for Work National 3			
2	National 2, Awards			
1	National 1, Awards			

5.2 Education and Training Landscape

The main learning contexts for learning leading to qualifications in the SCQF are shown in Figure 2 below. This shows the school system, and, in broad terms, the main forms of education and training available to young people on completion of compulsory education. Further information about each of these routes is given in the following sub-sections, with information about the legal status and structure of the school, college, higher education and community routes, together with important features of delivery, the kinds of qualification and learning programmes offered and the main features of quality assurance which applies.²

² More details of the design of the qualifications in the SCQF are given in Annex 5, *Qualifications on the SCQF*, and information about quality assurance arrangements is given in the response to Principle 5.

FIGURE 2: Learning contexts leading to qualifications in the SCQF

Ages		Scottish Colleges	Universities and specific higher education institutions	Communities	Workplaces
17+	Secondary School Senior Phase – years S5&S6. Mainly qualifications at SCQF levels 5-7.	Qualifications at SCQF levels 1-12.	Qualifications at SCQF levels 7-12.	Qualifications at all SCQF levels.	Qualifications at SCQF levels 3-12.
16+					
16	Secondary School Beginning of the Senior Phase – year S4 (Compulsory) Qualifications at SCQF levels 1-5.				
13-15	Secondary School – years S1-S3 (Compulsory) – broad general education Experiences and outcomes – no national qualifications.				
5-12	Primary school – years P1-P7 (national learning outcomes).				
3-4	Pre-school (national learning outcomes).				

A note on the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

SQA is the national accreditation and awarding body in Scotland. The Education (Scotland) Act 1996 sets out SQA’s functions and the governance arrangements to oversee SQA’s distinct accreditation, regulatory and awarding functions. SQA is sponsored by the Scottish Government’s Learning Directorate.

In its accreditation role, SQA accredits vocational qualifications that are offered across Scotland, including Scottish Vocational Qualifications, and approves awarding bodies that wish to award them.

SQA is the statutory awarding body for qualifications in Scotland. Its duties are to develop, validate, quality assure and award a national framework of qualifications for Scotland. In addition, SQA has a statutory duty as the regulator for National Qualifications in Scotland as defined by the Equality Act (2010).

The majority of school and college qualifications in Scotland are provided by the SQA however other awarding bodies also operate in Scotland offering a range of qualifications.

5.2.1 Scottish Schools

Legal basis and structure

The Scotland Act 1998 gives the Scottish Parliament legislative control over all education matters, but much of the structure of Scottish education is set by the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. These Acts and other more recent acts are supplemented by regulations issued by the Scottish Government which have the force of law and by guidance issued by Education Scotland, which sets de facto norms and standards for the quality of teaching and learning.

The school curriculum is not governed by legislation in Scotland and there are no compulsory subjects/qualifications that a pupil must take within the Scottish education system. However, guidance on the curriculum – now the Curriculum for Excellence, sets standards which schools are expected to meet. Inspections of educational standards and capacity-building activities in schools are conducted by Education Scotland, which incorporates the national educational inspectorate.

Curriculum for Excellence ³

A new “Curriculum for Excellence” based on a structure of experiences and outcomes for young people from 3-18 was introduced in schools and colleges in 2010. It resulted from a “National Debate on Education” which led to the identification of four key purposes of education: enabling young people to become, successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

Qualifications

SQA began to introduce new and revised qualifications linked to Curriculum for Excellence in 2013/14. These qualifications, known as National Courses, Highers and Advanced Highers are subject-based, or topic-based and are made up of units of outcomes. There are also Scottish Baccalaureates (a group award) which consist of Advanced Highers, Highers and an interdisciplinary project at SCQF level 7. These qualifications and units are recorded on the SQA’s Scottish Qualifications Certificate which also denotes the SCQF level and credit value of each module or unit achieved. Awards are made on the basis of combinations of assessment, including externally verified ongoing assessment by teachers and national examinations held annually. The outcomes required by specific national qualifications are kept under review by the SQA, which is responsible for maintaining the currency of the qualifications. It does this on the basis of an annual review, with revisions where necessary. During 2017 Scottish Government has asked that SQA removes the requirement for unit assessment for some National Courses in order to reduce teacher workload. This work is still underway.

In the fourth year of secondary school – the final compulsory year – young people enter a senior phase which can continue for up to three years at school or in college, taking Highers in 5th year at age 16/17. In the senior phase, they will take national qualifications in a wide range of general and vocational subjects at SCQF levels 1-7 and may also take other qualifications offered by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) or other awarding bodies to reflect their wider achievements. Recently the Scottish Government has introduced Foundation Apprenticeships which sit at SCQF level 6. These are in specific subject areas and include work placement and are an attempt to widen the offer at this phase of school to include more vocationally relevant qualifications.

In Scotland pupils can go to university at age 16/17 with Highers providing the entry requirements for Scottish universities. However increasing numbers of young people stay on for a 6th year, taking Highers and Advanced Highers, and leave school at age 17/18.

³ Further information can be found at [https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence?](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence?)

Quality Assurance

Public funded schools are normally deemed to be competent to offer the National Qualifications described above, however they are subject to periodic inspection by Education Scotland⁴ to ensure that they are meeting appropriate quality standards relating to these qualifications.

An on-line National Assessment Resource (NAR) has been developed to support teachers' assessment. The NAR is an online resource for teaching staff which provides quality assured materials in a range of assessment approaches. SQA runs external examinations and external checks on internal assessment carried out in schools and colleges offering these qualifications.

Where schools offer additional qualifications and learning programmes, they have to meet the quality assurance requirements of the awarding body for the qualification. This also applies to some SQA qualifications where the teaching, learning and resource requirements go beyond the usual capacity of schools.

5.2.2 Scottish Colleges

Legal basis and structure

Scottish colleges are self-governing organisations in the public sector. They were established with this status in the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Acts of 1992 and 2005 and they are treated as part of Scottish Government for budgeting, reporting, and accounting purposes. The recent Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013 brought about significant changes to college governance and established a new legal framework for a regional structure of colleges. Scottish colleges are now 26⁵ organisations in 13 regions: 10 regions with a single regional college; and three regions with more than one college, but a single regional board that is responsible for strategic planning and allocating funds to the colleges in that region. In the northern region, Highlands and Islands, there are ten colleges. There is also a single national residential adult education college which lies outside the regional structure. Colleges are managed by autonomous boards of governors and the Chairs of College Regional Boards are appointed through the public appointments process. A full list of Scottish colleges can be found in Annex 4, *SCQF Credit Rating Bodies*.

Qualifications

Scottish colleges offer a wide range of general, vocational, technical and professional qualifications and learning programmes. Across the sector, they offer provision at most levels of the SCQF, but the majority of provision in most colleges is at SCQF levels 3-8.

Courses are delivered in colleges through day, evening or weekend classes, in the community, by distance learning and on-line, or in the work place. Some are short courses and others are designed to incorporate extensive periods of skills development – up to three years – in college workshops, restaurants, studios or other specialist areas, or by combining off-the-job and on-the-job learning. Most of the qualifications offered in Scottish colleges are awarded by SQA, but colleges also offer the qualifications of other Scottish, UK or international awarding bodies.

Colleges can also create their own awards and credit-rate them onto the SCQF. Most of these are associated with youth work, adult education and community learning, such as access to employment, digital literacy, training of volunteers involved in community learning, sport and leisure qualifications.

Scottish colleges offer a range of higher education qualifications. In particular they offer Higher National Certificates (HNCs) at SCQF level 7 and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) at SCQF level 8. These qualifications provide both the practical skills and the theoretical knowledge needed to do a job at a technical level. Many of these qualifications also offer articulation to university degree courses with various kinds of recognition of prior learning, including exemptions and credit transfer. So for example

⁴ <https://education.gov.scot/>

⁵ Within the 26 colleges two sit outside the regional structure; a national residential adult education college and a national centre for Gaelic language. <https://collegescotland.ac.uk>

completion of an HNC at level 7 would allow access directly into year 2 of an associated degree. A small number of taught degrees are available in Scottish colleges by the authority of a university or other competent higher education institution.

Quality assurance

Colleges also have their own quality systems and carry out continuous self-assessment as part of a national programme of enhancement. External reviews of quality are carried out by Education Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council, the body which allocates public funds to colleges and universities. Additional quality assurance processes may be operated by bodies such as Skills Development Scotland for vocational education and training schemes such as Modern Apprenticeships⁶. Quality assurance mechanisms in Scottish colleges include an active element of student participation and feedback. The College Development Network⁷ runs a number of workshops aimed at developing and sharing good practice in quality assurance.

5.2.3 Scottish Higher Education Institutions

Legal basis and structure

Higher education is provided in sixteen universities and three other higher education institutions in Scotland. Together, these nineteen institutions are referred to as higher education institutions. University status is conferred by the UK Privy Council⁸ on the advice of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. There are sixteen universities in Scotland which have the authority to award academic degrees.

There are three other higher education institutions: Glasgow School of Art, the Scottish Conservatoire (previously the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama), and Scotland's Rural College, which was formed in 2012 from a merger of three Scottish colleges which specialise in land-based studies⁹. Only the Scottish Conservatoire has degree awarding powers (for taught, but not research degrees).

Universities and the other higher education institutions are all public bodies funded by the Scottish Government through the SFC on the basis of Outcome Agreements. There are no private universities and only a small number of private higher education institutions in Scotland.

A full list of Scottish universities and other higher education institutions – all members of a representative body called Universities Scotland which is an SCQF partner body – can be found in Annex 3, *SCQF Credit Rating Bodies*.

Qualifications

All Scottish universities award degrees at SCQF levels 9-12: i.e. undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral levels. Institutions use SCQF credit points for students entering or transferring between learning programmes or institutions, and use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for transfers within the European area.

Higher education provision is developed within the parameters of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, introduced in 2012 to replace a previous Code of Practice. The Quality Code was developed

⁶ Unlike the systems in many other countries, these apprenticeships extend beyond training for skilled artisans and can include technical and professional level training at the top levels of the SCQF – e.g. in areas like management and social services.

⁷ College Development Network is the organisation in Scotland that supports the college sector through delivery of a range of professional learning activities, supporting governance, leadership and organisational development.

⁸ The Privy Council formally advises the Queen on the exercise of her powers. It advises the Queen on the issuing of Royal Charters, which are used to grant special status to incorporated bodies.

⁹ Although it is a higher education institution, Scotland's Rural College offers qualifications at most levels in the SCQF on sites throughout Scotland. It intends to gain degree-awarding powers.

by the higher education sector and is published and maintained by QAA: it sets out a series of expectations on which all higher education providers are agreed and is subject to revision as required: it covers academic standards, the quality of provision and support for students, and communication about provision. Higher education institutions are encouraged to create their own quality codes, building on the national expectations. The main aim of the UK Quality Code is to ensure that higher education provision and outcomes are comparable and consistent at a threshold level across the UK.

Quality Assurance

Scottish universities validate their own qualifications making use of the QAA UK Quality Code, including subject benchmarks, and the Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland, which aligns fully with levels 7-12 of the SCQF. In some cases, qualifications have to be endorsed by professional bodies to allow holders of the qualifications to become registered in the profession (teaching, nursing, medicine, law, etc.). Universities are responsible for the quality of a range of processes: including programme design and maintenance, credit rating of their own provision, credit rating of the provision of other organisations (if they choose to offer that service), assessment of learners, and making awards to successful learners. They do this through internal evaluation processes, in which individuals external to the institution often have a formal role – especially external examiners and professional bodies. The approach, which is called “Enhancement-led Institutional Review”, aligns with the European Standards and Guidelines and there are international reviewers on all teams. In addition QAA Scotland carries out regular reviews of aspects of the work of these institutions and these reviews are published. Particular features of Scotland’s quality assurance mechanisms are a strong element of student participation in the review process and a national programme of enhancement, aimed at developing and sharing good practice.

5.2.4 Community Learning and Development (CLD)

Legal basis and structure

The legal basis for CLD is established in the *Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013*. This places legal requirements on every local authority in Scotland for the delivery of CLD. Policy on CLD is set out in a number of areas, such as youth work, community regeneration, employability, tackling poverty, early years provision, the skills strategy, a greener Scotland and the SCQF.

Qualifications

Partnerships plans involve all kinds of organisations – from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. This means that schools, colleges, universities and other higher education institutions are part of CLD and many of the qualifications and learning programmes used in CLD are on the SCQF. This includes qualifications and learning programmes developed specifically to support CLD. For example, a recent area of action in CLD has been on continual professional development for the CLD workforce and a number of new qualifications have been developed to support this and these have been credit rated and placed on the SCQF, as have awards for youth achievement and adult achievement and for community capacity-building. Examples of these qualifications are shown in Figure 3.

One notable approach in this sector is the Awards Network¹⁰, a forum of twenty one, mainly third sector providers of non-formal learning awards in Scotland. One of the aims of the Network is to develop a Scottish framework for valuing, recognising and accrediting young people’s achievements through non-formal education. They recognise young people's contributions in a variety of settings including youth work, volunteering, active citizenship, and formal education. Some youth awards have external accreditation and currency through the SCQF, while others have their own long-standing internal processes for validation and accreditation.

¹⁰ <http://www.awardsnetwork.org/>

Figure 3: Examples of CLD and Non-mainstream Programmes on the SCQF

THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

This Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database.

scqf
scottish credit and qualifications framework

SCQF Levels	Examples of CLD and non-mainstream programmes on the SCQF			
12				
11		Mind over Matter <i>Decision Making Processes</i>	Chartered Management Institute <i>Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership</i>	Police Scotland College <i>Strategic Community Safety</i>
10		Mercat Tours Ltd. <i>Walking Tour Guiding</i>	abdi <i>Professional Certificate in Evaluating Human Capital Investment</i>	City of Edinburgh Council (CLD) <i>Leading a Project</i>
9		Mountain Training Scotland <i>Winter Mountain Leader Award</i>	Young Enterprise Scotland <i>Can, Plan, Do: Supporting the Enterprise Journey</i>	Innovate Now Ltd <i>Innovate Leadership Programme</i>
8	COSCA <i>Certificate in Consulting Supervision Skills</i>	Deafblind <i>Diploma in Deafblind Studies</i>	The Governance Forum <i>The Governance Certificate Course</i>	College Development Network <i>Cooperative Learning Principles and Practice</i>
7	The Boy's Brigade <i>George VI Leadership Programme</i>	SQA Awarding Body <i>Supporting Employment Practice</i>	Notre Dame Centre <i>Seasons For Growth</i>	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland <i>Introduction to Actor Training</i>
6	South Ayrshire Council <i>Adult Literacy & Numeracy Volunteer Tutor</i>	The British Computer Society <i>ECDL Advanced</i>	Glasgow Life <i>First Steps in Adult Literacy Tutoring</i>	TUC Education <i>Certificate for Trade Union Learning Representatives</i>
5	Cycling Scotland <i>Cycle Training Assistant</i>	Rural & Urban Training Scheme <i>Bilgifi Leadership Award</i>	The Outward Bound Trust <i>Adventure & Challenge Award</i>	Move On <i>Volunteer Peer Education Excellence Programme</i>
4	Calman Trust <i>Live, Learn and Work</i>	West College Scotland <i>Care Matters</i>	Learning Alliance Scotland <i>Effective Mentoring & Peer Education</i>	New College Lanarkshire <i>Relationships</i>
3	Shetland College, UHI <i>Letters, LogJets and Labels</i>	West Lothian Council <i>Everyday Art and Media Literacies</i>	East Ayrshire Council <i>Integrated Youth Literacies</i>	Rathbone <i>OneLife</i>
2	ASDAN <i>Employability Qualification</i>	Playback ICE <i>Moving On Transition in Action</i>	Dundee and Angus College <i>Home Skills</i>	SQA Awarding Body <i>Steps to Work Award</i>
1	SQA Awarding Body <i>Cycling Award</i>	Borders College <i>Ready for Retail</i>		SQA Awarding Body <i>Personal Achievement Bronze, Silver and Gold</i>
				Hidden Gardens Trust <i>Organic Gardening & Growing Skills</i>

Quality Assurance

Organisations in the CLD sector wishing to have qualifications and learning programmes credit rated and placed on the SCQF must ensure that their provision meets the criteria for credit rating laid out in the SCQF Handbook when they are submitting their provision to a CRB. CRBs will have designed and developed a range of quality assurance systems to support SCQF principles to ensure the quality and integrity of the SCQF is maintained. While the individual design of the quality assurance system and processes is entirely within the remit of the CRBs, there are a number of elements and key features of commonality, best practice and documented evidence required to safeguard the integrity of the Framework

5.2.5 Work-based Learning

Legal basis and structure

The main qualification for work based learning in the SCQF is the Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ). These qualifications are based on national occupational standards that cover specific industry sectors in the United Kingdom. SVQs are a requirement, or a recognised qualification, for registration or practice in a number of sectors, including workers in social services, health care and early years education, and construction workers, plumbers and electricians.

Modern Apprenticeships, with a focus on occupational competences, were introduced in the UK in the 1990s. They share some characteristics with more traditional apprenticeships in other countries, but are also distinctive in a number of ways. A Modern Apprentice must be employed, receiving a wage and also learning on the job. The standards to be achieved are set out in an approved Modern Apprenticeship Framework which will include at its core either an SVQ or another work-based qualification relevant to that sector. The Modern Apprenticeship Group, an independent group which draws its authority from the Scottish Government, is responsible for the approval and de-approval of all Scottish Modern Apprenticeship frameworks. The frameworks are developed by Sector Skills Councils. All Frameworks are allocated a level and a credit value on the SCQF. During 2016-17 Scottish Government also worked

with the national skills body – Skills Development Scotland to introduce Higher Apprenticeships at SCQF level 8 and Graduate Apprenticeships at SCQF levels 9, 10 and 11. Although these are delivered primarily through higher education institutions they all contain work based skills and competences.

In addition to SVQs however there are a number of programmes on the SCQF which belong to individual employers or professional bodies and which will be assessed in the workplace. These include, for example, programmes from Microsoft and Oracle and also programmes from the fire service, police service and food standards agency.

Qualifications

There are national occupational standards and SVQs in around 80% of the occupations in Scotland. The use and uptake varies. Sectors with high use of SVQs include Social Services and Healthcare, Business and Administration Retail, Hospitality, Driving Goods Vehicles, Construction, Engineering, and Management.

Quality assurance

Similar to the quality assurance arrangements for the CLD sector described above, individual employers and professional bodies which wish to offer vocational qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they have the necessary quality assurance arrangements in place to meet the criteria for credit rating as described in the SCQF Handbook and/or the relevant quality assurance arrangements of the relevant awarding body.

In the case of SVQs, which are the basis of Scottish Modern Apprenticeships, these are approved for use by SQA Accreditation and then awarding bodies seek accreditation to award the units and/or the full qualifications. All SVQs must be credit rated by SQA Accreditation.

5.3 Scotland Responses to the Principles 1 - 5

Principle 1

The roles and responsibilities of the relevant bodies and authorities are clear and transparent.

The SCQF is managed by the SCQF Partnership: the members of the Partnership are the College Development Network, QAA Scotland, SQA, and Universities Scotland. The object of the SCQF Partnership is “to advance education through promoting and supporting the Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework as a tool to support lifelong learning in Scotland” and to meet its legal responsibilities the SCQF Partnership must:

- promote wider adoption and use of the Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework as a tool to support lifelong learning in Scotland
- maintain the quality and integrity of the Framework and ensure that there is a common understanding of credit values and levels among users
- ensure that the work of the Partnership is effective.

The SCQF Partnership is a company limited by guarantee and a registered Scottish charity. It was established in 2006 after discussions between the Scottish Government and the main stakeholders on designing an appropriate model for supporting the ongoing development and implementation of the SCQF. The SCQF itself is not set out in any law but the Memorandum and Articles of the Company clearly set out its roles and responsibilities. The SCQF Partnership Board is responsible for the governance of the organization and for ensuring that it delivers on its key priorities. It is constituted with the most senior representatives of the College Development Network; the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Scotland; the Scottish Qualifications Authority; and Universities Scotland

Although the Scottish Government has no direct managerial role in the functioning of the SCQF (it does have observer status) much of the funding for the Partnership’s activities comes from the Scottish Government. A proportion of funding also comes from the Scottish Funding Council but this is targeted at working directly with colleges and universities in their role as CRBs.

The work of the SCQF Partnership includes maintaining the quality and integrity of the Framework, linkage with the EQF and other national frameworks, commissioning developmental and research projects, disseminating information about the Framework and supporting individuals and organisations to use the Framework and the level descriptors. The overall aim of the Partnership is to ensure that, as far as possible, all assessed qualifications and learning programmes in use in Scotland are included on the Framework.

As part of its strategic role, which includes agreeing the principles upon which the quality of the SCQF will be assured, the SCQF Partnership has the responsibility of approving additional Credit Rating Bodies (i) to credit-rate their own provision, and (ii) to credit-rate the provision of other bodies.

SCQFP Structures

The SCQF Partnership was established in such a way that partnership working is central to its ability to deliver and implement the Framework. The name chosen for the organisation was deliberate and was intended to send out a message that all stakeholders would have a part to play in making the Framework a success. In order to co-ordinate this partnership working the Partnership has established two key groups consisting of stakeholders from all sectors across Scotland.

SCQF Quality Committee

The SCQF Partnership Board established the SCQF Partnership Quality Committee to provide it with recommendations on all issues concerning the ongoing maintenance and quality assurance of the Framework and its relationship to other Frameworks. The Quality Committee comprises around 15 experts in the development and quality assurance of credit, qualifications and frameworks from a range of sectors, awarding and quality assurance bodies associated with the SCQF. Its Chair is appointed by the Board.

The Committee meets four times a year. It reports to the SCQF Board on applications for approval as an SCQF credit-rating body and manages the monitoring and review of organisations which are already approved by the SCQF Partnership to act as Credit Rating Bodies.

SCQF Forum

The SCQF Partnership has also established a Forum to advise the Partnership on the continuing development and maintenance of the SCQF. The Forum is a national committee of key organisations with responsibility for providing or supporting education and training in Scotland. Its members are senior representatives from 24 organisations representing the main providers, users and funders of qualifications in Scotland and it is chaired by the Chief Executive officer of the SCQF Partnership.

The Forum enables key organisations, and the sectors they represent, to work together to make full use of the SCQF in meeting needs for access and participation in lifelong learning and to engage in wider debate about the use of the SCQF as a tool which underpins, supports and influences Scottish lifelong learning policies. The Forum meets twice a year and advises the SCQF Partnership on the continuing development and maintenance of the SCQF.

Principle 2

Comparison of the Bahrain NQF and the SCQF demonstrates matching between the levels of the two frameworks.

A detailed analysis of the level descriptors in each framework was undertaken to identify where there was correspondence between a level descriptor in one framework with the level descriptors in the other framework. The detailed analysis is included at Annex 1.

Referencing summary between Bahrain NQF and SCQF Levels

Bahrain National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
10	12
9	11
9 (with a significant match to 8)	10
8	9
7	8
6	7
5	6
4 (with some match to level 5)	5
3	4
2	3
1 (with some match to level 2)	2
No match	1

There is a correspondence between the levels of the Bahrain NQF and the SCQF for all levels in the frameworks except for SCQF level 1 which finds no match with the Bahrain NQF. The SCQF levels sometimes match more than one level in the Bahrain framework, this may be a consequence of the fact that the SCQF has more levels than the Bahrain framework. In reaching the decisions on the level to level matching it was necessary in many cases to make professional judgements to arrive at a 'best fit' between the levels in the two frameworks. These considerations are described in detail in Annex 1.

