Comparative Analysis of the European Qualifications Framework and the New Zealand Qualifications Framework:

Joint Technical Report

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Introduction

This report sets out an analysis of the technical and conceptual characteristics of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) in their operational contexts, identifying key elements of comparability and similarities and differences in a mutually beneficial way.

The analysis is the product of a joint project completed by a Technical Working Group formed between the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the EQF Advisory Group in 2014-15. The work on this report was completed in 2016.

The frameworks

The EQF was established in 2008 as a regional common reference framework with the purpose of improving the transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications in Europe. European national qualifications frameworks are currently being 'referenced' to the EQF. Referencing in the EQF is a process that results in the establishment of a formal relationship between the levels of a European national qualifications framework and the levels of the EQF. As a meta-framework, the EQF does not contain qualifications itself.

The NZQF was established in July 2010. It replaced the both the National Qualifications Framework (established in 1992) and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (established in 2001). The NZQF is a single, unified framework for all New Zealand's quality assured qualifications, from senior secondary school to doctoral degrees.

Project purpose and scope

International comparability of qualifications is important in New Zealand and Europe as set out in the objectives and policies of both qualifications frameworks. One of the objectives for putting in place qualifications frameworks is to facilitate recognition of qualifications to support mobility of learners and workers – both within and between countries.

New Zealand shares a common educational heritage with many European countries, and there is significant mobility of students and skilled workers between New Zealand and Europe. New Zealand and Europe have a long history of education engagement through bilateral relations with individual nations and with the European Union. This project comparing the NZQF and EQF can help to further strengthen existing relationships between New Zealand and the European Union.

While this report does not reference the NZQF with European national qualifications frameworks, it is intended to be useful for people in the European Union seeking to understand New Zealand qualifications, their place in the New Zealand education and qualification system and the quality assurance system that underpins the NZQF; and vice versa for people in New Zealand to acquire better understanding of the EQF objectives and implementation and of qualifications referenced to the EQF through European national qualifications frameworks.

The primary audience for this report are policy makers within New Zealand, Europe and beyond who wish to gain further understanding of the commonality and differences between the NZQF and the EQF. Equally, it is intended that the report be used as a resource to inform policy decision-making for future education and training cooperation and engagement, particularly in key policy areas of strategic importance to New Zealand and the European Union.

This report can serve as a source of information to support transparent and consistent recognition decisions informed by a strong understanding and appreciation of the learning outcomes delivered by the frameworks. It will not, however, result in automatic or guaranteed recognition of

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qualifications. Recognition of qualifications is carried out by relevant competent authorities in Europe and New Zealand.

Project approach

A joint Technical Working Group was established between the NZQA and the EQF Advisory Group in 2014 to carry out exploratory technical work comparing the NZQF to the EQF. This technical work included a series of detailed information sharing meetings via video conference, and a study visit to New Zealand by EQF Technical Working Group members in February 2015. NZQA also gave two presentations to EQF Advisory Group in Brussels: the first in June 2014 on the NZQF, and the second in December 2015 on the comparative analysis report.

The Technical Working Group agreed to structure the content of this report according to the following principles adapted from the Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF. These principles provided the basis through which the foundations and key aspects of each framework could be compared with the other.

- **Principle 1:** The roles and responsibilities of NZQA and the corresponding authorities for the EQF are clear and transparent.

- **Principle 2:** Comparability of the NZQF and the EQF and their levels.

- **Principle 3:** The NZQF and the EQF are based on learning outcomes.

- **Principle 4:** There are transparent processes for the inclusion of qualifications on both frameworks.

- **Principle 5:** Both qualifications frameworks are underpinned by quality assurance and are consistent with international quality assurance principles.

- **Principle 6:** National or regional policies for the validation of all learning and credit systems, where these exist, are a key feature of the qualifications frameworks.

The comparative analysis process included structural and technical analysis and comparison of key concepts, detailed analysis of level descriptors of both frameworks, and contextual and social matching. The structural and technical comparison provided an initial view, but for some framework levels, further research was required to make a more comprehensive comparison. A contextual and social effects matching process which examined the place of qualifications of certain levels within their national contexts was used to deepen the comparison.

To generate trust, analysis of the NZQF and the EQF required an equivalent level of transparency between the members of the Technical Working Group, particularly in relation to key features such as the use of learning outcomes and quality assurance.

As part of the project process, NZQA and the EQF Advisory Group consulted with their respective education sectors and relevant bodies.

Project outcomes

The Technical Working Group examined the characteristics of the EQF as a meta-framework for European countries and the NZQF as a national framework. While there are conceptual and functional differences between the NZQF and the EQF, due to their different purposes and functions, the analysis shows that both frameworks can be considered comparable.