As part of the process of arriving at the most reliable correspondence between levels in the two frameworks two further processes were completed. The first was to have experts in the two countries

examine the logic of the proposed by liaising with those with a specific qualification responsibility. In Scotland this was via the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

The second process was to select three similar types of qualifications from different parts of the education systems, from each country a school graduation qualification, a skilled worker qualification and a Masters level qualification was chosen and then the pairs of qualifications were compared to each other in detail. For each of the pairs of qualifications the following comparative analysis was made:

- the general profile of the qualifications such as their national status and basic structure;
- the learner recruitment requirements for both qualifications;
- the destinations of successful graduates of the qualifications;
- the learning methods that are used in preparing learners;
- the expected learning outcomes that are the defining characteristics of the qualifications;
- the assessment strategy and practices and general quality assurance aspects.

Summary

There is a reliable correspondence between the levels in the two frameworks, this is shown in the table above. The correspondence is supported by expert scrutiny and the detailed analysis of qualifications in each country.

Principle 3

The Bahrain NQF and the SCQF are based on learning outcomes and, where these exist, credit systems and the recognition of credit.

Any learning in Scotland at any level can be entered on the SCQF, provided that it is outcome-based, requires at least 10 notional hours of learning, and is subject to quality assured assessment. The SCQF has twelve levels defined by level descriptors which describe outcomes of learning in five domains or characteristics:

- knowledge and understanding
- practice: applied knowledge, skills and understanding
- generic cognitive skills
- communication, numeracy and IT skills
- autonomy, accountability and working with others

Any qualification or learning programme which is on the SCQF must be based on a clear set of learning outcomes and these outcomes must be referenced to the relevant characteristics of the SCQF level descriptors at the appropriate level.

In 2012, following an extended consultation, the SCQF level descriptors were revised. The consultation had revealed broad satisfaction with the descriptors and stakeholders asked for minimal change.

Prior to the creation of the SCQF, learning outcomes had been used in the design of qualifications, with the change from input to output as the basis for assessment and awarding qualifications starting in the 1980s. Since 2010, many of these qualifications have changed and other types of qualifications have been added to the framework. These changes and additions have strengthened the commitment of the SCQF and its users to learning outcomes as a basis for the national system.

All qualifications and learning programmes on the SCQF have a level and a credit value (with the exception of Research Degrees which do not have a credit value). Credit points are fundamental to the SCQF because they are the building blocks for Credit Transfer. They provide a way of quantifying the amount of learning achieved and they symbolise the amount of time taken to complete a unit/module or qualification/learning programme.

One SCQF credit point represents a notional 10 hours of learning and only whole credit points can be awarded. One credit point is the minimum number of credit points which can be allocated to a learning programme. Along with the level descriptors, credit points allow learners, learning providers and employers to compare different qualifications at the same or even different levels.

Credit transfer

Credit Transfer is a type of Recognition of Prior Learning which allows the transfer to SCQF credit points from one qualification to another or one learning programme to another to minimise duplication of learning.

The amount of credit which will be recognised for Credit Transfer is at the discretion of the receiving institution or awarding body and will be dependent on the commonality of the subject and level of the qualification previously gained with the qualification or learning programme being undertaken.

These arrangements are most commonly used to help learners to do the following:

- move between qualifications/learning programmes in a college or a university or to move between colleges or universities
- move from an HNC or HND course at a college to a degree course at a university or vice versa
- count learning from a previously gained SVQ or other qualification accredited by SQA towards a degree or an HNC or HND or towards another SQA qualification.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The assessment and certification of non-formal and informal learning has been a central feature of education and training reforms in Scotland since the mid-1980s and the principle that there should be certification of achieved learning outcomes regardless of the place, pace or mode of learning has been intrinsic to the SCQF from its inception. This inherent flexibility of the SCQF makes the validation of non-formal and informal learning less of an issue than it may be in more regulatory frameworks.

At the time of writing more than 800 qualifications and learning programmes based on non-formal learning had been added to the SCQF database. The owners of these qualifications and learning programmes include government agencies, professional and commercial organisations, individual employers and training companies, trade associations, trade unions, youth organisations, community organisations, adult education organisations and charities. The qualifications range in level from SCQF 2 to SCQF 11 and in size from 1 SCQF credit point to over 100 SCQF credit points. All of these qualifications are awarded on the basis of quality-assured assessment of outcomes of learning.

Principle 4

The policies and processes for the inclusion of qualifications on the NQF and the SCQF are clear and transparent.

The process of preparing a qualification or learning programme for inclusion on the SCQF database, by allocating it to a level in the framework and giving it a value in SCQF credit points, is known as “credit rating” and bodies which are authorised to carry out this process are called “Credit Rating Bodies” (CRBs). As part of its strategic role, which includes agreeing the principles upon which the quality of the SCQF will be assured, the SCQF Partnership has the responsibility of approving organisations to become Credit Rating Bodies. The organisations must be a body of good standing with a successful track record in the design and delivery of learning provision. They need to have a documented quality assurance system for the design, validation and assessment of these qualifications and learning programmes and evidence through both internal and external reviews, that this quality assurance system is valid and reliable. And they need to have the capacity and commitment to operate as an SCQF credit-rating body. A list of current Credit Rating Bodies is given in Annex 4.

Credit Rating Bodies are also responsible for ensuring that the credit rated qualifications and learning programmes on the SCQF database are current and accurate. The SCQF partner bodies which award qualifications have been approved by Government to credit rate qualifications: these are the SQA, Universities and other higher education institutions in Scotland and Scotland’s colleges.

The SCQF Partnership is responsible for approving other organisations to become Credit Rating Bodies. At the time of writing, there were 7 of these as follows:

- The Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland
- City & Guilds London Institute
- Scottish Police College – Tulliallan
- The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS)
- The Institute of Counselling
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service – TED
- Scottish Prison Services College

The SCQF Handbook states there is no “standard process” for credit-rating, which is seen as a matter of professional judgement. However, Credit Rating Bodies are expected to establish their processes in accordance with SCQF principles, which are set out in the SCQF Handbook. Credit-rating must focus on learning outcomes and on the arrangements for assessing these learning outcomes. Credit-rating processes are expected to be explicit, reliable, valid, and subject to external review. Any qualification/learning programme has the potential to be included on the SCQF, provided it meets the following criteria:

- must be written in learning outcomes
- must be a minimum of ten notional learning hours
- must be formally assessed;
- must be quality assured

The credit-rating process must involve the use of SCQF level descriptors, and should include a stage where the levels above and below the estimated level are also examined. However, the SCQF Partnership makes clear that the process should also involve other reference points such as relevant qualification or learning programme descriptors, higher education subject benchmark information, SQA specifications and other appropriate sources of information and guidance. The SCQF Partnership advises that the SCQF level descriptors should not normally be the only point of reference. The Partnership offers a range of support materials, seminars and workshops to support credit rating bodies. In all cases, for a qualification or learning programme to be credit rated and placed on the SCQF it must meet four criteria as follows; contain at least 10 notional hours of learning, be based on learning outcomes, be formally assessed and quality assured.

Credit Rating Bodies are required to operate quality assurance systems that include robust checks carried out by an independent body or someone who is not employed by, or part of, the institution or organisation. Providing clear evidence on this is a crucial part of the process of being approved to become a Credit Rating Body.

Third Party Credit Rating

Not all Credit Rating Bodies are allowed to carry out credit rating for other organisations. However, Further Education colleges, universities and other higher education institutions, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and, at the time of writing, Scottish Police College Tulliallan has included within their credit rating status. Such credit rating for external partners or organisations is called Third Party Credit Rating. If an organisation awards qualifications that are not currently on the Framework, or offers learning programmes that do not result in recognised qualifications, SCQF Third Party credit rating provides a means of placing these qualifications and learning programmes on the Framework without the need to go through the process of becoming a credit rating body themselves. Consequently, any organisation can submit a qualification or learning programme to an existing credit rating body that offers a Third Party credit rating service. Most CRBs will offer guidance on this and the growing number of third party programmes on the SCQF suggests that an increasing number of organisations will continue to use Third Party credit rating.

Principle 5

Both qualifications frameworks are underpinned by quality assurance and are consistent with international quality assurance principles.

At the heart of the SCQF are the twenty-five principles set down in the SCQF Handbook (SCQF Partnership: 2015) – see Annex 3. Principle 1, which underpins all of the other principles, states that the SCQF Partnership and the Credit Rating Bodies share responsibility for ensuring the quality and integrity of the SCQF. This principle underlines the duties that fall on the Credit Rating Bodies, but does not detract from the lead responsibility of the Partnership. The Handbook also states that “Safeguarding the integrity and reputation of the Framework is paramount and quality assurance systems must be strong and rigorous enough so as not to compromise this integrity.”¹¹ These systems must combine internal quality systems with external scrutiny.

Quality assurance policies and procedures underpin all parts and levels of the SCQF. SCQF Principle 9 crystallises this, stating that Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating, including internal and external quality assurance and arrangements for the retention of evidence confirming decisions on level and credit. These operational procedures must also cover credit transfer and the recognition of prior learning. This requirement applies to all Credit Rating Bodies and the requirements of the SCQF have increasingly been built into the quality assurance process and criteria used by the bodies themselves and the organisations which review or audit them.

Therefore, all CRBs must operate a robust quality assurance system for programme design, approval, validation, accreditation or other related activities and demonstrate that the separate processes which make up the quality assurance system:

- are operated by individuals who are experienced in the relevant process and have subject expertise where this is required;
- are supported by appropriate management structures and have externality in decision making;
- are benchmarked against other equivalent processes; and
- are subject to regular review to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of users.

CRBs must also demonstrate that they regularly reviews and strive to improve and enhance their quality assurance system by:

- carrying out internal reviews on all aspects of the quality assurance system
- taking action on the outcome of such internal reviews.

They must further ensure that quality assurance systems are subject to regular external review and provide evidence of the outcome of these external reviews and actions taken as a result of these external reviews. Examples of Evidence Procedures and policies will include:

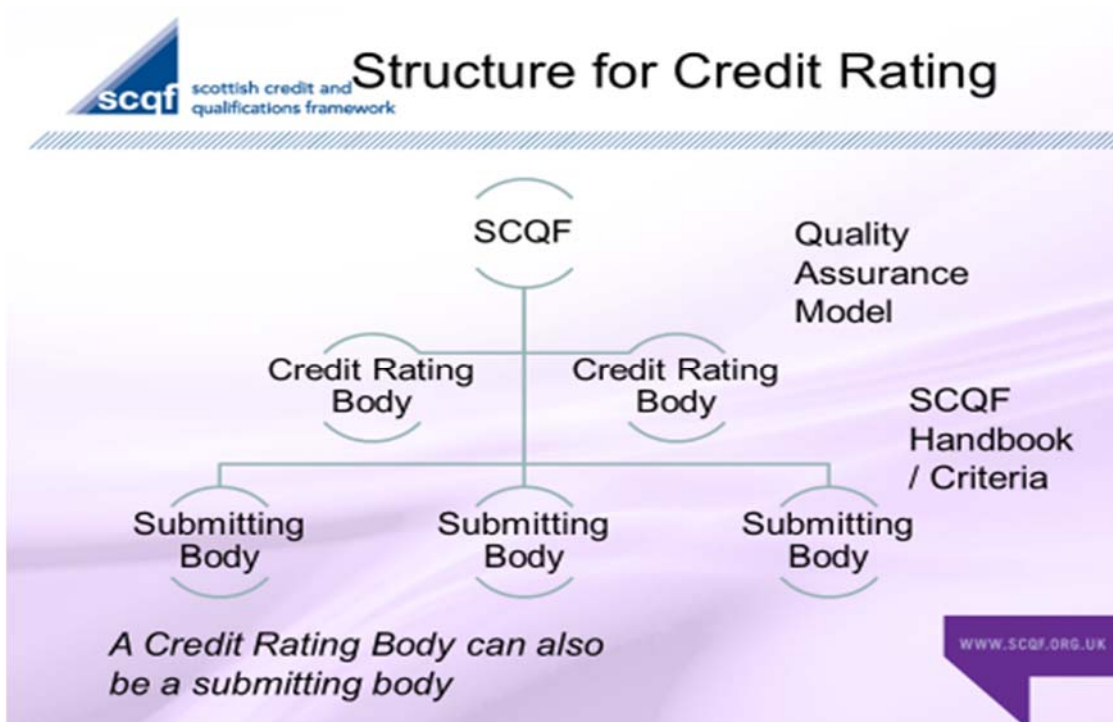
¹¹ SCQF Handbook p33.

- the quality assurance of programme design, approval, validation, accreditation, assessment or other related activities;
- roles and responsibilities of staff and/or committees involved in managing and operating both the quality assurance system and the individual processes within it;
- evidence of system review and action taken as a result;
- evidence of benchmarking activities and consideration of issues arising from these;
- evidence of process reviews and actions taken as a result.

Other evidence will include internal review reports; details of actions taken on the findings of these reports; details of action taken in relation to any quality assurance activity. External review reports from quality assurance bodies such as QAA, SQA, Education Scotland; external review reports of other external quality assurance schemes; details of actions taken on the findings of these reports

The levels of quality assurance relating to the SCQF are shown below. They include: the overarching role of the SCQF Partnership in maintaining the quality and integrity of the SCQF; the Credit Rating Bodies and third-party Credit Rating Bodies which ensure that the qualifications on the SCQF database meet the required standards; organisations which undertake, support or contribute to the external element of quality assurance of Credit Rating Bodies; and owners which ensure the reliability and validity of the certificates issued for qualifications on the SCQF. The basis of the various levels of quality assurance which underpin the SCQF vary in kind, from legal requirements to agreed guidelines.

Figure 4: Credit Rating Quality Assurance Structure



Credit Rating Bodies

CRBs must ensure that their documented quality assurance systems and arrangements are aligned to SCQF principles for design, approval, assessment and related activities, including RPL, and internal and external review processes.

They must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating, including systems of internal and external quality assurance and arrangements for the retention of evidence confirming decisions on level and credit.

They must also employ assessment procedures for RPL and credit transfer which are consistent with the normal assessment and general quality assurance of the organisation.

If CRBs are authorised to carry out credit rating for other organisations then they also have the following additional responsibilities:

- Employ rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating third-party submissions.
- Ensure that third-party organisations are of good standing and credibility and that they:
- Submit documented evidence of their assessment processes, including arrangements relating to the internal and external quality assurance of assessment decisions
- Provide details of internal and external auditing/quality assurance of their systems
- Submit regular (e.g. annual) reports of progress in the delivery of any credit-rated qualifications or learning programmes and inform the credit-rating body of any changes which may affect the SCQF level or credit points
- Review the qualification or learning programme in an agreed timescale.
- Place the details of all third-party qualifications or learning programmes which they have credit-rated on the SCQF database and keep these up to date.

All CRBs are subject to monitoring of their SCQF credit rating processes and systems:

- For universities and other higher education institutions which have credit rated provision, this is the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and will form part of their overall monitoring processes of quality assurance generally.
- For colleges with credit rated provision, monitoring from 1 April 2018 will be carried out by the SCQF Partnership (it was previously part of the Education Scotland review process).
- For SCQFP approved CRBs, the SCQF Partnership conducts an annual monitoring process and a four yearly periodic review.

QAA Scotland: Manages the Enhancement-led Institutional Review process which includes periodic reviews of Scotland's Universities and other higher education institutions, which make specific reference to SCQF requirements/principles. Publishes reports, and conducts annual discussions and follow-up activities. QAA is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the umbrella organisation for quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area.

Education Scotland: Supports quality and improvement in Scottish education. Evaluates the quality of learning and teaching in Scottish schools, colleges, education services and third sector organisations through inspection and review.

SQA Accreditation: Advises on and recommends approval of National Occupational Standards. Accredits SVQs, regulated qualifications and other qualifications on the basis of SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles. Approves and audits the Awarding Bodies of these qualifications (including SQA Awarding Body) making specific reference to SCQF requirements/principles. SQA Accreditation has been approved by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance to the ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management System Standards. This applies to the approval and subsequent monitoring of awarding bodies and the accreditation of vocational and occupational qualifications, other than those conferred by higher education institutions.

SCQF Partnership: Manages the Framework and ensures the principles set out in the Handbook and the SCQF Quality Assurance Model are adhered to.

Programme Owners

All programme owners who wish to have their programmes credit rated and placed onto the SCQF must:

- provide clear evidence of how the learning programmes will be assessed and that the method of assessment is robust, appropriate, secure and quality assured
- provide clear evidence that their programmes are internally and externally quality assured
- ensure that learners are appropriately certificated and formal records kept
- regularly review their programmes

Some more detailed aspects of quality assurance in the different sectors are given in Section 4 of this report, *Education and Training in Scotland*.

5.4 The Future of the SCQF

Since the SCQF was launched in 2001 the Scottish Government and its agencies have worked to ensure that SCQF levels and credit values are part of everyday work and communication in schools and colleges and with learners and (for younger learners) their parents. The SCQF Partnership has also commissioned several important pieces of research with learners and stakeholders over that period looking at impact and levels of understanding of the Framework across all learning sectors.

Since 2010 a systematic programme of research has been carried out among learners, institutions and employers to gauge levels of understanding and use of the Framework. An emerging trend in this research has been that learners themselves are often using the SCQF to take more control of their own planning and progression, realising that the Framework is as amenable to recognising non formal learning as it is to recognising formal qualifications gained in schools or other formal institutions.

HEIs and Colleges continue to use the SCQF to inform the design and development of their curriculum portfolio and to ensure that there is a balance of provision at different SCQF levels. Colleges in particular use the SCQF to inform the development of new regional curriculum portfolios, to embed new National Qualifications and to ensure a balance of provision at different SCQF levels including non-formal learning.

Scottish Government priorities

The Scottish Government's strategies to widen access and participation for young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and to develop Scotland's young workforce have encouraged sectors to work more extensively with each other and with schools, Local Authorities and employers, and the SCQF can be seen as integral to this process. This work is enabling better integration of Scotland's education system and is developing both academic and vocational education and training opportunities that support youth employability and offer young people alternative progression pathways and development choices across and upwards through different SCQF levels. The SCQF is essential for informing the design, development and communication of curriculum and alternative progression pathways between different parts of Scotland's education system. In this way it will continue to provide partners with a framework and common vocabulary, assisting in the identification of gaps in provision, informing credit rating and levelling decisions and supporting the recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning.

These activities complement the current Government focus on education including Developing the Young Workforce¹², Curriculum for Excellence¹³, Post 16 Education Reform¹⁴ and raising educational attainment.¹⁵ As well as initiatives such as 'How Good is our School' and 'Closing the Gap'. Ministers have placed the focus very firmly on education and particularly education of young people and there seems to be a clear vision that learning in many different contexts and settings should be recognised for the benefit of society as a whole. The SCQF Partnership will continue to develop its activities in the development and promotion of the Framework to help deliver on the pledges of Government in relation to excellence and equity in education. During 2017 the Scottish Government undertook a 'Learner Journey Review' looking at the progression routes and pathways primarily for those aged 15-24. SCQFP was a key stakeholder in this work and at the time of writing this report is awaiting the publication of a Scottish Government Action plan to take recommendations forward. The Partnership expects to be able to play a key role in this work as the SCQF is fundamental to creating and maintaining effective and efficient learner journeys.

The Partnership will continue to promote the use of the SCQF to support curriculum development, progression planning, and attainment and achievement of learners. The Framework will continue to keep

¹² <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/developingtheyoungworkforce>

¹³ [https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/Curriculum%20for%20Excellence%20Implementation](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/Curriculum%20for%20Excellence%20Implementation)

¹⁴ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/post16reform>

¹⁵ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/Raisingeducationalattainment>

the learner at the centre of its priorities. Supporting learners to achieve their full potential will continue to be a top priority for Scottish Government and the SCQF and the Partnership will play a key role in this.

The SCQFP Strategic Plan

In developing the SCQFP strategic plan, the Partnership, along with others, are fully contributing to supporting the Government agenda to deliver economic recovery. The need to support economic growth and ensure that skills are utilised fully in workforce development are very clear. The SCQFP strategic plan also acknowledges that the principles which underpin the SCQF will be fundamental to the success of Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. The Partnership recognises fully that the next few years will continue to see many changes in the education and training landscape both structural and contextual. The Strategic Plan has been developed to capitalise fully on the SCQFP's excellent partnership arrangements whilst still recognising that we will need to be flexible in order to respond to changing priorities for partners. The Partnership will continue to consult with key stakeholders on how best to support them and enhance education, learning, skills and training for individuals and employers.

The vision is to ensure that the Framework provides a range of tools and solutions to support both learners and employers through extremely challenging times ahead. The Partnership will seek to add value to the strategy outlined in Developing Scotland's Young Workforce as well as those strategies and initiatives which are more closely linked to supporting the economic recovery agenda. To this end, the SCQF Partnership's Key Objectives for 2015-18 are to:

- Maintain the reputation of the SCQF as a quality framework by monitoring, supporting and enhancing the work of Credit Rating Bodies
- Create greater demand for learning to be recognised on the SCQF from learners and employers
- Provide support and guidance on the inclusion of informal and non-formal learning on the Framework along with advice on the use of Recognition of Prior Learning
- Market and promote the use of the Framework and associated tools and guidance
- Cultivate new collaborative relationships with key stakeholders to further embed the SCQF across all sectors
- Promote the SCQF as a tool to support learner transitions
- Promote the experience of developing and maintaining the SCQF to an international audience

6. Country Report of The Kingdom of Bahrain

6.1 Bahrain NQF and BQA – Aims and Development

Since the last decade, The Kingdom of Bahrain has been pursuing diversification and privatization of its economy with the aim to reduce its dependence on Oil. Such ambition of growth strongly depends on the Kingdom's ability to acquire new resources and ensure sustainability. Hence, a series of ambitious reforms pillars were initiated with two main objectives;

1. enabling the private sector as the engine for growth,
2. ensuring that Bahrainis are the employees of choice within the Kingdom.

The realisation of the second objective requires guaranteeing that the skills and qualifications of Bahrainis are up to standards and meet the need, specifically of the labour market in this context.

His Majesty the King's future 2030 Economic Vision¹⁶, places the Bahraini citizen at the heart of growth and development and the primary beneficiary of prosperity, and opportunities arising from economic and social development. The National Economic Strategy aimed to realize His Majesty's future Economic Vision. The three main areas included in this strategy were governmental, social and economic.

Early in 2005 the government of Bahrain initiated a comprehensive reform of its general, vocational and tertiary education sectors. This reform addresses many aspects including curriculum improvement, transparency and teaching standards. Analysis of these areas lead to the identification of a series of key initiatives, now being implemented by the Supreme Council for the Development of Education and Training (SCET)¹⁷, Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD), and international partners. Some examples of the outcomes of these initiatives are: The Education & Training Quality Authority of Bahrain (BQA), Bahrain Polytechnic and the Bahrain Teacher's College.

In light of these initiatives, there was a consensus among the key stakeholders and national policy makers, of the need to link the various sectors of the education system in a way that promotes learner recognition and transfer of qualifications while facilitating the learner's access, movement and progression into and between various education tracks. Accordingly, a qualifications framework has been identified as a crucial need in contribution to the achievement of the 2030 economic vision.

BQA¹⁸ is an independent entity that carries out its mandate with the guidance of its Board of Directors. It reports to the SCET. The main aim of the Education Reform Project is to fundamentally improve the services provided in education and vocational sectors in the Kingdom of Bahrain, which will in turn ensure the professional advancement of Bahrain's human capital. BQA aims to be a leader in 'fostering sustainable quality enhancement for world-class education and training sectors in the Kingdom of Bahrain'. The BQA established two General Directorates¹⁹, the General Directorate of Education and Training Institutes Reviews (GDR), and the General Directorate of National Qualifications Framework (GDQ). The NQF Advisory Committee (NAC) was established by the Cabinet Resolution No. 52 of 2013. The Advisory Committee is chaired by the BQA's Chief Executive and includes representatives from the

¹⁶ The Economic Vision 2030:

http://www.bahrain.bh/wps/portal/lut/p/a1/jdBND4lwDAbg3-KBKy0MAB1Ng6KBaFQUdzFg5tAgM4jgzxf15Le9rXnetB0wCIFIUbKvUbGVWZRe38xcuSM0Nd3WhzgLekhHU8P1HJfQxKrB8gEQ4tTAtMbWvKWbNv6XR93vagOjBr6PSO3OxJv1uoh98mf-Q9Gf86c8qwWwJ_Z6xQ18W_MOPu8xBCZSGd_-dEmzmNgCWM43POe5esrrdIUh2NbQQWrlKFICLI6lru1ThR8F0qkccCwhcMh30QhOfBrpmWHqWNxgXoKYJk/dl5/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/

¹⁷ Originally established in 2007, the Education and Training Reform Board (ERB) was responsible for leading the development and implementation of educational reform initiatives in the Kingdom of Bahrain. In 2015, the ERB was retitled to become the Supreme Council for the Development of Education and Training (SCET).

¹⁸ Currently all BQA's activities are free of charge to institutions under its remit.

¹⁹ The GDR covers Higher education, VET and Schools, in addition National Examination is also part of BQA's mandate. BQA organization structure: <http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/SRU/Pages/default.aspx>

MoE, Higher Education Council (HEC), Civil Service Bureau²⁰ (CSB), MLSD, Government Universities, Private Universities, Private Institutes and the Private Sector. The Advisory Committee oversees all National Qualifications Framework (NQF) activities, particularly the recommendation of policies related to the Institutional Listing (IL) and Qualification Placement (QP); these are presented to them after they are quality assured by the internal academic committee. The resulting recommended policies and operations are presented to the BQA Board of Directors for approval and then endorsed by the SCET.

6.1.1 Development of the NQF of Bahrain

The establishment of the NQF of the Kingdom of Bahrain originated in the decision taken by the SCETD. The NQF is a 10-level comprehensive and compulsory framework encompassing all forms of learning, to support lifelong learning.

The NQF development was set in three Phases: Design Phase (2010-2011), Setup Phase (2012-2014) and Implementation Phase (from 2014 onwards). Both the Design and Setup Phases were funded by the Labour Fund (Tamkeen)²¹, with technical assistance provided by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). During the Design Phase, the development of the NQF was carried out under the strategic guidance of the SCETD.

The Design Phase commenced in January 2010 and was completed by November 2011. A Steering Group comprising a wide range of stakeholders including representatives from BQA was established by Tamkeen to oversee the implementation of the contracted project deliverables and to provide advice both to Tamkeen, as the funding organisation, and to the SQA Technical Team. Consultation and communication were considered vital to the development of the framework, and stakeholders have been fully engaged in the development. Various NQF policy working groups were established comprising representatives from public and private education and training institutions in the Kingdom. The main objective of the policy working groups has been to consult stakeholders in the early formulation of the policies.

Endorsement of the Design Phase was sought from two international organisations, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) and the National Qualifications Authority Ireland (NQAI)²², each being responsible for the governance and management of their respective national qualifications frameworks. Endorsement was provided through official letters to the Steering Group and subsequently through signed Memoranda of Understanding from both organisations. At the end of the Design Phase, results comprised the NQF Architecture, NQF Level Descriptors, and a series of NQF Policies relating to placement, recognition of prior learning, referencing, assessment, verification and validation.

The second phase, the Setup Phase, was managed by the BQA and commenced in March 2012 to build on the Design Phase. One of the main activities in the Setup Phase was the pilot, where 17 institutions –covering higher education, vocational education and training and general education- participated in testing NQF processes, procedures, operations and documents. Six working groups were established during the Setup Phase to provide input from private and public institutions, employers and government bodies. Additionally, an NQF Technical Committee was established early in 2012 to oversee developments and provide advice to the BQA and the SQA Project Team. The Setup Phase resulted in valuable information which helped in improving NQF processes and operations in preparation for the third phase; the Implementation Phase. In October 2014, the Implementation Phase of the NQF commenced.

²⁰ Civil Service Bureau (CSB) was established in the Kingdom of Bahrain in back 1975 as an independent government entity under the jurisdiction of the Cabinet Affairs with the sole mission of supervising Human resource in all government entities, and seeks to develop the level of the civil service by raising production efficiency and achieve justice

²¹ Tamkeen is a semi-governmental organization in Bahrain, established in 2006 under Law Number (57) as part of the country's national reform initiatives. Tamkeen is tasked with making the private sector the key driver of economic development.

²² Currently Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

It is of importance to explain the meaning to some terminologies used in the NQF processes, these mainly are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Terminologies of Bahrain’s NQF

Alignment of Foreign Qualifications	The process of comparing and evaluating a foreign qualification against the NQF levels.
Archived	The status given to a qualification placed on the NQF which no longer meets NQF or regulatory body requirements. The record of such a qualification is archived for reference purposes.
Confirmation	An internal process conducted by the institution by which the Confirmation Panel confirms the proposed NQF Level and NQF Credit allocated by the Mapping Panel for a qualification and its comprising units.
Foreign Qualification	A qualification that is offered and delivered by an institution in the Kingdom of Bahrain, while it belongs to a foreign body which has control over the qualification.
Institutional Listing	A process by which the GDQ ensures that an institution has established suitable formal arrangements to maintain the standards of their national qualifications placed on the NQF. Listing also depends on the quality assurance reviews conducted by the BQA.
Mapping	In the context of the NQF, an internal process conducted by the institution by which the Mapping Panel associates an NQF Level and an NQF Credit to a qualification and its comprising units.
NQF Credit Framework	A framework that provides guidelines and design requirements regarding titles, description, the level and credit distribution of national qualifications.
Notional Learning Hours	The time in hours that an average learner would take to successfully complete all learning activities, including assessments, required for achieving the learning outcomes and subsequently achieving a qualification.
NQF Credit	In the context of the NQF, one NQF Credit equates to ten Notional Learning Hours. NQF Credits are used to reflect the volume of units and qualifications (See ‘Credit’ and ‘Notional Learning Hours’).
Placed Qualification	A qualification attaining the endorsement of the SCET as a result of satisfying the <i>Validation Standards</i> .
Qualification Placement	The process of placing a national qualification of a listed institution on the NQF after fulfilling the qualification placement requirements.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	The assessment of an individual’s knowledge, skills, and competence acquired through previous Non-Formal and Informal Learning, which is used to grant status or credit towards a qualification.
Referencing	The activity of comparing the National Qualifications Framework of the Kingdom of Bahrain to other national, regional or meta qualifications frameworks. Referencing includes comparisons of education and training systems and frameworks levels.
Regulatory Bodies	Those bodies that regulate (license and approve) education and training providers within the Kingdom. In some cases, those bodies have set requirements for the institution to follow when developing their qualifications (e.g. Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Development, etc.).
Validation	The process to ensure that a qualification is credible and fit-for-purpose.
Verification	The process of ensuring that a qualification’s proposed NQF Level and Credit value and its comprising units meet the learning complexity of the NQF level.

6.1.2 Aims of Bahrain NQF

As illustrated in the previous section, the development of a qualifications framework in the Kingdom of Bahrain was based on addressing crucial developments related to the national vision, some of the needs underpinning the decision to develop the NQF are:

- Strengthening the links between qualifications and labour market.
- Ensuring consistency in qualifications.
- Having a proper system for comparing qualifications.
- Setting better progression pathways between qualifications and education and training sectors.
- Establishing common grounds to identify the value of qualifications to all parties.

Hence, the NQF of Bahrain is envisaged to:

- provide a stronger basis for the understanding, comparison and recognition of national and foreign qualifications, thereby improving the understanding of employers, parents and learners of the value of qualifications;
- provide fit-for-purpose qualifications that have stronger linkages with labour market and learner needs;
- increase the accountability of education and training institutions towards maintaining high quality standards in their provisions;
- improve the opportunities for mobility and progression of learners within and across higher education, vocational and general education sectors;
- promote the concept of lifelong learning through the recognition of all types of learning: formal, non-formal and informal.

6.1.3 NQF of Bahrain Characteristics

The NQF of Bahrain is supported by Royal Decree 83 Of 2013, which states:

“All Education and Training institutions are required to coordinate with the BQA to place their qualifications on the NQF, in accordance with BQA’s regulations”.

In addition to being mandatory, the core characteristics of the NQF of Bahrain; Figure 1, is that it is a learning outcome-based qualifications framework, comprehensive of all education and training sectors and recognises all forms of learning: formal, non-formal and informal learning. The NQF comprises 10 levels, each being identified by a unique set of Level Descriptors²³. Placement of a national qualification on the NQF requires mapping the Learning Outcomes (LO) of each unit comprising the qualification; and the overall qualification LO, against the NQF Level Descriptors.

²³ NQF Level Descriptors: <http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/Documents/NQF%20Level%20Descriptors.pdf>



Figure 1: Overview of Bahrain NQF

NQF Level Descriptors are classified into three strands (categories): Knowledge, Skills and Competence. These strands are expressed into five sub-strands as shown in Figure 2.

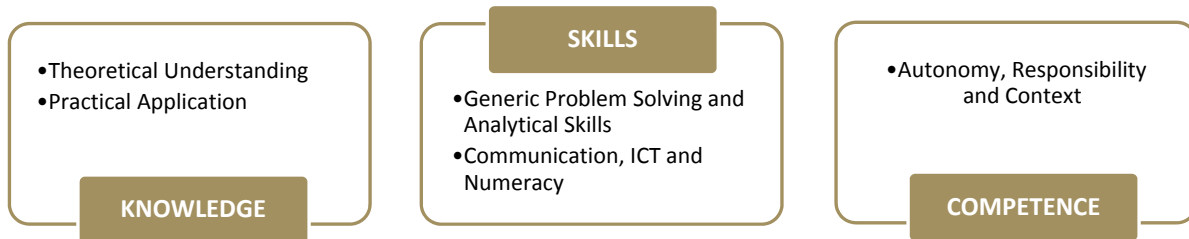


Figure 2: Level Descriptors Sub-strands.

6.2 Education and Training System in Bahrain

This section sheds light on the current education and training system in the Kingdom and explains the roles of each of the parties involved. The Education and Training system in Bahrain involves: regulatory bodies, internal and external accreditation, quality assurance, qualifications framework, and institutions. Each playing a significant role in the system. Regulatory bodies in Bahrain are mainly the MoE, the MLSD, the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs, and the HEC. Regulatory bodies of the education and training sector of Bahrain have the authority to approve and license institutions and their offering. Currently, statistics show that there are around 1300 qualifications offered in the Kingdom across the three main sectors²⁴, 600 of which are foreign qualifications.

The education and training system of Bahrain has been going through many developmental efforts for quite a while. The Global Competitiveness Reports of the World Economic Forum (WEF) records such improvement and how it affected the overall Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) of the Kingdom. Since 2006, Bahrain has dramatically improved in²⁵:

- Quality of primary education (rank improved from 65 to 36) - under the fourth pillar: Health and

²⁴HE, VET and GE

²⁵ WEF: Global Competitiveness Reports from 2006-2007 to 2016-2017.

primary education.

- Quality of education system (rank improved from 79 to 25), quality of math and science education (rank improved from 86 to 29) and quality of management schools (rank improved from 77 to 34) – under the fifth pillar: Higher education and training.
- Quality of scientific research institutions (rank improved from 117 to 75), university-industry collaboration in R&D (rank improved from 121 - 44) and availability of scientist and engineers (rank improved from 96 to 42) – under the twelve's pillar: Innovation.

6.2.1 General Education

General education qualifications²⁶ are mainly regulated by MoE and it involves national curriculum - national qualifications- which is owned by the MoE, in addition to advanced international curricula – foreign qualifications. The scope of general education in Bahrain covers basic education, secondary education (including technical and vocational), continuous education and religious education, Figure 3.

The year 1919 marked the beginning of modern public school system in Bahrain. Al-Hidaya Al-Khalifia school for boys was established in Muharraq. Following which another public schools for boys was established in Manama in 1926. In 1928 the first public school for girls was opened in Muharraq. Most recent statistics on MoE website show that there are 208 government schools in the Kingdom with a total of approximately 133889 students. All government schools are managed and supervised by the MoE. The curriculum is designed and approved by the MoE. Appointment of staff and principals' preparation, professional development and evaluation is the responsibility of the MoE. The Ministry also follows up on quality improvement efforts through the senior chiefs and chiefs of schools. On the other hand, there are 77 private schools in Bahrain with a total of approximately 61538 students. Almost half of the students in private schools are Bahraini. There are approximately 138 private kindergartens. Private schools usually have their own board. The MoE represented in the Directorate of Private Education is responsible for licensing and supervising the private schools. The Directorate along with other Directorates in the MoE provide private schools in Bahrain with technical support and assistance; such as finding teachers to be appointed for mandatory topics that are required by the ministry; providing free Arabic language, Islamic education, and Bahrain history and geography textbooks. It also assigns specialists to supervise the teachers of those subjects who teach the MoE curriculum.

Grade	Age	Stage			
12	17	Secondary Education	General	Technical & Vocational (Specialized Track - Advanced Track)	Religious Education Primary, Intermediate & Secondary
11	16				
10	15				
9	14	Basic Education	3 rd Cycle (Intermediate)		
8	13				
7	12				
6	11		2 nd Cycle (Primary)		
5	10				
4	9				
3	8		1 st Cycle (Primary)		
2	7				
1	6				

Figure 3: Illustration of general education in Bahrain²⁷

²⁶ MoE website: <http://www.moe.gov.bh>

²⁷ MoE website: <http://www.moe.gov.bh>

Basic Education

Preceding Basic Education, is the noncompulsory preschool (kindergartens and nurseries) which is not included in the educational ladder. It is run by private sector. However, kindergartens are supervised by the Ministry of Education through Directorate of Kindergartens. Nurseries fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Development.

The constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain lists basic education as compulsory²⁸. It is divided into three stages as expressed in Figure 3 above:

Primary Stage: age 6-11

This stage represents the first formal school ladder in Bahrain and accommodates students of age group 6 - 11. There are two cycles in this stage.

The first cycle includes the first three grades of primary education; in which the class-teacher system is applied, whereby in this system a single teacher teaches most of the subjects, except English language, design and technology, music education, and physical education. The second cycle includes the upper three grades, in which the subject-teacher system is applied, whereby each subject is taught by a teacher who has specialized in a specific discipline, and obtained educational academic qualifications.

The curriculum for the first and the second cycles of basic education, include compulsory common subjects, including: Islamic education, Arabic language, English language, Science and Technology, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Physical Education, Family Education, Art, Music and Songs. Formative evaluation system is applied in the first cycle aiming at reaching the student to master specific competencies of the subjects through continuous teaching, diagnosis and correction process. The teacher relies on a variety of instruments and methods for evaluation, such as continuous systematic observation, daily training and practicing, planned activities, individual and group projects, and diagnostic and cumulative tests. The percentage of success in the basic subjects (Arabic and Mathematics) is 60% of the total mark, while the other subjects is 40%. In the second cycle, all schools apply the above system. The students in the first or second cycles have the opportunity to be re-evaluated in case of failure in the basic subject.

Intermediate Stage: age 12-14

Intermediate stage is considered to be the third cycle and the last one in basic education, which accommodates students of age group 12 - 14, and lasts for three years. A successful completion of the sixth grade of primary cycle or its equivalent from the literacy education is a prerequisite to join this stage. The subject-teacher is applied in this stage, whereby each subject is taught by a teacher who has specialized in a specific discipline, and obtained educational academic qualifications. The curriculum for this stage includes compulsory common subjects, including: Arabic language, English language, science and technology, mathematics, social studies, Islamic education, practical studies and physical education. Students are evaluated through systematic observation, daily training and practicing, planned activities, individual and group projects, mid-semester test, and final examination at the end of each semester. Students must attain an overall score at least 50% in each subject matter. If a student fails a subject matter he/she has the right to re-set the examination in accordance with the terms and conditions stated in the evaluation and examination system. If a student fails more than one subject, he/she will have the right to repeat that grade for one time only, with the provision of remedial lessons for him/her. Failures in the intermediate level are allowed to set the examination as external students. Those who pass the examination are awarded Intermediate Education Certificate.

Secondary Stage: age 15-17

This stage is considered to be a complementary one to basic education, and a new phase for the student for preparing him/her to enter universities and higher institutions or directly enter the labour market. It accommodates students of age group 15-17; the duration of study is three years, which is divided into six semesters (three levels). A successful completion of the intermediate stage or its equivalent is a requirement to join the first semester of secondary education. This stage includes many tracks that lead to different pathways, as can be seen in Figure 3 above.

²⁸ Bahrain Constitution, Chapter II, Article 7

The credit-hours system is applied in this stage providing broad choices of subjects and courses. It permits students to tailor programs that suit their future goals. The student has a choice to pursue a science curriculum, a literary curriculum, a commercial curriculum, a technical curriculum, or textile and clothing track. The latter track is for girls only. Students can change tracks depending on the common courses among more than one specialization. However, since 2004/2005 a unified Academic Secondary Education Track was implemented in two schools and is gradually being generalised to cover all schools. It includes Science, Literary and Commercial Tracks.

The evaluation system for secondary stage involves a combination of continuous, diagnostic and formative evaluation carried out by the teacher of each course throughout the semester (30% of the course's final grade), internal evaluation made by the school by means of a mid-semester examination carried out by MoE in collaboration with schools by means of unified examination (20% of the course's final grade) and external evaluation (50% of the course's final grade).

Religious Education

Religious education takes place at a specialised institute that follows the Ministry of Education. It is for boys only. The system of this type of education is the same as that of general Basic Education and Secondary Education in terms of duration of study and admission age, but it emphasises on Islamic studies aiming at the preparation of men with an appropriate background in religious affairs.

Education in Private Schools

Private schools in Bahrain offerings cover all educational levels, starting from kindergarten, primary, intermediate and secondary. These are mainly National or Foreign private schools. National private schools offer national curricula under the supervision of MoE. Foreign private schools offer foreign curricula and educational supervision, and awards certificates of the country of origin. The Directorate of Private Education within MoE is the arm responsible for legislations on the private education schools.

Special Needs and Rehabilitation Education

In Bahrain, there are two main bodies responsible for special needs and rehabilitation education. MoE and the MLSD. Depending on case MoE has a number of approaches that ranges from providing special assistance and the class room integration method in ordinary schools to admission to specialised educational institutions. On the other hand, MLSD regulates a variety vocational and academic rehabilitation programmes for different age segments. These mainly cover hearing defect, special education, vocational rehabilitation and craft workshop.

Continuing Education

MoE organises educational programmes for two categories in the society; the first one is the illiterates, and the second includes those who have passed successfully literacy and follow-up stages, and are willing to continue their education, in addition to the continuing education programmes for adults.

Quality Assurance in General Education

The BQA represented by its concerned directorates, these are: The Directorate of Government Schools Reviews (DGS) and The Directorate of Private Schools and Kindergarten Reviews (DPS) are the external bodies responsible for monitoring and reporting on the quality of the provision of education in public and private schools in Bahrain. Specifically, both the directorates are responsible for the following:

- evaluating and reporting on the quality of provision in all schools; government and private schools;
- establishing success measures;
- spreading best practice;
- making recommendations for school improvements via identifying strengths and areas in need for improvement.

The DPS and DGS reviews focus on the following aspects:

- Students' academic achievement;
- Students' personal development;
- The quality of provision in: Teaching and learning; and Support and guidance.
- Leadership, management and governance.

Furthermore, the framework used by the DGS and DPS reflects international good practice in the sector, which was developed in consultation with international renowned partners and national stakeholders to ensure fitness-for-purpose. It has been developed to encompass the context and the needs of all schools operating in Bahrain, both government and private.

In addition, National Examinations conducted by the BQA, through its Directorate of National Examinations (DNE), provide MoE with results and reports on national achievements, as well as curriculum status, for the purpose of curriculum development and improvement.

6.2.2 Vocational Education and Training

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Bahrain is mainly regulated by the MLSD. Institutes offer achievement programmes and externally accredited programmes in addition to attendance workshops. However, Bahrain Training Institute (BTI) is regulated by the MoE. BTI offers National Diplomas and Higher National Diplomas in addition to some short courses. In addition, Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance (BIBF) offers training for the banking sector and supervised by the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB). As of 2017, there are 75 active training providers under the umbrella of the MLSD and 40 active educational providers for ages under 18 years regulated by the MoE.

In 2006 the Institute of Public Administration (BIPA) was established by Royal Decree No. (65) for the year 2006 with the purpose of achieving sustainable development for the country and its citizens by providing training programmes to support government leaderships and developing leaders in the public sector.

Furthermore, there are specialised programmes leading to qualifications for special needs learners as explained earlier. These mainly cover vocational and academic rehabilitation programmes which are currently under the MLSD after the merge of the Ministry of Social Development with the Ministry of Labour.

Another main contributor to the sector is industry training centers. These offer training qualifications within workplace. In addition, Bahrain Vocational Qualifications are currently under development. Further details of available VET qualifications can be found in the Bahrain NQF Credit Framework²⁹, Annex 6.

Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training

The BQA represented in the Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR), is mandated to review and report on the quality of vocational education and training across the Kingdom of Bahrain and seeks to ensure that the quality of vocational provision is at the level required by employers and that it provides the range and level of skills required by a dynamic economy.

DVR evaluates the quality of vocational education and training offered by:

- Institutions licensed by the MLSD;
- Non-compulsory private institutes licensed by the MoE.

In addition, DVR joins technical schools' reviews undertaken jointly with DGS.

The main objectives of the DVR are to:

- monitor and report on the quality of vocational education and training provision in Bahrain, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, and focusing on the achievement and experience of the learner;

²⁹ Credit Framework: The Guidelines: <http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/Documents/Credit%20Framework.pdf>

- establish a culture of openness, self-regulation and continuous improvement;
- spread best practices;
- recommend how areas for improvement might be addressed;
- offer policy advice to key stakeholders, including the MLSD and the MoE.

Moreover, the DVR undertakes regular reviews and makes realistic recommendations that can be quickly acted upon by all those responsible. This enables timely and well-focused changes to practice and helps establish a culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement.

Also, there are some VET providers whom alongside the BQA review, seek external accreditation. This is especially the case for the externally accredited programmes that are offered in Bahrain; as in most of these cases the international awarding bodies responsible for these programmes, and as part of their quality assurance process regularly review and monitor their qualifications that are offered in another country, and in this case Bahrain.

6.2.3 Higher Education

The first Higher Education Institution in Bahrain was the Gulf Technical College which was established in 1968. In 1981, this institution by Decree became known as Gulf Polytechnic and it started to offer BSc qualifications in Engineering degree in Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Chemical and Computer Science.

In 1976, the College of Health Sciences was established offering courses in Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health Inspection, Diagnostic Radiography, Medical Equipment Maintenance and other health-related vocational courses up to the associate degree level. A degree course in nursing began in 1984.

In 1979, the University College of Arts, Science and Education was established (Amiri Decree, 1978), offering bachelor degree courses in Arabic Language and Islamic Studies, Biology, Chemistry, Education, English Language, Humanities, Mathematics, Physics and Psychology.

In 1986, the University of Bahrain (UoB) was established by decree via bring together already established institutions, namely: Gulf Polytechnic and University, College of Arts and Sciences, under one administrative umbrella; the UoB. This formation marked a new era in the education history of Bahrain.

In 2008, Bahrain Polytechnic was founded as part of the reform project by Royal Decree No.65 for the year 2008. The Polytechnic has been established to address the need for a skilled Bahraini labour force, with the aim of supporting economic growth and diversification. Bahrain Polytechnic delivers applied, professional and technical qualifications. In the same year Bahrain Teachers College (BTC), currently a college of the University of Bahrain, was established by MoE with the mandate of preparing teachers, educational administrators, and other education specialists.

In addition to these National/Government Higher Education Institutions (HEI) which are self-regulated, there are 10 private HEI that are regulated by the HEC, as well as one institute offering a higher education programme, alongside its professional vocational qualifications. Furthermore, the Arabian Gulf University (AGU) was established based on the belief in the importance of university and higher-level education in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) society. The General Convention of Arab Education for the GCC at its fourth meeting was held in Bahrain in April 1979, it was decided to establish the Arabian Gulf University to be located in the Kingdom of Bahrain. AGU is a medical and postgraduate studies University which is accredited by the Ministries of Higher Education in GCC countries.

Generally, HEIs enrolment in the Kingdom, is determined by three main factors: the demand for higher education, the need for qualified manpower, and the economic situation of Bahrain, and until now there has been a great demand for higher education in the country. The need for skilled manpower is also present and the economic situation. Overall, the main qualifications offered in the higher education sector in Bahrain are diplomas, associate degrees, bachelor degrees, postgraduate diplomas, masters and doctoral degrees. Details on referenced qualifications can be sought from the Bahrain NQF Credit Framework³⁰, Annex 6.

³⁰ Credit Framework: The Guidelines: <http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/Documents/Credit%20Framework.pdf>

In addition, the MoE utilises the scholarships awarded by other countries to send students for specialized courses that are not available in the Kingdom.

Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The BQA represented in the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) is mandated to 'review the quality of the performance of education and training institutions in light of the guiding indicators developed by the BQA. DHR's main objectives are to:

- enhance the quality of higher education in Bahrain by conducting reviews into the quality assurance arrangements of higher education institutions in the Kingdom and identifying areas in need of improvement and areas of strength;
- conduct programme reviews within higher education to ensure that minimum standards are being met;
- ensure there is public accountability of higher education institutions through the provision of an objective assessment of the quality of each provider and their programmes (Review Reports) for use by parents, students, and the HEC;
- promote quality assurance in higher education through:
 - facilitating capacity development workshops and related activities;
 - liaising with the HEC, industry, business and other stakeholders; and
 - identifying good practice where it exists and disseminating it throughout the Bahraini higher education sector.
- act as an advocate for Bahrain higher education within the Kingdom, the region and internationally.

The DHR has three main functions: conducting Institutional Reviews; Academic Programmes Reviews and capacity building.

Institutional Review

DHR conducts institutional reviews across all HEI in Bahrain to assess the effectiveness of an institution's quality assurance arrangements against eight pre-defined quality standards consisting of 25 indicators through which areas of strength and weakness can be identified and a summative judgment is concluded. The framework for reviews is in accordance with the good practice of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). Besides having the DHR within BQA as the major contributor to quality assurance of higher education in Bahrain, the HEC has recently started implementing accreditation of institutions.

Academic Programmes Review

Academic Programmes Reviews are specialised exercises, that focus on the academic standards of each programme and its delivery and the quality assurance arrangements within all learning programmes at Bachelor and Master levels within a college in a particular major disciplinary area. The reviews are carried out using four Indicators each of which has a number of sub-indicators and which are in line with international good practice. The Review Reports developed as a result of the Academic Programmes Reviews make judgements about whether or not each of the programmes meets the requirements of each Indicator as well as make recommendations for the enhancement of the programmes. All programmes offered within a college are reviewed simultaneously. The purpose of these reviews is to ensure that graduates enter the workplace with the skills and knowledge to be able to contribute to the further economic development of Bahrain. In addition, most of Bahrain's HEIs seek external accreditation from international professional bodies.

6.2.4 Qualifications Framework

The NQF of Bahrain, which was launched in late 2014, connects all of these efforts as it brings all the education and training system players into the picture. The NQF framework considers all of the information stated above. Further in this report, specifically under the five principles of referencing, this will be demonstrated.

6.3 Bahrain Responses to Principles 1 to 5

Principle 1

The roles and responsibilities of the relevant bodies and authorities are clear and transparent.

BQA Structure and responsibilities

In 2008, the BQA was established under the name “Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training” (QAAET) by Royal Decree³¹ with a view to improving the quality of education and training in the Kingdom of Bahrain. BQA initially comprised a number of sector-specific review units (namely: Higher Education Review Unit, Vocational Review Unit, Schools Review Unit) alongside a dedicated National Examinations Unit. In 2012, Royal Decree No. (83) stated BQA as the body responsible for managing and maintaining the NQF in addition to its original responsibilities.

The restructured BQA aims to be a leader in ‘fostering sustainable quality enhancement for world-class education and training sectors in the Kingdom of Bahrain’. The BQA established two General Directorates, the GDR and the GDQ, in addition to the Directorate of National Examinations (DNE) which is responsible for preparing and conducting national examinations to test performance levels of students in the stages of pre-university education.

The GDR is the arm responsible for reviewing and reporting on the quality of education and training in the Kingdom. This comes with a commitment to identifying strengths and areas for improvement, as well as spreading good practice. The GDR manages four specific directorates:

- DHR: responsible for conducting quality reviews of both institutions and the programmes of higher education.
- DVR: responsible for evaluating and reporting on the quality of vocational education and training provision.
- DGS: responsible for reviewing, monitoring and reporting on students’ achievement and the quality of teaching and learning in government schools.
- DPS: responsible for reviewing, monitoring and reporting on students’ achievement and the quality of the teaching and learning in private schools and kindergartens.

On the other hand, the GDQ has the responsibility of administrating and maintaining the NQF in line with the NQF General Policies³², Annex 7. This is done through two directorates and governed by the NQF framework, standards and procedures:

- Directorate of National Framework Operations (DFO): responsible for carrying out the main processes of the NQF; these are Institutional Listing (IL) and Qualification Placement (QP) of national qualification. The processes are governed by the NQF framework, standards and procedures.
- Directorate of Academic Cooperation and Coordination (DAC): the strategic arm of the GDQ that is responsible for national coordination and international cooperation. It is highly related to capacity building of institutions, awareness projects, and developmental projects to enhance and support the NQF operations, such as: alignment of foreign qualifications, referencing exercises, promoting lifelong learning in addition to achieving futuristic and strategic goals.

With the clear distinction in responsibilities; these two directorates work hand in hand in populating, maintaining and improving the standards of the NQF in addition to realizing the ultimate goals of the NQF.

Furthermore, the operations and frameworks of the GDR and GDQ are integrative³³. Results of reviews are taken into account by the GDQ when listing institutions, placing national qualifications on and aligning

³¹ Royal Decree No. (32) of 2008, amended by Royal Decree No. (6) of 2009.

³² NQF general policies: <http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/Documents/EN/NQF%20General%20Policies.pdf>

³³ BQA GDR frameworks: <http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/Publications/Pages/manuals.aspx>

foreign qualifications to the NQF. In all, the status of institutions and qualifications on the NQF register is governed by review outcomes.

NQF Advisory Committee

The NAC; as explained earlier, was established by the Cabinet Resolution No. 52 of 2013. The Advisory Committee is chaired by the BQA’s Chief Executive and includes representatives from NQF’s main stakeholders; MoE, HEC, CSB, MLSD, Government Universities, Private Universities, Private Training Institutes and the Private Sector³⁴. The Advisory Committee oversees all NQF activities, particularly the recommendation of policies related to the IL, QP and alignment; these are presented to them after they are quality assured by BQA’s Academic Committee³⁵. The resulting recommended policies and operations are presented to the BQA Board of Directors for approval and then endorsed by the SCET. Figure 4, provides an overview of NQF governance structure.

The NQF advisory committee meets on regular basis without exceeding a total of 12 times a year³⁶ and has a strategic role to the NQF operations. In addition to being a quality assuring step to decisions made by the GDQ and recommending listing institutions, placing national qualification on and aligning foreign qualifications to the NQF, the NAC acts as strategic partners to the NQF and the reform project. The NAC provides consultation to NQF ongoing projects and help spreading the NQF principles and ideas in the organizations/bodies they represent; hence, providing dramatic support in achieving the NQF goals and driving change in the education and training system of the Kingdom. Currently the GDQ started an awareness campaign to learners and employers with the prospect to involve learners as advisors to the NQF.



Figure 4: NQF governance structure

³⁴ Representation of industry.

³⁵ BQA Academic Committee is a standing committee with representation of all BQA’s directorates

³⁶ Resolution No. (8) for the year 2014, Gazette 3155.

Joint Committees and Partnership Approach

Generally, BQA utilises outcome of all its activities to provide policy advice to key stakeholders and work on joint improvement projects, these are mainly the concerned regulatory bodies. That is done through active joint committees with clear remits. The purpose of such collaboration is to address common areas for improvement and bridging gaps identified. As part of NQF principles and general policies, all projects are carried out in partnership approach to ensure transparency and fitness for purpose.

Principle 2

Comparison of the Bahrain NQF and the SCQF demonstrates matching between the levels of the two frameworks.

A detailed analysis of the level descriptors in each framework was undertaken to identify where there was correspondence between a level descriptor in one framework with the level descriptors in the other framework. The detailed analysis is included at Annex 1.

Referencing summary between Bahrain NQF and SCQF Levels

Bahrain National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
10	12
9	11
9 (with a significant match to 8)	10
8	9
7	8
6	7
5	6
4 (with some match to level 5)	5
3	4
2	3
1 (with some match to level 2)	2
No match	1

There is a correspondence between the levels of the Bahrain NQF and the SCQF for all levels in the frameworks except for SCQF level 1 which finds no match with the Bahrain NQF. The SCQF levels sometimes match more than one level in the Bahrain framework, this may be a consequence of the fact that the SCQF has more levels than the Bahrain framework.

In reaching the decisions on the level to level matching it was necessary in many cases to make professional judgements to arrive at a 'best fit' between the levels in the two frameworks. These considerations are described in detail in Annex 1.

As part of the process of arriving at the most reliable correspondence between levels in the two frameworks two further processes were completed. The first was to have experts in the two countries examine the logic of the proposed by liaising with those with a specific qualification responsibility. In Bahrain this was carried out in collaboration with a working group representing the education and training system. The working group involved regulatory bodies, providers from different institutions representing the different sectors, in addition to education and training stakeholders and employers.

The second process was to select three similar types of qualifications from different parts of the education systems, from each country a school graduation qualification, a skilled worker qualification and a Masters level qualification was chosen and then the pairs of qualifications were compared to each other in detail. For each of the pairs of qualifications the following comparative analysis was made:

- the general profile of the qualifications such as their national status and basic structure;
- the learner recruitment requirements for both qualifications;
- the destinations of successful graduates of the qualifications;
- the learning methods that are used in preparing learners;

- the expected learning outcomes that are the defining characteristics of the qualifications;
- the assessment strategy and practices and general quality assurance aspects.

Summary

There is a reliable correspondence between the levels in the two frameworks, this is shown in the table above. The correspondence is supported by expert scrutiny and the detailed analysis of qualifications in each country.

Principle 3

The NQF and the SCQF are based on learning outcomes and, where these exist, credit systems and the recognition of credit.

Learning outcomes and NQF level descriptors

BQA was developed as a main contributor to the reform project of education and training in Kingdom of Bahrain. One significant impact of BQA is the shifting of qualification design in the Kingdom towards an outcome-based design. Mainly, higher education and vocational education and training sectors were influenced by such impact, while MoE was already adopting learning outcomes and objectives for designing some general education qualifications since early 1990s. Sharing the same concept; The NQF of Bahrain on the other hand, is designed to ensure that all national qualifications are outcome based. The 10 levels comprehensive qualifications framework is expressed by a grid of level descriptors. Where each level is described by a set of unique statements that represent the complexity of acquired learning³⁷. These are categorised into three main strands with five sub-strands:

- Knowledge:
 - theoretical understanding and
 - practical application;
- Skills:
 - generic problem solving and analytical skills, and
 - communication, ICT and numeracy;
- Competence:
 - Autonomy, responsibility and context.

Consequently, the NQF has a number of qualification design requirements as part of the eligibility criteria for placement on the NQF, which is governed by NQF policies³⁸. As a rule, only qualifications that adhere to the NQF design requirements can be placed on the NQF, these are:

- complying with relevant regulatory body requirements and criteria where applicable;
- development of qualifications must be based on justification linked to learners, labour market, or other needs;
- qualifications must be developed in line with any related national standards, where applicable (e.g. National Occupational Standards)³⁹;
- qualifications should articulate access requirements, mechanisms for credit transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), progression routes for learners, and whether they would lead to further studies or employment, as applicable;
- qualifications must have appropriate structures, expressed in units and stating mandatory and elective unit's where applicable;
- qualifications and comprising units must state learning outcomes. Learning outcomes must be assessed using summative assessment and comply with the NQF Level and Credit requirements. The institution must ensure that learning outcomes are covered adequately with fit-for-purpose

³⁷ The NQF level descriptors were reviewed and revised considering the pilot phase outcomes. The current and updated NQF level descriptors can be found here:

<http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/Documents/NQF%20Level%20Descriptors.pdf>

³⁸ NQF General Policy 2: Qualification Compliance with NQF Requirements.

³⁹ NOS project was initiated back in 2012

assessments, and demonstrate – where applicable – how learning outcomes of individual units are being linked to the overall learning outcomes of the qualification or programme. Learning outcomes may include transferable skills such as communication, numeracy, problem solving, information technology and working with others;

- units have to be linked with learning and teaching methods that are adequate and appropriate for the stated learning outcomes;
- special needs learners are provided with suitable learning and assessment arrangements;
- qualifications and comprising units must be allocated an NQF Level and Credit value;
- qualifications' design must adhere to the NQF Credit Framework Guidelines;
- suitable arrangements are in place for the Mapping and Confirmation processes. Members participating in the Mapping and Confirmation processes should be able to apply the NQF policies, procedures and guidelines, and must be familiar with the use of NQF Level Descriptors. The institution must follow the qualifications Mapping and Confirmation processes declared within the IL submission.

Credit

Prior to the implementation of the NQF, different credit systems were adopted in the Kingdom⁴⁰. The NQF - as part of its goals- worked on unifying how the volume of learning is expressed across the education and training system in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The NQF makes it mandatory for national qualifications to express the learning volume in NQF credit. The NQF credit system relays on calculation of the notional learning hours and assign it to units/courses comprising a qualification⁴¹. In this context one NQF credit equates to 10 notional learning hours. This is mainly to ease the comparison of the depth of learning, aide in the design of units and qualifications, provide a framework for learning access, transfer and progression, and support the development of consistent learner workloads across qualifications within different disciplines and/or within different learning environments.

The NQF has been designed and developed with the ability to recognise non-formal and informal learning in addition to formal learning. The GDQ is moving in the direction of achieving such potential of the NQF. In 2016, a credit framework⁴² has been developed to support the NQF operations and the design of national qualification. The guidelines of the credit framework provide clear description of credit and its distribution for national qualifications. In addition, it provides a ground for facilitating cross-sector credit transfer by supporting the development of a Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) in the Kingdom and potential progression pathways.

Currently, credit transfer is mainly taking place in the higher education sector being governed by the HEC regulations and general education specifically for G12 qualifications which is governed by MoE regulations. In 2018⁴³, it is planned to initiate the development of a CATS to acknowledge trust and facilitate cross-sector credit transfer and subsequently recognition of previous and experiential learning.

⁴⁰ In higher education sector, most HEI adopted the American Credit System while a minority adopted the European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System. In General Education only G12 follow a credit system while vocational education and training mostly adopted guided learning hours.

⁴¹ In the Bahrain NQF sense, notional learning hours is the time in hours that an average learner would take to successfully complete all learning activities. Including assessments, required for achieving the learning outcomes and subsequently achieving a qualification.

⁴² Credit Framework: The Guidelines: <http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/Documents/Credit%20Framework.pdf>

⁴³ Strategic plan 2015-19

Principle 4

The policies and processes for the inclusion of qualifications on the NQF and the SCQF are clear and transparent.

The NQF is governed by 10 statutory policies⁴⁴. These policies clearly articulate commitments and responsibilities towards placing qualifications on the NQF in addition to other NQF commitments. While the GDQ stands by four principles⁴⁵:

Principle 1: Consistency and Transparency, **Principle 2:** Security and Confidentiality, **Principle 3:** Code of Conduct and **Principle 4:** Capacity Building, there are clear procedures for placing national qualifications on the NQF, as well as for the alignment of foreign qualifications. These are published in the NQF handbook for institutions⁴⁶ and are supported by internal GDQ procedures which also caters for quality assuring the processes. It is worth noting that these processes and procedures have been developed in partnership with the NQF main stakeholders identified earlier. Furthermore, NQF operations are evidence based.

As explained earlier, the DFO within the GDQ is responsible for managing and processing IL and QP applications in accordance with GDQ procedure. On the other hand, the DAC is responsible for processing Alignment requests in addition to providing institutions with support throughout all processes of the NQF. This includes providing awareness, capacity building sessions, training for validation and evaluation panels and conducting readiness visits to applicant institutions as means of support prior to submission.

It is a requirement that all eligible institutions must be listed in the NQF register prior to placing their national qualifications on the NQF. This is carried out through the IL process which ensures that applicant institutions are conforming to the IL standards.

The IL process is applicable and mandatory to any institution that fulfills the following criteria⁴⁷:

- has a valid license/approval issued by a regulatory body, where applicable (e.g. MLSD, MoE, HEC, etc.),
- has passed its quality assurance review conducted by the GDR, where applicable. However, newly established institutions that have not yet been reviewed by the GDR may be listed solely against the NQF IL Standards,
- offers qualifications that meet the NQF qualification design requirements.

This process is mainly concerned with checking that education and training institutions have suitable governance and operational structures to ensure that learning is occurring in a robust environment. Where institutions must meet the IL standards, Table 2 below, to ensure the quality of their learning environment and qualifications⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ NQF General Policies: <http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/Publications/DocLib/NQF%20General%20Policies.pdf>

⁴⁵ GDQ Principles - NQF handbook for institution– 2017 edition, page 17:
<http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/Publications/DocLib/NQF%20Handbook%20for%20Institutions%20-%202017%20Edition.pdf>

⁴⁶ NQF handbook for Institutions – 2017 edition:
<http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/Documents/NQF%20Handbook%20for%20Institutions%20-%202017%20Edition.pdf>

⁴⁷ Eligibility criteria for institutions – NQF handbook for institution– 2017 edition, page 31:

<http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/Documents/NQF%20Handbook%20for%20Institutions%20-%202017%20Edition.pdf>

⁴⁸ NQF IL standards can be found in full details on:

<http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/Documents/Institutional%20Listing%20Standards.pdf>

Table 2: Institutional Listing Standards

Institutional Listing Standards	
1	ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION: the institution has formal arrangements for learners' access, transfer and progression that ensure that all learners – including those with special needs – are involved in appropriate learning opportunities, all barriers to their progression are removed, and they are supported on their route to further learning and/or employment.
2	QUALIFICATION DEVELOPMENT, APPROVAL AND REVIEW: the institution has formal arrangements for the design, approval and review of national qualifications bearing NQF Level and Credit.
3	ASSESSMENT DESIGN AND MODERATION: learners are assessed and learning achievements are recognised using agreed and published criteria. Learners' achievements are assessed fairly and consistently.
4	CERTIFICATION AND AUTHENTICATION: learners' achievements are recorded, certified and authenticated to mark the achievement of learning outcomes.
5	CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT: the institution operates and regularly reviews a fit-for-purpose quality assurance system that covers all processes related to the Institutional Listing Standards and NQF requirements with the aim of continuous quality improvement.

The process, which can be found in the NQF handbook, involves an IL evaluation panel which has the responsibility to review and pass a judgment⁴⁹.

Only listed institutions can apply for placing qualifications on the NQF. The QP process, as illustrated earlier, is mandatory for all national qualifications that meet the eligibility criteria listed below:

- have a valid license/approval issued by the appropriate regulatory body, where applicable (e.g. MLSD, MoE, HEC, etc.);
- be developed and delivered in the Kingdom of Bahrain;
- be internally quality assured within the institution;
- comprise at least ten notional learning hours;
- meet the NQF qualification design requirements⁵⁰ (*refer to Principle 3*).

The placement process provides a means of determining the value of a qualification. Through which education and training institutions and stakeholders including learners, employers and parents can expect to have a better understanding of the wide variety of qualifications. Stakeholders can be assured that any qualification placed on the NQF has met minimum requirements for quality, consistency and learner support. The QP process involves two major steps: verification of level and credit and validation of the qualification. It is the institutions responsibility to propose the level and credit for a qualification using the NQF level descriptors, while the DFO within the GDQ carries out the verification of level and credit. Afterwards, a validation panel is appointed by the GDQ to ensure that national qualifications are credible, fit-for-purpose, and meet market and learner needs. Validation panels usually involve a combination of academics and professionals who receive training prior to appointment. Validation involves a process of expert review that focuses on the justification for and coherence of a qualification⁵¹. This is done in accordance with a set of five Validation Standards, Table 3.

⁴⁹ Further details can be found in NQF handbook for institution– 2017 edition:

<http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/Publications/DocLib/NQF%20Handbook%20for%20Institutions%20-%202017%20Edition.pdf>

⁵⁰ NQF design requirements - NQF handbook for institution– 2017 edition, page 39-40:

<http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/Publications/DocLib/NQF%20Handbook%20for%20Institutions%20-%202017%20Edition.pdf>

⁵¹ Further details can be found in NQF handbook for institution– 2017 edition:

<http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/Publications/DocLib/NQF%20Handbook%20for%20Institutions%20-%202017%20Edition.pdf>

Table 3: Validation Standards

Validation Standards	
1	Justification of Need: confirming that the overall rationale and justification is based on actual and tangible labour market or learner needs and stating potential occupations to which the qualification leads. Institutions might conduct or use existing market research to establish the need to develop a particular qualification and also might consult with relevant stakeholders such as industry representatives and targeted learners.
2	Qualification Compliance: confirming that the design of the qualification complies with NQF design requirements and any relevant regulatory body requirements and criteria where applicable.
3	Appropriateness of Qualification Design, Content and Structure: ensuring that the title of the qualification is concise and indicative of its content, the qualification structure is designed appropriately, and mandatory and elective units are each clearly detailed and include targeted transferable skills where applicable. Also ensuring that the content is valid and fit for purpose and that the notional length of the programme is appropriate for the proposed qualification and for the required learning outcomes. Arrangements must be in place to meet the needs of learners with special needs.
4	Appropriateness of Assessment: ensuring that assessment is planned to adequately cover the targeted learning or performance outcomes and reflects how assessment standards will be maintained, verified and quality assured.
5	Appropriateness of NQF Levels and Credit Values: ensuring the adequacy of the proposed NQF levels both for the overall qualification and for all composite units and learning outcomes. Ensuring that assigned notional learning time and credit values are appropriate for the targeted learners and in line with the complexity of the learning outcomes.

Decisions made by panels go through internal quality assurance within GDQ and BQA before taken to the NQF Advisory Committee followed by BQA Board of Directors and then to endorsement by the SCET. Once endorsed, listed institutions and valid national qualifications are published on the NQF register⁵². Both processes, IL and QP, involve annual monitoring and review by the GDQ to ensure validity of decisions made be it listing or validation of a qualification. The monitoring and review processes are also linked to outcomes of reviews conducted by the GDR. After being placed on the NQF, a qualification receives a status of archived on the register should it fails to meet the validation standards or the institution owning it fails to maintain its listing status. Furthermore, all placed qualifications are assigned a validity period; after which revalidation is a must to ensure qualification fitness for purpose.

In addition to national qualifications processes, the GQD also caters for alignment of foreign qualifications process. The process is carried out by the DAC and is mainly to provide additional opportunities for employment and access to education. The concept of aligning foreign qualifications to the NQF provides a comparability ground between foreign and national qualifications making the value of foreign qualifications more understandable to employers and stakeholder.

There are certain eligibility criteria for aligning a foreign qualification to the NQF, these are:

- being a foreign qualification that is written in learning outcomes, expressed in units/courses/modules, assessed, quality assured and certified;
- being compliant with the concerned regulatory body requirements, where applicable;
- the qualification and/or its provider(s) within Bahrain passed the latest BQA quality review with a grade of, at least, Satisfactory or equivalent, where applicable;
- the qualification is delivered in the Kingdom of Bahrain by at least one provider that falls under the BQA remit.

⁵² NQF Register:
<http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/Pages/register.aspx>

The process involves reviewing alignment requests against four standards;

1. **Ownership of the Qualification**- the organisation requesting for alignment is the owner of the qualification or has the authority of the owner.
2. **Justification of Need** – the qualification is delivered in the Kingdom of Bahrain with consideration to fitness-for-purpose for market needs and demands.
3. **Quality Assurance** – quality assurance procedures are in place to govern the delivery, assessment, reviewing and monitoring, and certification of the qualification.
4. **NQF level and Credit alignment** – the alignment proposal of NQF level and credit has been reached using a documented process and sufficient evidence of the rationale for the proposal has been provided.

The process of alignment may be entirely carried out by the DAC or in cases a panel may be appointed, this is mainly governed by rules illustrated in the NQF handbook⁵³. Approval of alignment decisions follows the same process of approval as the QP and IL decisions. Aligned qualifications are published on the register and are also monitored annually and reviewed by the GDQ considering the GDR reviews outcomes.

Principle 5

Both qualifications frameworks are underpinned by quality assurance and are consistent with international quality assurance principles.

Establishment with consideration to international good practice

All BQA operations -internal and external – are governed by robust quality assurance systems. Such systems were set out at early stages of the development of the BQA⁵⁴ review directorates and national examinations. These systems and frameworks were established in partnership with international quality assurance bodies. For instance; DHR first framework -both Institutional and programme reviews- was established in collaboration with the Australian Quality Assurance Agency (AUQA)⁵⁵ back in 2007. The DVR and the DSR⁵⁶ first frameworks were developed in collaboration with Nord Anglia⁵⁷ in 2007, while the DNE established its first framework in collaboration with Cambridge International Examinations⁵⁸ in 2007. All these frameworks are reviewed at the end of each cycle as part of BQA commitment to ensuring fitness of purpose, quality assuring its operations and continuous improvement. This was done in partnership with all concerned stakeholders. Similarly, and as explained earlier the GDQ operations and the NQF were established in collaboration with, and consultation of; internationally renowned bodies; SQA, SCQFP and National Qualifications Authority Ireland (NQAI⁵⁹) since early 2010. The initial design and processes (inclusive of standards and level descriptors) were revised after the pilot phase of the NQF to ensure fitness for purpose of all NQF operations to the context of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

BQA and NQF quality systems

As explained earlier, BQA is the main Quality Assurance entity in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Hence all operations of the NQF which is administrated by the GDQ are directly linked to GDR frameworks.

It is an eligibility requirement for operating institutions offering national qualifications to have passed the GDR quality review prior to applying for qualification placement. This also applies for programme reviews outcome of Higher education qualifications. In addition, maintaining the listing and placement status (validity) of an institution and its qualifications on the NQF register is also linked to review outcomes⁶⁰.

⁵³ Further details can be found in NQF handbook for institution– 2017 edition:

<http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/Publications/DocLib/NQF%20Handbook%20for%20Institutions%20-%202017%20Edition.pdf>

⁵⁴ Formerly established as QAAET.

⁵⁵ Currently Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)

⁵⁶ For government schools only

⁵⁷ Nord Anglia Education

⁵⁸ Currently Cambridge Assessment International Education

⁵⁹ Currently under Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

⁶⁰ Refer to principle 4

As part of the BQA values, the GDQ stands by four principles in administrating and maintaining the NQF:

- **Principle 1: Consistency and Transparency**

The GDQ is committed to process all applications in a transparent, objective and consistent manner.

- **Principle 2: Security and Confidentiality**

The GDQ is committed to maintain confidentiality and security of all records related to GDQ activities to cultivate the confidence and trust of stakeholders and the integrity of the NQF.

- **Principle 3: Code of Conduct**

The GDQ embraces the BQA's Code of Conduct for all GDQ staff as well as other experts involved in evaluating applications, to objectively process applications and make judgements that are fair, accurate and consistent.

- **Principle 4: Capacity Building**

The GDQ is devoted to continuously developing its staff and training all experts involved in evaluating applications, ensuring that they are competent and equipped to carry out their roles and responsibilities.

The GDQ applies these principles to its operations and commitments towards the NQF which are governed by 10 policies; the Bahrain NQF General Policies, annex 7, which clearly state the main roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. These policies ensure that all NQF and GDQ operations are built on quality assurance grounds, internally and externally.

One core operation is the qualification placement which requires the owner of the qualification to have a solid quality assurance system governing the design, delivery and recognition of national qualifications⁶¹. This is reflected in NQF policies 1-4⁶². The NQF handbook for institutions explains the main processes of the NQF -Institutional Listing, Qualification Placement and Alignment of Foreign Qualifications- as well as it provides guidelines for institutions. In addition, the GDQ supports such processes by a set of internal procedures to ensure consistency and reliability of its operations. These mainly cover registration, processing applications, timeframes, panel appointment, confidentiality, capacity building, readiness visits, approval process, publication on NQF register... etc. All these procedures are approved by BQA Procedures committee⁶³.

Decisions made regarding IL, QP and Alignment of Foreign qualifications follow three main steps of quality assurance prior to approval of the BQA board and endorsement of the SCET.

1. First: Internally quality assured within the GDQ.
2. Second: Quality assured by the Academic Committee of the BQA.
3. Third: Endorsement by the NQF Advisory Committee -which acts as a final check regarding any arising issues concerning compliance.

On the other hand, in addition to quality assuring processes and decisions made, the GDQ is committed to ensuring the value and credibility of the NQF and its relevance to education and training requirements within the Kingdom of Bahrain through continuous quality improvement⁶⁴. The GDQ is responsible for maintaining, benchmarking and continuously improving the NQF structure, typology and values through the evaluation of international standards and adaptation to the developments of the education and training systems. The GDQ is also responsible for periodically reviewing policies, processes and procedures, taking into consideration the views of relevant stakeholders. As part of the IL and QP processes, post-event feedback is collected from involved parties for the quality assurance purposes. Currently a new edition of the NQF Handbook for Institutions -2017 edition- has been published, the improved edition includes more guidelines covering designing qualifications at different levels and the

⁶¹ Refer to principle 4

⁶² NQF General policies: <http://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/Documents/EN/NQF%20General%20Policies.pdf>

⁶³ BQA Procedure committee involves representation from all directorates of the BQA to ensure consistency, proper ties and avoid overlap between different internal procedures.

⁶⁴ NQF General Policy 10

credit framework for qualifications on the NQF of Bahrain. It also includes the process for aligning foreign qualifications to the NQF.

Joint committees, networks and international collaboration

Within the Kingdom of Bahrain, BQA represented in GDR and GDQ sits on several joint committees to share review and NQF updates with regulatory bodies. With the purpose of exchanging updates and facilitating proper actions towards the education and training system of the Kingdom. These actions may involve penalties imposed by regulatory bodies when needed as well as addressing system improvement recommendations made by the BQA. Some of these are: The Steering Committee for Higher Education Improvement, the Vocational Performance Improvement Strategy, BQA and MoE Coordination Committee and the Joint Executive Committee for preparation of the Unified National Examination System Scheme.

Furthermore, BQA maintains strong ties to international good practices in quality assurance in all its operations through membership in quality assurance networks and signing memoranda with the purpose of sharing good practice, staff development and disseminating information to stakeholders. The BQA is a board member in the following quality assurance networks:

- Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE);
- Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World (IQA);
- International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

BQA, represented in the GDQ has signed memoranda with the following international organisations:

- MoU with SCQFP.
- MoC with New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA);
- MoU with Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA);
- MoU with National Qualifications Authority (UAE);

Furthermore, the BQA, represented in the GDQ, sits as a consulting platform for the development of Gulf Qualifications Framework, Saudi Arabia Qualifications Framework, Oman qualifications Framework.

In addition, driven from its belief in continuous improvement, BQA was externally reviewed by the INQAAHE in 2015 in order to determine the extent to which the BQA is meeting its mandate in line with international good practice. The activity resulted in a review report⁶⁵ and a decision to list BQA as an Aligned Agency with a validity of five years.

⁶⁵ External review report: <http://www.inqaahe.org/sites/default/files/QQA%20report.pdf>

6.4 Future of NQF

The NQF of Bahrain has been developed and designed with certain aims, most of which are futuristic and serve as government priority in the reform project. These aims⁶⁶, such as recognition of informal and non-formal learning and reaching to an appropriate level of trust between the VET and HE sectors. In that context, the GDQ has set its five years strategic plan to address these aims and prepare the education and training system of Kingdom of Bahrain for the establishment of a framework that caters for recognition of prior learning, achieving international recognition and promoting lifelong learning. The GDQ strategic plan 2015-2019 comes to contribute to the following goals:

- Set the National Qualifications Framework's standards and guidelines for the recognition of all learning;
- Ensure the coherence and clarity of Bahrain's qualification system;
- Ensure the qualifications on the NQF are credible and meet the needs of learners and the labour market;
- Encourage the development of articulation and progression routes for learners to different levels of qualifications;
- Promote the values of transparency, equity and recognition of prior learning;
- Promote the NQF using a range of targeted communication channels and mechanisms;
- Achieve international recognition and contribute to the regional /global development of National Qualifications Frameworks.

In general, the GDQ conducts NQF projects as nationwide projects that involves representation of main NQF stakeholders and ensure that products are announced in conferences and forums and published on the BQA website.

6.4.1 Robust Credit System, Progression Pathways and RPL

In 2016 the GDQ published the Credit Framework Guidelines to support the NQF operations and widen the scope of qualifications in Bahrain's Education and Training System and initiate a series of projects to break the barriers between sectors. In addition to the published guidelines, the product involved a set recommendations concerned with a need to improved certain regulations, these have been taken on board through joint committees.

According to the GDQ operational plan, in 2018 the GDQ is initiating a project to study progression pathways and develop CATS in line with the NQF credit framework.

In 2019 a series of national consultations with relevant stakeholders will take place with consideration to RPL. The outcome of such consultation shall provide guidance and feed in the development of an initial model for RPL for Bahrain.

6.4.2 Regional and International Recognition

The BQA has initiated this referencing exercise in accordance with NQF General Policy 8: Referencing the NQF; in pursuit of the international recognition opportunity it holds and in 2017 the GDQ developed the alignment of foreign qualifications framework in collaboration with the SCQFP. The GDQ is planning to conduct two more referencing exercises in coming three years. These are intended to be with the Malaysian Qualifications Framework and the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. The GDQ is also planning to initiate the referencing exercise with the Irish Qualifications Framework of which an initial comparison report was produced in 2014.

While currently, the GDQ is heavily involved in the development of the GCC meta-framework; and the Arab Qualifications Framework which crystallises the efforts of ANQAHE.

⁶⁶ Refer to NQF aims section

6.4.3 Review of NQF operations

The GDQ is planning to review current NQF operations, Institutional Listing and Validation standards and criteria considering stakeholders' feedback and international good practice. In addition, it is planned to conduct a preliminary impact study of the NQF. This shall be done in 2020.

6.4.4 Promoting Lifelong Learning

Continuous involvement of stakeholders is embedded in BQA values; as it stresses the instigation of national capacity building activities, and its stress on the enhancement of partnership and communication with stakeholders. More specifically, since the early stages of the NQF development, awareness efforts took place. These efforts continue as a continual item on the GDQ agenda and the NQF communication strategy. In addition to regulatory bodies and qualification providers, this year the GDQ embarked on series of awareness sessions to learners -currently with undergraduate students- in an attempt to having representation of learners on NQF advisory committee. Employers of different industries and sectors were also targeted with purpose to promote NQF and raising awareness of its potential. Improvement and promoting of career guidance in the Kingdom is on the agenda of the GDQ and part of its communication strategy.

Annex 1: Level-to-Level Comparison of the Bahrain NQF and the SCQF Level Descriptors

This comparison of levels in the SCQF and the Bahrain NQF is part of a broader project looking at the relationship of the SCQF and the Bahrain NQF. The only evidence used for this comparison is the written level descriptors for each framework. In the broader work the level to level comparisons should be derived from a consideration of the broad architecture of the frameworks, specifications of major qualifications at comparable levels and the social 'value' placed on qualifications at comparable levels in the two countries.

The Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework is the oldest framework and is well established, for this reason and no other, the levels of the SCQF is taken as a starting point for the comparison. Taking the Bahrain NQF as a starting point for analysis would have been equally valid and would have led to the same outcomes.

In carrying out the analysis a best fit approach has been used to find the most appropriate match between levels. This means the descriptors above and below the level descriptor which seems to be a good fit have also been analysed. This is reported in the final column in the table below.

When considering the match between descriptors at specific levels, it is useful as part of a best fit process, to highlight significant differences in descriptors as well as significant similarities. These points are also made in the last column of the table that follows.

Language

The analysis presented below is about comparing the meaning of words and phrases. It is a matter of judgement whether the same words actually mean the same thing in each framework and whether different words can be considered to mean the same thing. Both frameworks offer some guidance on what is meant by some words and phrases and this helps to eliminate some of the uncertainty which might arise when determining how these words and phrases can be compared in the frameworks. Nevertheless some assumptions have been made about the intended meanings of words and phrases and, where these assumptions might be significant, they are explained in the third column.

SCQF level (arbitrary comparator)	SCQF descriptors – a summary that aims to give an idea of the level	Bahrain NQF descriptors – a summary and analysis in relation to the SCQF level including language issues.	Best fit match between levels
1	The SCQF descriptor relates to learning that requires participation in experiential situations with varying degrees of support. There is no further specification of knowledge and skills or reference to disciplines.	Whilst in NQF level 1 the learner is also supported and expected to work under supervision the NQF at level 1 is more detailed in the outcomes set out within all 5 sub-strands.	There is no match. The Bahrain descriptor for level 1 is more demanding than SCQF level 1 in terms of specific learning outcomes
2	The SCQF descriptor requires learning outcomes that include basic knowledge and simple skills (often routine) which are demonstrated with support in everyday contexts.	In the NQF the level 1 descriptor has almost exactly the same requirements for knowledge and skills that are expected within supportive environments. The NQF refers to elementary knowledge – it is assumed that this is has the same meaning as the SCQF term basic knowledge.	There is a strong match between SCQF level 2 and NQF level 1. The SCQF level 2 does require the identification of some strengths and/or weaknesses of the work completed. This is not present in the NQF level 1 descriptor. When SCQF level 2 is compared to NQF level 2 the match is good, however the SCQF requires that the learner is evaluative in identifying

			strengths and weaknesses in their work.
3	The SCQF descriptor requires working in a defined area of knowledge with facts and ideas and to for learners to relate these ideas to their experience. Skills include the execution of basic and routine tasks (some pre-planned) under guidance. There is also a requirement to deal with a situation and appreciate the consequences of actions taken. The level descriptors also contain learning outcomes related to using basic skills in literacy, number and ITCs. Learners are expected to begin to show basic evaluative skills at this level.	The NQF descriptor for level 2 in the NQF is broadly similar to the SCQF level 3 descriptor. There is less emphasis on the skills of evaluation in the NQF level 2 except for the requirement to identify the consequences of action or inaction. The SCQF uses the term 'under frequent directive supervision' at level 3 which in linguistic terms does not have an equivalent phrase in the NQF.	There is a good match between the SCQF level 3 descriptor and NQF level 2 It is clear that SCQF does not match NQF level 1 (see above). For NQF level 3 there are learning outcomes that are expected to be demonstrated when the learner is receiving much less support. Problem solving is also more prominent in the NQF at level 3.
4	The SCQF at level 4 introduces the outcome of completing straightforward tasks with some non-routine elements. There is still the expectation that the learner will generally be guided and under some supervision. Problem solving structures are also expected to be used in simple form. Early notions of teamwork are also introduced. The learner is expected to show stronger skills of evaluation such as contributing to the review of completed work and identifying their own strengths and weaknesses relative to the work.	The NQF descriptors for level 3 closely match those of the SCQF. NQF level 3 refers to support whereas SCQF level 4 refers to guidance. This may simply be a different use of language for the same process of helping the learner towards success and more autonomy. In the NQF at level 3 the learner develops and responds but does not produce written and oral communications (this occurs at NQF 5). The most significant difference in the descriptors for these levels is in terms of the level of support that is acceptable. The SCQF offers less in terms of defining the minimum levels of support or guidance on the completion of tasks. The notion of minimal support corresponds to the requirements of SCQF level 5. The NQF is more definitive about support being given both at Level 3 and a NQF level 4.	There is a good match between SCQF level 4 and NQF level 3. It is clear that the SCQF level 4 descriptor does not match the NQF level 2 as the latter is significantly less demanding. The match with level 4 of the NQF is also weak - the greater autonomy and requirement for non-routine processes included in the latter are not present in the SCQF at level 4.
5	Within the knowledge strand the learner develops a range of facts and ideas. The learner is expected to operate in familiar and unfamiliar contexts and work with routine and non-routine skills and processes and to be able to make adjustments to the tools they use. Within both the	The SCQF at level 5 and the NQF at level 4 have many learning outcomes in common. Knowing concepts is a learning outcome for the NQF at level 4. The NQF at level 4 also requires learning outcomes associated with using main theories and concepts. The SCQF at level 5 requires skills	There is a good match between the descriptors for SCQF level 5 and NQF level 4. However, there is also significant match with NQF level 5 descriptors. SCQF at level 5 does not match well with the descriptors for NQF level 3, for example the latter does not require use of abstract ideas. In terms of

	<p>learner is operating with minimal supervision. Team work and leadership are explicit in the descriptors at this level.</p>	<p>in using information which is theoretical and hypothetical. The learner is expected to operate in both frameworks with some responsibility at these levels. However, this is more explicit in the SCQF descriptors for level 5. The level of autonomy in the NQF level 4 descriptor is not clear, especially in terms of the level of guidance or independence in taking responsibility for quality and outcomes. The SCQF level 5 and the NQF level 4 use the term 'basic' for knowledge and for skills with little further definition. It is assumed that 'basic' in the NQF refers to a stage one step more demanding than 'elementary' as defined in the SCQF glossary.</p>	<p>the level of autonomy expected of the learner NQF level 3 is much less demanding. SCQF level 5 does have some comparability with the NQF level 5. However, the knowledge component could be considered generally more demanding in the NQF, also the ability to solve problems, adapt procedures and to make generalisations and predictions is also marginally more demanding at NQF level 5. In terms of accountability, responsibility and working with others, the SCQF level 5 descriptor includes a more defined element of teamwork and leadership than the NQF at level 5.</p>
6	<p>The SCQF descriptors are subject and discipline based and include theoretical or abstract knowledge and its application. There is also a significant problem-solving element which includes hypothesis and drawing conclusions. The SCQF descriptors demand a high level of application of general skills and for learners to work with no guidance or minimal supervision. Also included is a teamwork element and a leadership element.</p>	<p>The NQF level 5 follows the demands of the SCQF level 6 in terms of knowledge and application of skills although the NQF level 5 relates to generalised knowledge of the main theories and concepts. There is a strong match between the generic cognitive skills (SCQF) and the generic problem solving and analytical skills (NQF) and a broad match between the communication sub-strands/characteristics. The NQF does not match the demands of the SCQF in terms of supervisory responsibility. It is assumed that the SCQF phrase 'non- directive supervision' can mean the same as 'some guidance' in the NQF.</p>	<p>There is a match between SCQF level 6 and NQF level 5. The level of autonomy expected where the SCQF is more demanding. All other aspects are similar in demand including the knowledge and understanding and practical application sub-stands/characteristics. The SCQF level 6 is more demanding than NQF level 4 descriptors, for example in terms of knowledge and the skills of its application. The SCQF 6 descriptors do not bear comparison to NQF level 6 descriptors, for example in terms of the knowledge component, where the NQF is more demanding. The same is true for the applications area where the NQF includes reference to working in undefined situations.</p>
7	<p>The SCQF relates to an appreciation of the body of knowledge in a discipline including how it changes. The skills required can be professional standard and evaluation is required. General skills are expected to be practised in complex situations. There is a strong element of personal autonomy which includes the expectation of</p>	<p>The NQF relates to a detailed knowledge and understanding in a subject or discipline. It also requires skills to be advanced and to be practiced in unfamiliar situations. Generic skill requirements follow those of the NQF as do the levels of autonomy. However, the SCQF is perhaps more explicit in defining the latter. There is a transition from basic to advanced knowledge and</p>	<p>There is a good match between SCQF level 7 descriptors and the ones for NQF level 6. The SCQF descriptors for level 7 do not generally match those for NQF level 5. The latter demand less in terms of knowledge and its applications and the contexts for work are much more controlled and supervised.</p>

	leadership and managerial skills.	skills in the NQF at level 6 and 'advanced' is not defined in either framework. It has been assumed that the meaning intended is that the knowledge and skills are the defining characteristic knowledge and skills of the discipline but which are not yet expected as specialist professional knowledge and skills.	The SCQF descriptor for level 7 do not match the requirements of NQF 7. There is a research dimension to NQF level 7 which is not present in the SCQF level. The knowledge base and the undefined contexts in the NQF suggest a higher level of demand.
8	The SCQF descriptor requires specialist knowledge and understanding of core subject or disciplinary concepts and theories. The SCQF descriptors also require an awareness and understanding of research and equivalent scholarly/academic processes. They also expect an awareness and understanding of major current issues. In terms of skills the focus is on professional practice and standards across the descriptors. There is considerable autonomy for applying knowledge and skills.	The NQF level 7 descriptors generally follow the SCQF level 8 ones. NQF level 7 requires knowledge and understanding of research and/or other investigative techniques. It also relates to advanced knowledge (see above), while this is referred to as specialist knowledge in the SCQF level 8 descriptors. The NQF refers to the use of advanced and specialist skills and includes a reference to evaluation. There is weak comparability in the autonomy, accountability and working with others characteristic, with the SCQF requirement including reference to managerial responsibility. However, both require the learner to have responsibility for the work of others.	There is a broad match between SCQF level 8 and the NQF level 7 descriptors. The major differences are the stronger research focus of the SCQF descriptor and the higher demand for autonomy in the SCQF level. The NQF is more demanding in terms of the use of what might be termed advanced (non specialist) knowledge and skills. The SCQF level 8 descriptor does not match the NQF level 6 descriptor where there are a series of markedly higher expectations in the SCQF. The SCQF level 8 descriptor partly matches the NQF level 8 descriptor but there are important differences, especially in the expectation to use advanced knowledge and techniques consistently.
9	The SCQF requires knowledge of the defining features of a subject discipline; there is also reference to specialisms within disciplines and the need to have an appreciation of the forefront knowledge areas. Specialised and advanced techniques are required, and these include critical evaluation and synthesis. Contexts can be unpredictable. There is a demand for considerable autonomy and an expectation to know professional codes of practice and ethical issues involved in the work being done.	The NQF at level 8 has many of the aspects in common with SCQF level 9. For example, the specialist knowledge (perhaps not at the forefront of the field), the investigative research dimension using advanced techniques and the unpredictability of contexts. The NQF level 8 descriptor also captures a level of autonomy similar to the SCQF, but possibly not in such an explicit way. Research/projects feature at NQF level 8 in much the same way as SCQF level 9, however the codes of professional practice and ethical issues dimension is weaker in the NQF level 8. From SCQF level 9 the notion of 'professional' knowledge and practice is introduced which is not present in the NQF until level 9. It is well defined in the SCQF glossary. In the NQF glossary there is	SCQF level 9 largely matches the demands of NQF level 8 descriptors. There are many common elements in the descriptors at these levels. SCQF level 9 does have some match with NQF level 7, but these are weak and overall the match is not significant. For example, the knowledge and skills areas are possibly comparable but the level of expectation in SCQF level 9 for specialisms and the level of unpredictability of contexts makes the match weak. SCQF level 8 does not match NQF level 10 where expert level practice is defined and high levels of management are expected.

		reference to 'professional level' which is defined as 'trained; specialised; qualified; proficient'. The term professional is therefore open to some discussion about whether it is intended to mean the same in both frameworks	
10	The SCQF descriptors require a critical understanding of a specialist area and the capacity to link and integrate important concepts, some of which might be at the forefront of the discipline. Some appreciation of how the knowledge base has developed is required. Investigative work is at an advanced standard and significant creativity is required. A wide range of professional working practices are required that include leadership and working with other subject experts.	SCQF level 10 and NQF level 8 and 9 refer to having detailed knowledge of one or more specialisms and operating in unpredictable environments. Both refer to the need to have significant autonomy/independence and having responsibility for the work of others. Both require significant creativity. Another key comparable element is the requirement for professional behaviours appropriate to the discipline.	SCQF level 10 makes a strong match with NQF level 9, however there is also a significant match with NQF level 8. There are no elements of SCQF level 10 which match well to NQF level 7. The demand at level 10 in terms of knowledge and skills levels is higher, for example in terms of applying specialist knowledge. SCQF 10 does not match NQF 10 where for example the latter requires a contribution to the knowledge base in the field.
11	SCQF level 11 requires a critical knowledge and understanding of the core and specialised theories and concepts, and the descriptors include reference to creativity and originality in terms of knowledge development and use of skills. Advanced specialist skills are required that are informed by work at the forefront of the discipline. The descriptors require application of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis to issues at the forefront of the field in question. Considerable autonomy, managerial skills and leadership are expected to be demonstrated at this level, including working with specialists as peers and managing complex ethical and professional issues.	The NQF at level 9 matches most of the expectations of the SCQF at level 11. There is a less explicit, and (possibly) consequentially less demanding definition of the levels of autonomy and responsibility required. The elements of dealing with ethical and professional issues are not explicit. There is a sense that the professional working context is not defined in the NQF level 10 - for example working alongside specialist peers.	There is a good match between SCQF level 11 and NQF level 9. SCQF 11 does have overlap with NQF level 8 descriptors, although the depth and breadth of knowledge requirements are much weaker in the NQF descriptor, as are the levels of autonomy required. SCQF 11 descriptors also overlap with NQF level 10, but the NQF expects leading specialist knowledge and skills that are consistently at the forefront of the field.
12	The SCQF descriptor for level 12 includes a requirement for being capable of integrating across a depth and breadth of knowledge and making a	The NQF at level 10 includes most aspects of the descriptors for SCQF 12. These are sometimes not expressed as fully in terms of professional practice and so the autonomy	There is a broad match between SCQF level 12 and NQF level 10. The SCQF level 12 descriptor has weak overlap with NQF level 9. For example, both

	<p>contribution to the knowledge base of the field. Another aspect is that both on knowledge and the application of knowledge there is a critical appreciation of the characteristics of the specialist fields involved. The descriptors require the demonstration of substantial authority.</p>	<p>and responsibility requirements cannot be clearly linked. For example, many of the aspects described in the SCQF descriptor are embedded in the NQF requirement to take <i>sole</i> responsibility for the work of individuals, groups and projects.</p>	<p>NQF level 9 and SCQF level 12 require critical overview of the knowledge in the field, making original contributions to it and the demonstration of substantial authority. However SCQF level 12 also requires substantial leadership and authority including dealing with ethical issues and codes of practice.</p>
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Summary of linkages based on descriptor analysis

SCQF	NQF
1	No match
2	1 (with some match to level 2)
3	2
4	3
5	4 (with some match to level 5)
6	5
7	6
8	7
9	8
10	9 (with a significant match to 8)
11	9
12	10

Annex 2: Referencing the Bahrain NQF and the SCQF

Qualification comparison to verify the proposed level to level linkage. Comparing qualifications at Level 4 Bahrain NQF – level 5 SCQF

School Graduation Qualification:

Bahrain: Secondary School Qualification (G12)

Scotland: Scottish Senior Phase Secondary School Qualification (National 5)

Domains of comparison

1. Qualification profile

Both qualification types are of high standing and managed by national bodies of high status. The 'owning' institution in Bahrain is the Ministry of Education. In Scotland, National 5 Courses are managed developed and awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

In both cases the qualification level is considered as continuous to basic or lower secondary education and a new phase for the student as it prepares him/her for a higher stage of education or for the labour market; this phase is usually 3 years long. Whilst there are options in the Bahrain qualification, the options for learners in Scotland are more numerous and more flexible and the National Qualification may be part of a programme that includes other distinct qualifications. Learners will typically take National 4 (SCQF level 4) and/or National 5 (SCQF level 5) Courses in usually between six and eight subjects, followed by four or five Higher (SCQF level 6) qualifications. However, there is no statutory pattern of provision in Scotland and qualification levels can be bypassed. Many learners will also take either alternative vocational qualifications or a mixture of National 4, National 5 and Higher Courses along with vocational qualifications.

For the Bahrain qualification entry is conditional on obtaining the Intermediate School certificate or its equivalent. In Scotland, the entry to a programme of national courses will be tailored to a learner's previous learning experiences and outcomes.

Both of the qualifications carry credit values. In Bahrain, the credit-hours system is applied, its aim is to provide broad choices of subjects and courses and it permits students to tailor programmes that suit their future goals. The total credit hours required to complete secondary education is 156 for the scientific, literary, commercial and textile tracks and 210 credit hours for the technical track. In Scotland, each National 5 Course carries 24 SCQF credit points (240 notional learning hours (NLH)) at SCQF level 5.

Comment: These are comparable qualifications albeit in quite different national qualification systems.

2. Destinations of Graduates

In both countries, this qualification level is considered as a continuous to basic or lower secondary education and represents a new phase for the student as it prepares him/her for further study (academic or vocational, including a higher stage of education) and working life.

3. Learning methods

Both qualifications set out the requirements on teachers to use methods that optimise relevant learning.

In Bahrain teachers are required to use varied methods and techniques for students so that they can discuss and debate and enable them to understand and grasp the specific nature of the subjects while acquiring subject-specific knowledge and concepts and developing skills. Students are expected to

show skills as learners, utilising information technology and confidently apply the skills in various situations and be able to use problem-solving skills in real-life situations.

Teachers are also required to offer students sufficient opportunities to develop their higher order thinking skills. These skills enable them to justify, reason, interpret their answers and express their opinions. Students are expected to progress cognitive development, and apply higher order thinking skills such as critical and creative thinking, problem solving, inference, induction and synthesis.

In Scotland, the National 5 Courses reflect the values, purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence, the major national curriculum reform that offers flexibility, provides more time for learning, more focus on skills and applying learning, and scope for personalisation and choice. Curriculum for Excellence puts the learner at the heart of their own learning and provides them with a range of pathways that meet their individual needs and aspirations. This means helping learners understand how and why they are learning and what they need to do to develop. In National 5 Courses, there is an emphasis on the development and application of key knowledge and skills closely associated with each subject.

National 5 Courses also provide learners with the opportunity to develop higher order thinking skills including the ability to understand, analyse, evaluate, and use detailed knowledge and apply a range of skills in practical and relevant contexts.

In Scotland, teachers will utilise a range of approaches to learning and teaching to ensure that learners develop knowledge & skills to compete in global markets, including higher order thinking skills, and that they have increased engagement and responsibility for their own learning. This includes encouraging the development of an improved learner metacognition, enabling them to reflect on and where appropriate design their own learning to help them suit their own needs, interests and preferences, and to increase their levels of challenge. Learners are encouraged to be responsive to increased levels of challenge and to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in new contexts, while demonstrating & reinforcing their own learning.

For both qualifications learning activities should meet students' individual needs, as well as the differing needs of groups of students.

Comment: Both of the qualifications require the use of a range of learning methods that allow the learning of subject content, broader transferable skills and higher level thinking skills.

4. Learning Outcomes

Scottish National Courses are designed to develop skills and knowledge in specific subject areas. Achieving a National 5 Course shows that a learner has demonstrated the specified knowledge and skills for a particular subject at the defined national standard. National 5 Courses must have a clear rationale that:

- justifies the need for the Course and its uniqueness
- provides evidence of demand for it
- explains how the Course fits with other qualifications
- identifies the progression opportunities into and from the Course
- outlines the aims, purposes and intended learning outcomes of the Course and explains how the award structure meets these purposes
- provides information about typical learners who might take the Course.

The content of every graded National 5 Course must be determined through rigorous validation processes and will comply with the relevant requirements of SQA's governing principles.

In the case of the Bahrain qualification each programme has a set of 'programme intended learning outcomes' and these are linked to the qualification's aims and objectives. For each module, specific learning outcomes and assessment methods are defined. Each topic is supported with a study plan and

curriculum document that clearly map the learning outcomes for each topic and how these are achieved and assessed. In more general terms on successful completion of the qualification, students should be able to:

- develop and apply knowledge and self-directed learning skills, research and information and communication technology skills to keep up with the flow of knowledge
- appreciate a variety of genres and develop knowledge and appreciation of diverse cultures and perspectives
- develop the critical thinking skills and be independent in thinking and balancing opinions to reach the right decisions
- deepen the sense of belonging to the homeland and pride in the language and be able to communicate with at least one foreign language
- develop the personality to achieve integrated growth so that he/she can contribute to the progress of the society
- understand the principles of democracy and awareness of its requirements and take it as an approach and behavior in his/her life
- understand the rights and duties and adherence to the values of freedom and tolerance and respect for the ideas of others and develop positive life skills and attitudes
- develop the ability to adapt to the requirements of economic reality with its multiple and changing dimensions
- take cooperative actions and participate in volunteer work to serve the community.

The broad aims of the National 5 qualification in, for example History, are similar to the above. The main aims of the Course are to enable learners to develop:

- a conceptual understanding of the past and an ability to think independently
- a range of skills including the ability to apply a detailed historical perspective in a range of contexts
- a detailed understanding of the factors contributing to, and the impact of, historical events
- the skills of investigating historical events and on the basis of evidence, forming views
- the skills of explaining historical events, and drawing reasoned conclusions.

Comment: Whilst the learning outcomes for the Bahrain qualification are more generic and the expected outcome for the Scottish qualification is more (subject) specific, there is a common sense of demand in the outcomes to be achieved.

5. Assessment Methods

For the Bahrain qualification, the evaluation/assessment system in secondary schools is based on a continuous, diagnostic and formative evaluation carried out by the teacher of each course throughout the semester. A further internally assessed element is a mid-semester examination. The external evaluation comprises 50% of the course's final grade. The Ministry of Education is carrying out this process in collaboration with the schools by means of unified examination supervised by committees formed by the Ministry. The student must attain an overall score of at least 50% of final cumulative average and complete all the study requirements to obtain the Secondary School Qualification.

For the Scottish National 5 Courses, assessment design and assessment load must be fair, equitable, accessible and inclusive, and must allow learners to show what they have achieved is proportionate and fit for purpose.

There will be a maximum of four Course assessment components in any graded National 5 Course, though typically most have only two.

All graded National 5 Courses will include a graded Course Assessment, which will consist of a Question Paper and/or Non-Question Paper Components (Coursework) as appropriate.

Course Assessment will sample the skills, knowledge and understanding from the mandatory Course content as well as breadth, depth, challenge, application and integration of these, as appropriate. It may involve a question paper, assignment, performance, project, practical activity, case study, portfolio or a combination of these, as appropriate to the area of study.

Comment: Both qualifications are based on a combination of assessment components which all contribute towards the final grade.

6. Overall conclusion

These qualifications are broadly comparable in terms of profile, learner recruitment, graduate destinations, learning methods and assessment practices. Whilst the qualifications have distinct features it can be seen that school qualifications at these levels confirm the appropriateness of the link of level 5 SCQF to level 4 Bahrain NQF.

Qualification comparison to verify the proposed level to level linkage. Comparing qualifications at Level 6 Bahrain NQF – level 7 SCQF

Skilled worker level qualifications used:

Bahrain: National Diploma in Medical Equipment Maintenance
Scotland: Modern Apprenticeship healthcare support (Clinical)

Domains of comparison

1. Qualification profile

The qualifications are both defined by the national framework specifications, the institutions offering them are quality assured to national standards.

Both qualifications of modular construction based on core and optional modules and carry credit values which are transferable.

Delivery of both qualifications is offered full-time and part-time basis that includes a substantial element of work experience or on the job training, possibly up to 25% of the programme duration. The full-time route is approximately 2 years in each case.

In both countries, the qualification is designed for learners who have completed school leaving qualifications and who may be currently employed or freshly entering work. They are aimed at people who work or intend to work within the medical industry or healthcare environment, and those who seek recognition for skills gained through experience in the field.

The qualifications are being compared here for their level of demand. They are not equivalent in any way and therefore it is not surprising that the broad aims of the qualifications take a different focus. In Bahrain, the focus is strongly on the technical medical equipment side and in Scotland the broader patient care side dominates. Nevertheless, in Scotland the technical side features, for example one aim of the qualification is to support learners to take responsibility for maintaining premises or equipment used by patients. The latter is used later to compare learning outcomes to those of the Bahrain qualification.

Both qualifications demand the learning and use of core (transferable) skills.

Comment: the profiles of the two qualifications are comparable even though their content focus is different.

2. Destinations of Graduates

Both qualifications prepare people to work in health support roles, graduates of the Bahrain qualification will be able to work as technicians in repair and maintenance of medical equipment or they could continue their education in the field of electrical/electronics and related sub-fields. Graduates of the Scottish qualification can expect to work in care settings providing a wide range of services such as delivering and installing medical equipment in hospital wards and theatres.

Comment: the destination of graduates of both qualifications are comparable, however the Bahrain qualification is more specific in the range of job destinations it serves.

3. Learning methods

In the Bahrain qualification the primary mode of teaching will be using through class lectures, PowerPoint presentations, and practical lab sessions. Regular hospital visits will be arranged for the learners to enhance their understanding of expensive medical equipment. The qualification uses a variety of effective delivery methods and practices, including lectures, discussions, classroom activities,

worksheets, quizzes and presentations with the aid of PowerPoint. The trainer employs learner-centred methods, outcomes-based approach and incorporates differentiated learning activities so that the learners are both challenged and motivated. Practical demonstrations and/or laboratory exercises showing the maintenance of medical equipment are provided.

The Scottish qualification does not prescribe learning and teaching strategies as this is national policy for all competence-based qualifications in the UK. However, the focus of measuring competence (see assessment section later) requires a considerable learner centred focus, learning by doing and practical approaches.

Comment: Both qualifications use a range of methods of delivery that include a focus on independent learning and development of transferable skills.

4. Learning Outcomes

Both qualifications use a learning outcomes approach to specifying the programme, each unit specifies content, assessment methods, learning outcomes, credit and offers guidance of the responsibilities of learners.

At the end of the Bahrain qualification, learners will learn to install, calibrate, troubleshoot, and repair medical equipment. Combining this with medical terminology and physiology, computer networking and medical equipment systems, the learners will work on a wide range of health-related monitoring, diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical apparatus and instrumentation with effective teamwork. Learners will be able to operate familiar and unfamiliar medical equipment in a hospital environment with accountability for determining and achieving personal outcomes. Successful graduates will also be able to communicate clearly in a well-structured manner to convey a variety of complex information and ideas in medical equipment.

Specific learning outcomes include the ability to:

- demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of the concepts, principles and techniques related to maintenance various medical equipment.
- demonstrate detailed knowledge of the main theoretical and conceptual principles of electrical and electronic systems.
- apply techniques and processes of calibration and maintenance to deal with various ranges of medical equipment/devices.
- communicate effectively to convey information on medical equipment maintenance

For the Scottish qualification the more diverse learning outcomes include these (which are of similar context to the Bahrain qualification). Learners must be able to:

- Adapt healthcare equipment, medical devices, or products to meet individual's needs
- Prepare and reproduce permanent radiographic images
- Assure the effective functioning of radiographic image processing equipment
- Conduct routine maintenance on clinical equipment
- Perform first line calibration on clinical equipment to ensure it is fit for use

For each learning outcome there is more specific performance criteria. For example, for the final learning outcomes must be able to (inter alia):

- run appropriate tests to confirm the operational status of equipment
- calibrate equipment for operation

- verify accuracy, precision and operational effectiveness of equipment following appropriate procedures.

In addition to skills requirements there are also learning outcomes based in knowledge, for example a learner must prove knowledge of (inter alia)

- relevant statutory, regulatory and legislative requirements, national standards and guidance the relevant standard operating procedures, policies and their importance
- limits of responsibility and when and where to seek advice
- the intended purpose, operational status and range of use of equipment
- the importance of both accuracy and precision within calibration
- the methods of first line calibration, and quality assurance.

Again, it needs emphasis that these two qualifications are distinct in the sense that they give different weight to different aspects of healthcare but it is possible to conclude that over the range of modules both the qualifications can be said to be comprehensive. As is clear above some modules are directly comparable.

Comment: The sample of expected learning outcomes presented here compare well to one another and show a common level of demand.

5. Assessment methods

The assessment of the Bahrain qualification is outcome based and learners' evidence is assessed against the learning outcomes. To achieve the programme intended learning outcomes, learners have to pass all units. Assessments will be both formative in the form of quizzes, tests, and presentation and lab assessments as well as summative in the form of exams. All assessment instruments are designed that learners will be able to achieve the learning outcomes as stated in the unit description. Learners' assessments will be assessed according to a scoring rubric that assesses the knowledge of the learners, the application of the knowledge, problem solving and critical thinking. To pass a unit, learners must achieve the stated learning outcomes.

For the Scottish qualification, Assessors must use their own judgement and expertise to deploy a range of assessment methods. However, observation of candidate performance is the principle method and regarded as the most reliable method of assessment and observation is required for each unit. It is expected that observation will be carried out holistically and observation of occupationally specific units will involve an expert witness and will be followed by professional discussion with the qualified Assessor. Other evidence for assessment will include:

- Reflective Accounts
- Professional Discussion
- Products of the candidate's own work
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- Witness testimony

For both qualifications quality assurance processes include the moderation and verification of assessments by internal and external agencies.

Comment: both qualifications use assessment methods designed to testify competence and the methods are module specific. The qualifications are comparable in terms of the assessment methods used.

6. Overall conclusion

These qualifications are comparable in terms of profile, learner recruitment, graduate destinations, learning methods and assessment practices. Analysis of a sample of expected learning outcomes show a similar demand on learners and some common content. Whilst the qualifications have distinct features it can be seen that they confirm the appropriateness of the link of level 7 SCQF to level 6 Bahrain NQF.

Qualification comparison to verify the proposed level to level linkage. Comparing qualifications at Level 9 Bahrain NQF – level 11 SCQF

Master's level qualifications used:

Bahrain: Master's Degree Nursing
Scotland: Master's Degree in Health Studies

Domains of comparison

1. Qualification profile

The 'owning' institutions are both of high standing in higher education sector.

Both qualifications of modular construction and carry credit values. The Bahrain qualification comprises 240 NQF Credits (120 ECTS). The Scottish qualification offers 180 SCQF credits (90 ECTS).

Delivery of both qualifications is offered full-time and part-time basis.

In both countries, the qualification is designed for learners who have the equivalent of Bachelor's Degree. In Bahrain, the requirement specifies a Nursing degree and also requires nurses and to be licensed/registered to practice. In Scotland, the requirements are less specific – a health related degree and some experience in the field. In Scotland some additional language and IT skills are required on entry and for entry to the Bahrain qualification formal proficiency in English must be proven.

Broad aims of the qualifications take a slightly different focus.

In Bahrain, the programme has been designed to meet local and global strategies; to encourage learners to examine contemporary nursing and health issues; in addition to having the opportunity to focus in depth, on aspects of practice as appropriate to their academic and professional interests. In Scotland, the overall aim of the programme is to provide the opportunity for students, within the multidisciplinary context, to further develop their knowledge, skills and expertise relevant to health studies.

Comment: the profile of the two qualifications is broadly the same.

2. Destinations of Graduates

Graduates of the Bahrain qualification have the opportunity to go for further studies, a PhD for research or advanced practice (Doctor in Nursing Practice). Graduates may also be clinical leaders who may not necessarily be in administration but rather assume accountability for patient care to achieve optimal care outcomes.

Graduates of the Scottish qualification will have the capacity to become leaders within their sphere of practice. Further study opportunities include study leading to Master of Science by Research (MSc), Master of Philosophy (MPHIL), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Professional Doctorate (DProf).

Comment: the destination of graduates of both qualifications are comparable.

3. Learning methods

The Scottish qualification uses a range of learning and teaching strategies, for example online delivery of lectures and seminars; workshops; group discussion; problem based-learning, independent study. Material is presented to students in such a way as to encourage critical and creative thinking skills e.g. journal article reviews, reviewing research reports, literature reviews, discussion and debate. Inherent within the process of programme delivery are mechanisms which facilitate the development of transferable skills. It is part of the programme philosophy that students are enabled to learn for life, by learning how to learn; by being able to adapt and respond to change and by being change agents.

For the Bahrain qualification, a variety of teaching and learning strategies are used including lectures, seminars, tutorials, student presentations, case studies, reflective diaries, data analysis and interpretation and research. The programme actively encourages debate and exchange of experience. The development of transferable skills such as reflection, critical thinking, collaborative working, communication and presentation skills is an important feature of all postgraduate programmes. Students are encouraged to become independent learners and the use computer based statistical packages will reinforce development of information technology skills.

Comment: Both qualifications use a range of methods of delivery that include a focus on independent learning and development of transferable skills.

4. Learning Outcomes

As one would expect in nursing/healthcare qualifications at this level there is considerable overlap in the fields of learning outcomes expected in both qualifications. The Bahrain programme uses an outcome based approach in its curriculum design which emphasises the attainment of Intended Learning Outcomes (PILO). The PILO are linked to the qualification’s aims, mission and objective, and mapped to the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILO). Each unit has a unit descriptor which specifies: content, assessment methods, learning outcomes, credit, required reading, special requirement such as audio CD, website, etc. PILOs and CILOs are documented and stated in the ‘Curriculum Mapping’ and unit descriptor of each unit, respectively.

In more general terms on successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

- Develop a systemic understanding and critical awareness of current challenges and/or new insights at the forefront of nursing and health.
- Take responsibility to develop a research proposal and undertake a supervised research dissertation on an area appropriate to their area of nursing practice.
- Critically evaluate the cultural environment in which healthcare is delivered and engage in critical discussion on key contemporary discourses in nursing and health.
- Critically self-evaluate their professional and personal learning needs consistent with their area of practice and their continuing professional development.

The Scottish qualification is also based on the use of learning outcomes. These are stated in broad terms as in the following table.

Knowledge and Understanding	
A1	Demonstrates a holistic, critical and comparative understanding of the principles, theories and concepts related to health.
A2	Demonstrates a critical awareness of theories, concepts and principles related to current issues in public health. Plans and develops strategies and interventions in the health field.
A3	Demonstrates a critical understanding and expertise in the use of research, scholarly and professional activities.
Practice - Applied Knowledge and Understanding	
B1	Demonstrate originality or creativity in the application of knowledge, understanding and / or practices related to health.

B2	Apply research based evidence and contemporary approaches to inform health care delivery.
B3	Apply knowledge, skills and understanding to health needs assessment, and planning in order to develop effective strategies and interventions.
Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills	
C1	Employs a range of Information and Communication Technology applications to support and enhance work.
C2	Undertake critical evaluations of a wide range of numerical and graphical data.
Generic Cognitive Skills - Problem Solving, Analysis, Evaluation	
D1	Identify, conceptualise and define new and abstract issues associated with health.
D2	Critically review, consolidate and extend knowledge, skills, practices and thinking in health.
D3	Critically evaluate policy and the economic issues impacting on health and contemporary health care provision.
Autonomy, Accountability and Working with Others	
E1	Practise in ways which draw on critical reflection on own and others' roles and responsibilities.
E2	Exercise substantial autonomy and initiative in professional and equivalent activities.
E3	Deals with complex ethical and professional issues and makes informed judgements on issues not addressed by current professional and/ethical practices.

For both qualifications, the modules are specified in detail, there is a more detailed set of learning outcomes, detail of the learning methods appropriate to these outcomes and the assessment methods to be used.

These two qualifications are distinct in the sense that they give different emphasis to aspects of advanced nursing but it is possible to conclude that over the range of modules both the qualifications can be said to be comprehensive and provide a learning experience that corresponds to what is expected at Master's level. Some modules are directly comparable and two of these (from each qualification) were selected to test the depth of treatment of learning outcomes in each qualification⁶⁷. The modules chosen are as follows.

Module titles Scotland	Module titles Bahrain
Leadership for Effectiveness	Leadership - Clinical & Professional
Responding to Public Health Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemporary Issues in Nursing • Health, discourse and society

⁶⁷ Other comparable modules could have been selected, for example: the Scottish modules *Research for health and social care*, *Research & Enquiry Dissertation* could be compared to the Bahrain modules *Advanced Research Methods 1 and 2* and *the Research Dissertation*.

Firstly, consider the rationale and the stated expected learning outcomes for the leadership modules.

Rationales

Scottish module: it is envisaged that students undertaking this module will be encouraged to critically explore the current challenges facing health and social care professionals delivering integrated care within a dynamic and evolving health and social care context. In conjunction, the students will be encouraged to critically appraise their personal leadership role, the influence of team dynamics and the contribution that the various professional groups make towards the delivery of efficient and effective health and social care practice.

Bahrain Module: the need to develop nursing leadership skills has never been greater as changes in health care are being addressed at national and international level. Clinical nursing leadership is an essential ability/attribute in empowering nurses and directing the complexity of care. The module aims to explore leadership in nursing from different perspectives encouraging the student to examine the importance of leadership in influencing and shaping nursing practice.

Expected learning outcomes.

Scottish learning outcomes	Bahrain learning outcomes
Critically analyse current theories and concepts related to leadership characteristics, styles and behaviours within modern health and social care policy and contexts.	Synthesise and conceptualise various leadership perspectives and apply them to nursing in the dynamic and complex clinical environment.
Critically appraise the leadership challenges involved in developing and enhancing team dynamics, synergy and effectiveness.	Critically evaluate the external environmental factors which influence the direction of nursing leadership; stakeholder involvement in progression health care Critically appraise the leader's role in influencing and shaping health policy
Demonstrate a critical understanding of the principles of partnership-working, client involvement and governance as applied to leading and promoting innovation within an effective organisation.	Demonstrate through the module assignment the importance of responsibility for others through teams and groups in order to lead and influence practice. Exhibit the ability to critically self-evaluate and determine their continuing professional and academic develop to achieve self-actualisation.

Whilst the modules are not identical in design (delivery and assessment), there are similar expectations of what the learners should achieve. The Health Challenges modules confirm this. Compare the rationale and the expected learning outcomes for the two modules.

Rationale

Scottish module: The module explores the policy context and its intended impact, developed across sectors to address, improve health and tackle health inequalities. It will allow an insight into some of the measures used in determining trends and patterns in population health, including epidemiology and health statistics, as well as a number of contemporary approaches in addressing health concerns. As well as being introduced to public health theory and practice, students will work towards adopting a systematic approach to developing health improvement interventions using the processes underpinned by public health and health promotion specialists. Students will also explore the methods by which these interventions can be planned, managed and evaluated, in order to develop the maximum impact and benefit for organisations and stakeholders (Corcoran, 2013).

Bahrain Module: Given public concerns about the cost of health care, fiscal sustainability, health care quality, the need to develop sustainable solutions to health care problems are driving reform efforts. This has prompted greater focus on health promotion and illness prevention, along with cost-effective approaches to high acuity, chronic disease management, care coordination, and long-term care. In order to effectively lead and manage change initiatives within this new environment, nurses and midwives should have an advanced understanding of a systems approach to contemporary healthcare services. This module aims to provide students with a systematic understanding of knowledge on concepts, principles, philosophies, models, systems and approaches to the delivery of local, national and international health care.

Learning outcomes

Scottish learning outcomes	Bahrain learning outcomes
Critically examine the range of theories and models, which underpin contemporary health improvement and public health practice.	Critically evaluate the current approaches to delivery of health care systems.
Analyse the major determinants of health and critically evaluate global, national and local policy initiatives for improving public health. Systematically review and evaluate the effectiveness of health improvement interventions which contribute to enhancing the health and social wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.	Critically analyse factors the internal & external political, socio-economic and Critical thinking healthcare nationally and internationally including the role of the WHO/UN/UNESCO. (text taken from module specification document) Critically evaluate the role of leadership & managers in the planning, implementation and evaluation of health care systems.
Demonstrate a critical understanding of the concepts, principles and methods of utilising epidemiological and other health data to underpin health needs assessment	Exhibit, through discussion in debate & assignment, an understanding of the principles underlying Health Outcomes Management Information Systems (MIS) as an integral component of contemporary health care.
	Debate the ethical issues recurring in contemporary health discourses and society. Debate the range of contemporary global health services funding models.

Comment: The focus of these two modules is broadly the same and the expected learning outcomes compare well to one another.

5. Assessment methods

For the Scottish qualification, the assessment methodologies are influenced by the learning outcomes for each module and each module is assessed independently of the others. In general, a range of methods are used including essays; reports; strategic planning proposals; critical incident analysis; projects; research proposal and dissertation. The results of the individual assessments are moderated and verified before being combined into a programme outcome. The assessment process is independently checked for consistency. An overview of the assessment details is provided in the Student Handbook and full details of the assessment criteria for each module is provided in the module descriptor which forms part of the module pack issued to students.

For the Bahrain qualification, the assessment strategy comprises of a wide range of approaches including essay assignments, presentations, debate and case studies. The Institution's overall approach to assessment is captured in the 'Examinations and Assessment'. This document defines assessment

practices along with the 'Marks and Standards' document, which sets out the criteria for progression and ensures using fair and consistent assessment methods. Formative and summative assessments take place throughout the semesters of the programme. A variety of assessment methods are employed to assess the achievement of learners. Each unit has an assessment blueprint document which details mapping of PILO and CILOs to assessment. The teaching institution has arrangements for internal and external verification and moderation of assessment. Grading are firstly moderated internally and then by the external examiner. The entire learners' assessment and evaluation processes are overseen by an external examiner.

Comment: both qualifications operate a quality assured assessment process. The assessment methods used are module specific and are therefore likely to be fit for purpose. The qualifications are comparable in terms of the assessment methods used.

6. Overall conclusion

These qualifications are comparable in terms of profile, learner recruitment, graduate destinations, learning methods and assessment practices. Analysis of the learning outcomes of the sets of modules show a similar demand on learners and some common content. Whilst the qualifications have distinct features it can be seen that they confirm the appropriateness of the link of level 11 SCQF to level 9 Bahrain NQF.

Annex 3: SCQF Principles

SCQF principles	Details
1	Credit Rating Bodies (CRBs) and the SCQF Partnership have equal responsibility for ensuring the quality and integrity of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

Principles related to Learning Arrangements and Credit Rating

SCQF principles	Details
2	All qualifications/learning programmes credit rated on to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework must meet the 4 criteria for credit rating.
3	A qualification/learning programme must be capable of being allocated an SCQF level and SCQF credit points in order that it can be included on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.
4	A qualification/learning programme must have at least 10 notional learning hours (1 SCQF credit point) before it can be credit rated and considered for inclusion on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Only full SCQF credit points are awarded – fractions of SCQF credit points (e.g. 0.5) are not allowed.
5	Qualification/learning programme designers must determine the Notional Learning Hours required by a typical learner to complete all learning activities within the qualification/programme.
6	The number of SCQF credit points allocated to a unit or module of learning is determined independently of the perceived importance or centrality of that unit/module within a broader programme of learning.
7	The number of SCQF credit points allocated to a unit/module of learning is independent of the standard at which the outcomes are achieved (e.g. grading).
8	Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that within the process of credit rating, and in processes for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), they take due cognisance of the SCQF Level Descriptors and any other relevant reference points.
9	Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating, including systems of internal and external quality assurance and arrangements for the retention of evidence confirming decisions on level and credit.
10	Where assessment leads to the award of SCQF credit points then the certificates issued to learners must include the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the title of the qualification/learning programme; • the total number of SCQF credit points awarded on completion; • the SCQF level of the qualification/learning programme achieved; • the SCQF logo; • the name of the CRB.
11	Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for uploading the details of all credit rated qualifications/learning programmes to the SCQF database.

Additional Principles when working with a Third Party submission

SCQF principles	Details
12	Credit Rating Bodies must assure themselves, as far as is practically possible, of the good standing and credibility of the Third Party organisation prior to any submission for credit rating.
13	Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating Third Party submissions.
14	Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that Third Party organisations submit information, and documented evidence of, their assessment processes, including arrangements relating to the internal and external quality assurance of assessment decisions.
15	The Credit Rating Body must ensure that the Third Party provides details of auditing/quality assurance of their systems including appropriate externality.
16	Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that the Third Party organisation submits regular (e.g. annual) reports of progress in the delivery of any credit rated qualifications/learning programmes and is aware that they must inform the CRB if any significant changes to these are made which may affect the SCQF level or credit points.
17	Credit Rating Bodies must agree an appropriate review date for the credit rated qualification(s)/learning programme(s) with the Third Party organisation.
18	Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for uploading the details of all Third Party qualifications/learning programmes which they have credit rated to the SCQF Database.
19	Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for issuing the SCQF logo to the Third Party organisation and ensuring that they are aware of the requirements for certification as outlined in Principle 10.

Principles relating to Credit Transfer and the Recognition of Prior Learning

SCQF principles	Details
20	The design and development of qualifications and learning programmes for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework should facilitate and promote credit recognition for prior informal and non-formal learning and credit transfer.
21	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is given for learning, not for experience alone.
22	SCQF Credit Points awarded as a result of RPL for informal or non-formal learning are of the same value as credit gained through formal learning.
23	RPL for the award of SCQF Credit Points must involve a formal assessment or acceptance of evidence of learning which is quality assured.
24	The assessment procedures for RPL including Credit Transfer should be consistent with the normal assessment and general quality assurance of the organisation.
25	The process of monitoring and reviewing the operation of RPL procedures, including those for Credit Transfer, should be clearly defined and integrated within the existing quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms of the organisation.

Annex 4: SCQF Credit-Rating Bodies (as at end 2016)

Argyll College (UHI)	Abertay University	SQA Accreditation
Ayrshire College	Edinburgh Napier University	SQA Awarding Body
Borders College	Glasgow Caledonian University	SQA Credit Rating Service
City of Glasgow College	Herriot-Watt University	City and Guilds London Institute
Dumfries and Galloway	Queen Margaret University	Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland
Dundee and Angus	Robert Gordon University	Scottish Police College - Tulliallan
Edinburgh College	The Open University in Scotland	The Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland
Fife College	University of Aberdeen	Institute of Counselling
Forth Valley College	University of Dundee	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service – TED
Glasgow Clyde	University of Edinburgh	Scottish Prison Services College
Glasgow Kelvin College	University of Glasgow	
Inverness College (UHI)	University of St Andrews	
Lewis Castle College (UHI)	University of Stirling	
Moray College (UHI)	University of Strathclyde	
Newbattle Abbey College	University of the Highlands and Islands	
New College Lanarkshire	University of the West of Scotland	
North East Scotland College	Glasgow School of Art	
North Highland College (UHI)	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	
Orkney College (UHI)	Scotland's Rural College	
Perth College (UHI)		
Sabhal Mor Orstaig (UHI)		
Shetland College (UHI)		
South Lanarkshire College		
West College Scotland		
West Highland College (UHI)		
West Lothian College		

Annex 5: Qualifications on the SCQF

QUALIFICATIONS OF SQA AWARDING BODY

SQA awarding body is responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of formal school and college qualifications other than degrees. It is the national examining body for school qualifications.

National Courses

National Courses are the main qualification offered in schools in Scotland. National Courses are also offered in colleges. They are mainly based on general educational or pre-vocational subjects (e.g. National 5 Art and Design, Higher Mathematics, Advanced Higher History).

To be awarded a course at any level, the candidate must provide evidence of achievement of the units that make up the course. Units can be assessed individually or in an integrated way. National 2, 3 and 4 courses only require the completion of the component units and will be ungraded. The award of a course at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher will also require success in an additional external assessment, which will be graded, A to D. The external assessment will sample and integrate skills, knowledge and understanding from the component units. It might take the form of an examination, performance, project, practical activity, or combination of two of these. Highers and Advanced Highers are the main entry qualifications for higher education.

Wider Achievement Awards

SQA have also developed a range of very flexible Wider Achievement Awards which are shorter than National Courses and recognise success across different levels of difficulty, meaning they are suitable for learners of all abilities. Some are endorsed by other professional bodies or government agencies. They include Personal Achievement Awards (SCQF Levels 1 and 2), Employability Awards (SCQF Levels 3 and 4), Leadership Awards (SCQF Levels 5 and 6), Volunteering Skills Awards (SCQF Levels 3, 4 and 5), Modern Languages for Life and Work Awards (SCQF Levels 3 and 4), Internet Safety (SCQF Level 4).

National Certificates (NCs)

NCs are available at SCQF levels 2-6. They are aimed at 16-18 year olds or adults following full-time courses and are mainly offered in vocational colleges. They are designed to prepare people for employment, career development or progression to a higher level qualification. NCs may relate to a subject (e.g. Celtic Studies) or an occupational area (e.g. Electrical Engineering).

National Progression Awards (NPAs)

NPAs are available at SCQF levels 2-6. They are designed to assess a defined set of skills and knowledge in specialist vocational areas and they link to National Occupational Standards, which are the basis of SVQs, and are used in more traditional areas such as Construction and Childcare, and in newer areas such as Digital Literacy and Social Software. They are mainly used by colleges for short study programmes, such as return-to-work courses or part-time learning for those already in work (e.g. the NPA Enterprise and Employability).

Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Diplomas (HNDs)

HNCs are available at SCQF level 7 and HNDs at SCQF level 8. Many HNCs form the first year of a HND. They focus on different occupational areas and prepare people with the knowledge and skills to work in these areas. They cover subject areas from more traditional areas (accounting, business administration, childcare, computing, engineering, hospitality) to newer areas (creative industries, paralegal, sports and leisure). They are aligned to National Occupational Standards, or other professional body standards. Many HNCs and HNDs give entry to degree courses with credit transfer or exemptions of one or two years.

Professional Development Awards (PDAs)

PDAs are available at SCQF levels 6-11. In principle there could also be PDAs at SCQF level 12 although there are none currently. They are aligned to National Occupational Standards or other professional body standards and are designed to assess and certificate progression in a defined set of specialist occupational skills and are intended for individuals already in a career or vocation who wish to extend or broaden their knowledge and skills.

QUALIFICATIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SCOTLAND

The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions is an outcomes-based structure based on a consistent qualification nomenclature, qualification descriptors, and credits. Undergraduate qualifications offered in Scottish Universities are mainly modular, with each module being allocated to a level in the SCQF and credit-rated.

The Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) and the Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)

CertHEs and DipHEs may be awarded for achievement over a breadth of subject areas or for studies focused on one subject, in some cases with a strong vocational focus.

Ordinary degrees

Some Scottish bachelor's (non-honours) degrees will be highly focused while others will develop greater breadth of outcomes. Many degrees that have a specific vocational focus carry recognition by the appropriate professional or statutory body. It is awarded as either a Bachelor of Science (BSc), or a Bachelor of Arts (BA). The Scottish bachelor's (non-honours) degree is a recognised 'normal' entry requirement to a number of professions across the UK.

Honours degrees

The Scottish honours degree (bachelor's degree with honours) will demonstrate a balance of breadth and depth that will be clear from particular definitive records. It is awarded mainly as either a Bachelor of Science (BSc Hons), or a Bachelor of Arts (BA Hons). Many honours degrees will have a specific vocational focus, and in some cases will carry recognition by the appropriate professional or statutory body.

Master's degrees

In the majority of cases, the master's degree reflects a specialised knowledge and understanding of particular areas, applications or levels of expertise in particular subject or professional areas. In some professional areas, master's degrees are linked to structures of continuing professional development.

Doctoral degrees

Doctoral degrees reflect specialised, advanced knowledge, understanding and practice at the frontiers of the subject or professional area. The PhD is normally awarded following successful completion of a thesis which requires the equivalent of a minimum of three years' full-time research and study to complete. Professional doctorates also require the equivalent of three years' full-time research and study to complete and will frequently involve work-based, as well as institution-based, research and study.

QUALIFICATIONS APPROVED BY SQA ACCREDITATION

SQA Accreditation has a remit from Scottish Government to accredit and regulate any type of qualification from approved awarding bodies.

Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)

Scottish Vocational Qualifications are available at SCQF levels 4-11. The size and level of SVQs varies according to the number of units which have to be achieved in each qualification. They are primarily designed as outcomes of non-formal learning although in some cases elements of the SVQ can be achieved in simulated environments. SVQs are the basis of Scottish Modern Apprenticeships. There are SVQs in most areas of the economy/labour market. SVQs are approved for use by SQA Accreditation and then awarding bodies seek accreditation to award the units and/or the full qualifications. All SVQs must be SCQF credit rated and levelled by SQA Accreditation.

Other accredited qualifications

SQA Accreditation approves qualifications which assess knowledge, understanding and occupational competence in the workplace. This will include regulated qualifications and other competence based qualifications — some of which are included in Scottish Modern Apprenticeship frameworks. It also approves qualifications which assess expertise in areas which are not necessarily work related. These include exam-based qualifications such as music and dance performance. It is not compulsory for these qualifications to be credit rated for the SCQF. However most of these accredited qualifications have been credit rated.

OTHER QUALIFICATIONS AND PROGRAMMES CREDIT RATED BY SCQF CREDIT-RATING BODIES

More than 800 additional qualifications have been added to the SCQF database by CRBs alongside the formal qualifications and programmes outlined in the previous sections. These qualifications may be programmes of colleges, universities and other higher education institutions, or they may be programmes owned by other CRBs. They may also be programmes owned by other bodies who have submitted them to a CRB for credit rating. The owners of these programmes include government agencies, professional organisations, individual employers and training companies, trade unions, youth organisations, community organisations, adult education organisations and charities. The qualifications range from SCQF level 2 to SCQF level 11 and from 1 SCQF credit to over 1000 SCQF credits.

Examples of SCQF Partner organisations which own non-mainstream qualifications and programmes include:

SCQF Level	Qualification Owner	Qualification Name	Credit Points
3	Ayrshire College	Access to Painting & Decorating	8
8	City of Glasgow College	Certificate in Prosecution Practice	16
		Certificate and Diploma in Physical Theatre Practice	
		e-skills award	
		Union Health and Safety representative award	

Examples of SCQFP approved credit-rating bodies own qualifications include:

SCQF Level	Qualification Owner	Qualification Name	Credit Points
11	Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland	Chartered Accountancy qualification	480
7	Scottish Police College	Certificate crime scene examination	77
10	Scottish Police College	Police Driving instructors	40
10	Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland	Chartered Banker Diploma	125
8	Institute of Counselling	Certificate in Youth Counselling	20
5	City & Guilds	Diploma in Bricklaying at SCQF level 5	49

Examples of credit rated qualifications and programmes of other organisations include:

- *Aerial cutting of trees with a chainsaw* (on behalf of a sector skills organisation)
- *Traditional boat-building and repair* (on behalf of a cultural charity)
- *Community action and leadership* (on behalf of a social/educational charity)
- *Fire safety officers award* (on behalf of a specialist training organisation)
- *Introduction to youth work* (on behalf of local authority)
- *Introduction to workplace skills* (on behalf of a Government Agency)
- *Supporting clients with additional needs* (on behalf of a government agency)
- *Diploma in management consultancy* (on behalf of a professional body)
- *Professional Diploma in marketing* (on behalf of a professional body)
- *European Computer Driving License awards* (on behalf of a UK professional body)
- *Technical specialist awards* (on behalf of an IT vendor)
- *Breathing apparatus instructor* (on behalf of the a training organisation)
- *Training awards* (on behalf of a youth organisation)

SELECTED REFERENCES

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- QAA Scotland. 2014. *Recognition of Prior Learning: National Framework for Scottish Higher Education.* Glasgow: QAA Scotland.
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Websites

- College Development Network: www.collegedevelopmentnetwork.ac.uk
- Education Scotland: www.educationscotland.gov.uk
- The Higher Education Academy: www.heacademy.ac.uk
- QAA Scotland: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/scotland
- Scotland's Colleges: www.scotlandscolleges.ac.uk
- Scottish Funding Council: www.sfc.ac.uk
- SCQF: www.scqf.org.uk/features/Framework.htm
- SQA: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/70972.html
- SQA Accreditation: <http://accreditation.sqa.org.uk/accreditation/home>
- Universities Scotland: www.universities-scotland.ac.uk

Annex 6: Bahrain NQF Credit Framework Guidelines

1. The Credit Framework: The Guidelines

Provided Guidelines shall not to be used in isolation of NQF Level Descriptors and Validation Standards.

1.1 Qualifications' Titles and Description

1.1.1 Higher Education Qualifications' Titles and Description

a) Diploma

The range of High Education (HE) academic qualifications offered in the Kingdom of Bahrain⁶⁸ starts with **Diploma (Academic)** which sits on level 6 of the NQF and has a minimum duration of 120 NQF Credit. These qualifications can cover a wide range of subject areas while can also be focused on a certain discipline. Such qualifications are expected to be designed with appropriate linkage to National Occupational Standards⁶⁹ (NOS).

b) Associate Degree

The **Associate Degree** is an academic qualification which provides learners with the opportunity to leave university/college with a recognized intermediate qualification (exit qualification) allowing them to rejoin a HE programme leading to a Bachelor's degree. This qualification sits on level 7 of the NQF and should have a learning volume extending to a minimum of 240 NQF credits. Such qualification should be designed to allow learners to continue education within a certain Bachelor programme by topping up to the remaining required credits. Hence, proper ties to possible further continuation of learning and other possible pathways –where applicable- should be considered in the design in addition to linkage to the NOS².

c) Bachelor's Degree

Within the scope of what is being offered in the market of qualifications it can be generalized that most bachelors come with specialization field such as Bachelor of Business, Bachelor of Law, and Bachelor of Engineering... etc. while the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science dominate the spectrum. It is well established within the qualifications system what is meant by a "Bachelor's" degree; yet the reflection of the title within the design of a bachelor's degree and how it should be aligned to the purpose of such degree remains a matter to be clarified.

In coming to the title of a bachelor degree and its effect on the design, it should be taken into account the differences of weight in focus in accordance with the type/title of the bachelor's degree. For instance, **Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.)** is usually for technical and specific areas and comes with focus on the theoretical part of technical and practical aspects. This is usually offered in the fields of technical and scientific areas such as: natural sciences, business sciences, engineering sciences... etc. Such qualification requires more credits that are directly linked to the major/discipline while little exposure to external topics. **Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)** Providing more expansive education and giving room for exposure to liberal arts subjects. This is usually offered the fields of social sciences, humanities, linguistics, literature, history... etc. **Bachelor of Engineering (B. Eng.)** is usually more practically oriented. Although learners are introduced to main theories, the design comes with more focus and credits on applying theories and concepts. A Bachelor's Degree sits on level 8 of the NQF and have a minimum learning volume of 480 NQF credit, such qualifications should be designed with clear linkage to NOS⁷⁰ and market needs (especially professional bodies) while maintaining proper alignment to its purpose (B.A., B.Sc., B.Eng.... etc.).

⁶⁸ HEC regulations

⁶⁹ Phase one of the NOS project produced standards up to level 5, however, it is anticipated there will be a second phase that may cover parts of HE. This is put here with consideration should there be NOS for HE in the future.

⁷⁰ Phase one of the NOS project produced standards up to level 5, however, it is anticipated there will be a second phase that may cover parts of HE. This is put here with consideration should there be NOS for HE in the future.

d) Postgraduate Diploma

Postgraduate Diploma is a continuation to the HE and requires learner to have a bachelor's degree. Postgraduate Diploma sits on Level 9 of the NQF and has a volume of learning of a minimum of 72 NQF credit. This provides an opportunity for learners seeking postgraduate education in a related field of study and should be designed to include competencies of mastery level to allow learners to specialize and build on skills acquired through a bachelor degree.

e) Master's Degree

Master's Degree, although may be requirement for career advancement, especially academically, it is also an opportunity to further specialize in particular topic or profession. Master Degree sits on level 9 of the NQF and should be a minimum of 120 NQF credit provided it must include thesis defense. Such qualifications should be designed to specialize in a particular discipline and provide in-depth knowledge higher level of application and autonomy.

f) Doctoral Degree

Currently there is very limited number of Doctoral Degrees offered in Bahrain. **Doctoral Degree** sits on level 10 of the NQF with majority of credits at level 10⁷¹ of the NQF.

1.1.2 Vocational Education and Training Qualifications' Titles and Description

a) Bahrain Vocational Qualifications

Based on meetings that were conducted with the Ministry of Labour & Social Development (MLSD), **Bahrain Vocational Qualifications** (BVQs) will be tentatively allocated to NQF range of levels⁷² as illustrated in figure 1. BVQs are competence based qualifications which are delivered and assessed in the workplace. During the design phase of the NQF, it was perceived that attributing notional learning hours to BVQs would be quite difficult given that the undertaken training and assessment are not working on an academic timetable. However, and in a counter argument, it may well be valuable to attribute a credit value for the purpose of including BVQs and Units onto the NQF⁷³. This is yet to be furtherly studied during the design of the BVQs. Some working group members expressed their agreement with the importance of allocating NQF Credit to the BVQs.

b) Awards

According to current licensing regulations for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD) has a category for short courses entitled: "**Local Achievement**". These have a duration normally not exceeding of 60 contact hours as per MLSD regulations. It is proposed to introduce the title '**Award**' to cover the range of qualifications under this category, which will come at different levels of the NQF as illustrated in figure 1 below. In coming to dealing with NQF credit of the Awards, it is recommended that these Qualification (Awards) shall remain to be expressed in contact hours as per the licensing regulations; however, in reaching to the overall NQF credit the breakdown will have to be clearly and accurately described and justifiable. Awards should be designed to develop skills and knowledge in the vocational and training sector.

c) Professional Awards

It is proposed to introduce a new category of qualifications entitled: **Professional Awards**⁷⁴ at level 7, 8 and 9 that have similar standards to those externally accredited. These are at higher level of a specific profession and come as part of a career path for the purpose of extending or broadening knowledge and professional skills. Such qualifications would have a minimum NQF credit of 12⁷⁵. These should be aligned to international standards relevant to the profession and national standards.

⁷¹ This is governed by the Validation Standards

⁷² This is subject to change in accordance with the BVQ project development

⁷³ Design phase discussions

⁷⁴ These are yet to be developed

⁷⁵ The cap to these type of qualifications would be determined at a later stage in accordance with regulatory body approval and agreement to the proposal.

d) Certificates

It is proposed to introduce a new category of qualifications with the title: **Certificate**⁷⁶, with the prospect to provide progression pathway/route. Starting at level 1 of the NQF as illustrated in figure 1 and flexible in terms of covering a wide range of disciplines. Certificate 1 & 2 would be advantageous specifically for special needs qualifications with the purpose of including them in the system and provide them with access to a progressive route. Furthermore, these must be linked to the NOS of Bahrain and directly related to a vocational discipline/area.

e) National Diploma

Currently there are several Vocational Diplomas being offered in the Kingdom some of which are externally accredited. **National Diplomas** (NDs) –expected to rise in number since there are new national centers that just started operating⁷⁷- sit on level 6 of the NQF and typically has a duration of 120 NQF Credits. These are designed to provide learners with theoretical knowledge with emphasis on practical skills in a particular discipline/area in the vocational sector. Such qualifications should be linked to the NOS.

f) Higher National Diploma

For the purpose of extending the pathway for vocational qualifications and in line with international good practice it is proposed to introduce **Higher National Diploma** (HND) qualifications at Level 7 of the NQF with a duration of 240 NQF credit. HNDs are a higher level to ND and are designed to provide learners with theoretical knowledge with emphasis on practical skills in a particular discipline/area in the vocational sector. Such qualification should be linked to the NOS.

1.1.3 General Education Qualifications' Titles and Description⁷⁸

a) Access

In accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain⁷⁹, basic education (up until Grade 9) is compulsory and this is to combat illiteracy. The sole purpose of **Access** qualifications is to allow learners who require special education support and learners who have no formal qualifications to complete their learning across potential possible pathways. Access 2 sits on level 2 of the NQF. While Access 1, sits on level 1 on of the NQF.

b) Intermediate Certification Qualification

Intermediate Certification Qualification is defined as Grade 9 in accordance with Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum/system or equivalent in private schools' curriculum⁸⁰. Intermediate Certification sits on Level 3 of the NQF and designed to provide a stepping stone to School Graduation Qualifications and VET qualifications.

c) School Graduation Qualification

School Graduation Qualification; known as Grade 12 (Secondary School Certificate / Tawjihi Certificate), or equivalent in private schools, are the basic pivot to entering HE programmes. These are designed to provide general background in several disciplines to prepare learners to pursue further/tertiary education (most likely HE) and have a typical volume of 3 years of study to achieve Level 4 of the NQF.

In addition, there are several tracks provided by MOE schools⁸¹ in the technical education sector – VET. These, **Advanced Apprenticeship**, are designed to sit on the same NQF level (Level 4) and provide the option to either peruse further education -be it vocational, professional or higher education-

⁷⁶ These are yet to be developed

⁷⁷ Nasser Vocational Training Centre

⁷⁸ These are preliminary and require further consideration in a focused project

⁷⁹ Bahrain Constitution, Chapter II, Article 7

⁸⁰ Some institutions follow 13 years plan (inclusive of KG2) and intermediate certification could be at G8 or G10.

⁸¹ Some of technical schools in Bahrain: Shaikh Khalifa Ben Salman Technical School, Jidhuffs Technical School, AlJabreya Technical School and Shaikh Abdullah Ben Isa Technical School. It is worth mentioning that these schools cater only for male learners. However, we know of other schools for females, further information is needed on these.

or directly engage in an occupation, such qualification may have an intermediate/exit qualification (typically two years of study - **Apprenticeship**) that does not allow for perusing HE qualifications but does allow for further vocational studies and involvement in occupations. Unlike Grade 12 (and equivalent) technical school curricula should be linked to NOS, given their nature of study and progression opportunities.

d) Advanced School Graduation Qualifications

Advanced School Certificates are designed to include higher level specialized subjects at level 5 of the NQF providing one step further to entering Higher Education undergraduate programmes with a chance of exemption from year one equivalent subjects. Such early specialization may control/restrict learners' choices of further/tertiary education specialized pathways. Advanced School Certificate sits on Level 5 of the NQF and has a typical volume of learning of 3 years from Grade 9 equivalent.

1.2 Allocation of Qualifications on the NQF

Figure 1 below demonstrates the allocation of Qualifications on the NQF.

Level	Academic	Vocational (inclusive of Special Needs)		
10	Doctoral Degree			
9	Master's Degree	BVQs		Professional award L9
	Postgraduate Diploma			
8	Bachelor's Degree			Professional award L8
7	Associate Degree		HND	Professional award L7
6	Diploma		ND	Award L6
5	Advanced School Graduation Qualifications		Advanced Certificate	Award L5
4	School Graduation Qualification		Certificate 4	Award L4
3	Intermediate Certification	Certificate 3	Award L3	
2	Access 2	Certificate 2		
1	Access 1	Certificate 1		

1.3 Qualifications' Credit Description

Table 1 below shows the recommended credit framework /description of qualifications on the NQF. International good practice has been considered in this proposal and the method adopted in describing credits of these qualification come with the view of fitness for purpose with respect to the current situation of the education and training system in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

It is important to note that this description is to be used hand in hand with requirement of the Validation Standards. Specifically, standards 2, 3 & 5 (Qualifications Compliance, Appropriateness of Qualification Design, Content and Structure, and Appropriateness of NQF Level and Credit). The level of the remaining composite units and how it contributes to the design and the purpose of the qualifications will be subject to validation process judgment with consideration to progression between units as appropriate.

Table 1 Qualifications' Credit description⁸²

Qualification Title	Sector	Status	NQF Level	NQF Credit	
				Overall Credit	Credit Description
Doctoral Degree	HE	Currently Licensed at 45 USCS ⁸³	10	_____	Majority of Credits at level 10
Master's Degree	HE	Currently Licensed at 30 USCS	9	Min of 120 in total	At least 85% of total credits at level 9 or above
Postgraduate Diploma	HE	Currently Licensed at 18 USCS	9	Min of 72 in total	At least 85% of total credit at level 9 or above
Professional Award L9	VET	Proposed	9	Min of 12 in total	At least 50% of total credit at level 9 or above
Bachelor's Degree	HE	Currently Licensed at 120 USCS	8	Min of 480 in total	At least 25% of total credit at level 8 or above Should not include more than 20% of total credit at level 5 ⁸⁴
Professional Award L8	VET	Proposed	8	Min of 12 in total	At least 50% of total credit at level 8 or above
Associate Degree	HE	-----	7	Min of 240 in total	At least 35% of total credit at level 7 or above Should not include more than 15% of total credit at a level below level 6
Professional award L7	VET	Proposed	7	Min of 12 in total	At least 50% of total credit at level 7 or above
HND	VET	Proposed	7	Min of 240 in total	At least 50% of total credit at level 7 or above
Diploma	HE	Currently Licensed at 18 USCS	6	Min of 120 in total	At least 75% of total credit at level 6 or above
Award L6	VET	Currently Licensed at 60 hours	6	Max of 60 hours equivalent in NQF credit	At least 50% at level 6 or above
ND	VET	Proposed	6	Min of 120 in total	At least 75% of total credit at level 6 or above
Advanced School Graduation Qualification	GE	Currently at 3 yr from G9 equivalent	5	----- ----	Min of 1 yr. at level 5 Should not include any credits at level 3 or below
Award L5	VET	Currently Licensed at 60 hours	5	Max of 60 hours equivalent in NQF credit	At least 50% at of total credit level 5 or above
Advanced Certificate	VET	Proposed	5	Min of 120 in total	At least 50% of total credit at level 5 or above
School Graduation Qualification G12 and Equivalent	GE	Currently at 3 yr from G9 or equivalent	4	----- ----	Max of 10% at level 5 Min of 80% at level 4 Max of 10% at level 3

⁸² These are the general guidelines while HEI remain to hold autonomy of distribution of credits within the rules specified, even including credits form a higher level as long as proper progression is maintained within the design.

⁸³ United States Credit System

⁸⁴ Any presence of credit below level 5 (i.e. level 4), will have to be clearly justified and evidenced.

Qualification Title	Sector	Status	NQF Level	NQF Credit	
				Overall Credit	Credit Description
School Graduation Qualification: Technical Education qualification (Advanced Apprenticeship)	GE/VET	Currently at 3 yr from G9 or equivalent	4	----- ----	Max of 10% at level 5 Min of 80% at level 4 Max of 10% at level 3
School Graduation Qualification: Technical Education qualification (Apprenticeship)	GE/VET	Currently at 2 yr from G9 or equivalent	4	----- ----	Min of 85% at level 4 Max of 15% at level 3
Award L4	VET	Proposed	4	Max of 60 hours equivalent in NQF credit	At least 50% at of total credit level 4 or above
Certificate 4	VET	Proposed	4	Min of 120 in total	At least 50% of total credit at level 4 or above
Intermediate Certification and equivalent	GE	Currently at 3 yr	3	----- ----	Max of 5% at level 4 Min of 80% at level 3 Max of 15% at level 2
Award L3	VET	Proposed	3	Max of 60 hours equivalent in NQF credit	At least 50% at of total credit level 3 or above
Certificate 3	VET	Proposed	3	Min of 120 in total	At least 50% of total credit at level 3 or above
Access 2	GE	-----	2	----- ----	-----
Certificate 2	VET	Proposed	2	60 to 120 in total	At least 50% of total credit at level 2 or above
Access 1	GE	-----	1	----- ----	-----
Certificate 1	VET	Proposed	1	60 to 120 in total	Max of 25% at level 2

Annex 7: Bahrain NQF General Policies

1. POLICY 1: Listing Institutions in the NQF Register

Institutions are required to be listed in the NQF register prior to submitting their qualifications for placement on the NQF.

1.1. Purpose

- To identify institutions that are eligible to have their qualifications placed on the NQF.
- To ensure that institutions which provide qualifications placed on the NQF have established suitable and transparent operational mechanisms to maintain the standards of their qualifications.
- To ensure that institutions are aware of their roles and responsibilities in the Institutional Listing process.

1.2. Policy Statements

1. Institutions must comply with eligibility criteria and Institutional Listing standards in order to be eligible to have their qualifications placed on the NQF. Those criteria and standards must be clearly defined and published by the BQA in the NQF Handbook.
2. The GDQ must process all applications for institutional listing in a fair, transparent and consistent manner, that is fit-for-purpose and which embraces international good practice.
3. Prior to submitting qualifications for placement on the NQF, an institution must be listed in the NQF register. An institution is deemed to become 'listed' when:
 - it meets all Institutional Listing Standards
 - it has passed its quality review conducted by the General Directorate of Education and Training Institutes Reviews (GDR), if applicable⁸⁵. However, newly established institutions that have not been reviewed by GDR may be listed solely against the NQF institutional listing standards.
4. An institution maintains its status as being 'Listed', if it passes its institutional review, conducted by GDR, including the embedded Institutional Listing standards with the review framework.
5. Institutions have the right to appeal the outcome of their Institutional Listing application in accordance with the BQA's policies and procedures.
6. The GDQ will change the status of a 'listed' institution, including its 'placed' qualifications, to 'archived' when it does not pass its periodic review.

2. POLICY 2: Qualifications Compliance with NQF Requirements

Qualifications placed on the NQF must comply with NQF and regulatory bodies' requirements.

2.1. Purpose

- To ensure that qualifications placed on the NQF comply with requirements and criteria set by the relevant regulatory body, where applicable.
- To identify the qualifications that are eligible for placement on the NQF.
- To ensure that qualifications placed on the NQF have common design criteria across education and training sectors, which promotes lifelong learning and supports progression of learners between sectors.

⁸⁵ Some institutions are not included within the review scope of BQA

- To ensure that institutions use quality-assured and fit-for-purpose processes for Mapping and Confirmation.

2.2. Policy Statements

1. An institution must ensure that any qualification submitted for placement on the NQF complies with the relevant regulatory body requirements and criteria, where applicable.
2. A qualification must comply with NQF eligibility criteria in order for it to be considered for placement on the NQF.
3. Qualifications eligibility and design criteria must be clearly defined and published by the BQA in the NQF Handbook.
4. Institutions must follow the qualifications mapping and confirmation processes declared within the submission for institutional listing.

3. POLICY 3: Qualification Placement on the NQF

All national qualifications are placed on the NQF according to the process for 'Qualification Placement'.

3.1. Purpose

- To ensure that institutions are aware of their roles and responsibilities in the 'Qualification Placement' process.
- To ensure that the role and responsibilities of the GDQ in the placement process are clear and transparent, and that the arrangements for placing a qualification on the NQF, or archiving it, are defined, transparent and published.
- To set consistent methods for allocation and validation of NQF Level and NQF Credit.

3.2. Policy Statements

1. Institutions are required to submit all eligible qualifications to the GDQ for placement on the NQF. The eligibility criteria must be clearly defined and published by the BQA in the NQF Handbook.
2. The GDQ must process all qualification placement applications in a transparent, fair and consistent manner that embraces international good practice.
3. Institutions are required to submit documentation and evidence to support their Qualification Placement applications.
4. The Level Descriptors, along with provided rationales, form the basis for allocating the NQF Level of each unit within any given qualification. The overall NQF Level of a qualification is determined by considering the NQF Levels of comprising units.
5. The GDQ must verify the proposed NQF Level and NQF Credit of a qualification and its comprising units, as well as verifying the qualification's compliance with the NQF requirements (*see Policy 2*).
6. The GDQ must ensure that all submitted qualifications for placement on the NQF are subject to a validation process (*see Policy 4*).
7. Placed Qualifications will be archived if they:

- are no longer valid (i.e. do not satisfy Validation Standards);
 - are discontinued and no longer delivered by the institution; or
 - do not pass its periodic GDR's quality review.
8. Institutions have the right to appeal the outcome of their application for qualification placement on the NQF, in accordance with the BQA's policies.

4. POLICY 4: Validation of Qualifications

All qualifications placed on the NQF must be validated to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose and meet validation standards.

4.1. Purpose

- To ensure that qualifications placed on the NQF are fit for-purpose and meet the needs of learners or the labour market.
- To ensure that the validation standards, process and roles of validators are defined and transparent.

4.2. Policy Statements

1. A *Validation Panel* of professionals and educators/trainers ensures that each qualification – including its comprising units – meets the Validation Standards.
2. The GDQ is responsible for overseeing validation events and the selection of *Validation Panel* members. Panel members must be selected in a transparent and objective manner.
3. The *Validation Panel* shall only judge the validity of a qualification using the Validation Standards published by the BQA in the NQF Handbook. The Panel assigns a Validity Period for every valid qualification.
4. During the Validity Period, the GDQ monitors all qualifications placed on the NQF. Accordingly, institutions must maintain the qualifications' content and standards and are responsible for communicating any changes to the GDQ.
5. Qualifications will be subject to re-validation when:
 - they have passed their Validity Period; or
 - any changes occur that might affect the NQF Level or NQF Credit verified for a qualification or its constituent parts.

5. POLICY 5: Enabling Learners with Special Needs

Enabling learners with special needs by integrating them within the education and training systems and recognising their achievements on the NQF.

5.1. Purpose

- To provide equal and suitable opportunities for the integration and access of learners with special needs within the education and training programmes, and recognition of their achievements.
- To encourage institutions to develop, and place on the NQF, qualifications specifically designed for learners with special needs.

5.2. Policy Statements

1. Institutions should wherever possible provide learners with special needs with suitable support and resources, and ensure their integration and recognition of achievements.
2. Institutions are encouraged to develop, where appropriate, qualifications specifically targeted at learners with special needs in order to expand their learning and increase their employment opportunities. These qualifications must also comply with NQF requirements (*see Policies 2, 3 and 4*).
3. The GDQ must ensure that institutions provide learners with special needs with suitable support and resources for all qualifications.

6. POLICY 6: Promoting Lifelong Learning

Promoting the concept of Lifelong Learning which aims to recognise prior learning, and to further enhance progression pathways between education and training sectors.

6.1. Purpose

- To promote the concept of Lifelong Learning within the Qualifications System of the Kingdom of Bahrain, by enhancing progression pathways between education and training sectors and developing a common understanding of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the context of the NQF.
- To promote the value of prior learning achievement as being on equal terms with formal learning.
- To provide guidance to institutions in developing mechanisms for RPL in accordance with the current education and training regulations.

6.2. Policy Statements

1. The GDQ will develop and promote a common understanding of RPL in the context of the NQF, alongside valuing prior learning achievement on equal terms to formal learning.
2. The GDQ must ensure that Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) is the mechanism used to recognise prior learning, ensuring that the outcome of APL meets the identified standards of the relevant qualification.
3. The GDQ will provide guidelines for institutions to establish mechanisms for the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning, in accordance with current educational and training regulations within the Kingdom of Bahrain.

7. POLICY 7: Communication and National Cooperation

Communication and national cooperation is essential for raising public awareness about the aims, benefits and principles of the NQF, and for ensuring the readiness of institutions to implement it.

7.1. Purpose

- To raise public awareness about the aims, benefits, and principles governing the NQF, and promote its usage and application.
- To ensure that all policies, guidelines and publications governing the NQF are available, accessible and updated.

- To ensure the readiness of institutions for all NQF-related operations, particularly Institutional Listing and Qualifications Placement.
- To maintain an up-to-date NQF register (database) that includes all listed institutions along with all qualifications placed on, or aligned to, the NQF.
- To engage and communicate with regulatory bodies and stakeholders, with the aim of implementation and improvement of the NQF.

7.2. Policy Statements

1. The GDQ will take initiatives to raise public awareness, to promote and support the usage and understanding of the NQF.
2. The GDQ must provide appropriate support and, capacity building sessions to ensure the readiness of institutions to carry out NQF-related activities, particularly Institutional Listing and Qualifications Placement, and to equip those staff within institutions who are involved in qualification design, development and quality assurance with the required and appropriate skills.
3. The GDQ must ensure that all policies, guidelines and publications governing the NQF are up-to date, available and accessible to all stakeholders.
4. The GDQ will maintain and update the NQF register, which includes listed institutions along with qualifications placed on, or aligned to, the NQF.
5. The GDQ should engage with regulatory bodies and stakeholders with the aim of implementing and enhancing the NQF.

8. POLICY 8: Referencing the NQF

Referencing the NQF is an activity that leads to international recognition for the national qualifications.

8.1. Purpose

- To achieve international recognition of the NQF, including the placed qualifications.
- To ensure that referencing mechanisms are set and defined between the organisations involved.
- To ensure that referencing reports are available and published.

8.2. Policy Statements

1. The BQA is responsible for facilitating referencing activities in collaboration with relevant national and international organisations, to achieve international recognition of the NQF including the placed qualifications.
2. As the scope and aims of referencing activities may vary considerably, the GDQ will identify suitable qualifications frameworks and key organisations and will determine the scope and aims of any referencing activities.
3. The BQA must develop and publish referencing guidelines that are fit-for-purpose and in line with international good practice.
4. The BQA must ensure that referencing reports are available and published.

9. POLICY 9: Alignment of Foreign Qualifications

Alignment of foreign qualifications enhances the comparability between foreign and national qualifications.

9.1. Purpose

- To ensure that the mechanisms for qualification alignment to the NQF are specified and transparent.

9.2. Policy Statements

1. The GDQ can align foreign qualifications to the NQF if they meet alignment standards.
2. The BQA must publish alignment standards and procedures.
3. The GDQ must process all applications for aligning foreign qualifications to the NQF in a transparent and consistent manner that is fit-for-purpose and embraces international good practice.

10.POLICY 10: Continuous Quality Improvement

Continuous Quality Improvement will ensure the value and credibility of the NQF and its relevance to education and training requirements within the Kingdom of Bahrain.

10.1. Purpose

- To ensure that the structure, typology, values and characteristics of the NQF are maintained and benchmarked against international standards.
- To ensure that Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is the backbone of the NQF operations.
- To maintain the qualification standards placed on the NQF and the credibility and value of the NQF.

10.2. Policy statements

1. The GDQ will maintain, benchmark and continuously improve the NQF structure, typology and values through the evaluation of international standards and adaptation to the developments of the education and training systems.
2. The GDQ periodically reviews all NQF-related policies, processes and procedures, taking into consideration the views of relevant stakeholders.
3. The GDQ aims to continuously improve the quality of its standards in all aspects of the NQF operations and must ensure effective time management in processing applications through defined key performance indicators (KPIs).
4. Institutions listed in the NQF register must ensure effective application of their internal quality assurance mechanisms in order to maintain their qualification standards and the credibility and value of the NQF.