The deepened knowledge and understanding of the complex quality assurance mechanisms underpinning both frameworks gained through this comparative analysis will provide a sound basis

for strengthening mutual trust and understanding of qualifications frameworks and qualifications, and more importantly, their applications in the real world. This also extends to empowering decision-makers to recognise qualifications in the context of their frameworks and can further provide the grounds for improved student and labour mobility between European Union Member States and New Zealand.

Key findings

The comparative analysis confirmed that the NZQF and EQF are comparable and established a relationship between levels of the two frameworks. The following diagram provides a summary of the correspondence between the NZQF and EQF levels and examples of national qualifications types (linked to the EQF via NQFs referenced to the EQF).

NZQF			EQF
Doctoral Degrees	10	8	**Third cycle degrees (Doctorate)** **Higher professional qualifications** EE: occ. qual. 'chartered engineer'
Master's Degrees	9	7	**Second cycle degrees (Master's)** **Higher professional qualifications** CZ: 'Chemical engineer product 'manager'
Bachelor Honours Degrees* Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates	8		
Bachelor's Degrees	7	6	**First cycle degrees (Bachelor's)** IE: Ordinary Bachelor's degree, Honours Bachelor Degree **Higher professional qualifications** DE: 'Master Craftsman (certified)'
Diploma Qualifications	6	5	**SCHE qualifications** **Higher professional qualifications**
Diploma Qualifications	5		
Certificate level 4 Trade qualifications	4	4	**Upper secondary general school-leaving certificates** **Upper secondary VET school leaving certificates**
Certificate level 3 NCEA (secondary school – leaving certificate)	3		
Certificate level 2	2	3	**VET qualifications** **Secondary education certificates**
Certificate level 1 NCEA	1	2	**Lower-secondary education** **Basic VET qualifications**
		1	**Primary education** **Basic VET qualifications**

*reflects the Technical Working Group's agreement that NZQF level 8 will remain unlevelled to the EQF.

Acronyms

CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CUAP	Committee on University Academic Programmes
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ECVET	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EER	External Evaluation and Review
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance for Vocational Education and Training
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
HE	Higher Education
ITO	Industry Training Organisation
ITP	Institute of Technology and Polytechnic
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement
NCP	National Coordination Point (for EQF implementation at national level, also known as EQF-NCP)
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
NZQF	New Zealand Qualifications Framework
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PTE	Private Training Establishment
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area
SCHE	Short-cycle Higher Education
TEO	Tertiary Education Organisation
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning

Introduction: context, scope and purpose

Introduction: context, scope and purpose

This report is a result of a Technical Working Group (TWG) between the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Advisory Group, following a comparative examination of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

In June 2014, there was agreement by both the NZQA and the EQF Advisory Group to examine the characteristics of the EQF as a meta-framework for European countries and the NZQF as a national framework.

The purpose of this joint report is to analyse and document the technical and conceptual characteristics of the respective frameworks in their operational contexts, and systematically identify key elements of their comparability, similarities and differences, in a mutually beneficial way for both framework communities. In effect, the comparison of the NZQF and EQF will create a 'zone of mutual trust', leading to a better functional understanding and appreciation of NZQF qualifications and respective learning outcomes in Europe, and a better understanding of the EQF in New Zealand, and the respective European national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) that are referenced to it. By broadening and deepening the functional knowledge and understanding of respective frameworks, transparency in the frameworks can be further elevated, which in turn, can enhance opportunities for future cooperation between New Zealand and Europe.

International comparability of qualifications is important in New Zealand and Europe, and is articulated through the objectives and policies of both qualifications frameworks. One of the objectives for putting in place qualifications frameworks is to facilitate recognition of qualifications to support mobility of learners and workers – both within and between countries. Qualifications frameworks are rapidly emerging around the world, with UNESCO, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), and the European Training Foundation (ETF) showing that in 2014, there were more than 150 countries and territories involved in the development and implementation of qualifications frameworks.[1] International cooperation in using NQFs via transnational frameworks and for recognition purposes is a growing trend. The same is true for meta or regional qualifications frameworks to which NQFs of that region are referenced.[2]

A comparison of the NZQF and the EQF can provide the grounds for improved mobility between European Union (EU) Member States and New Zealand. Qualifications frameworks form part of a country or region's overall quality assurance framework, and can improve stakeholder confidence and trust in education and qualifications systems. The deepened knowledge and understanding of the complex quality assurance mechanisms underpinning both frameworks gained through this comparative analysis will provide a sound basis for strengthening mutual trust and understanding of qualifications frameworks and qualifications, and more importantly, their applications in the real world. This also extends to empowering decision-makers to recognise qualifications in the context of their frameworks to better support learner and worker mobility.

Within this context, it is important to stress there are different parameters within each framework that must be considered and understood as the differences explain the limitations of this activity.

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1   http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/2213
2   EQF, ASEAN qualifications reference framework, the Caribbean Qualifications Framework, the Gulf Qualifications Framework, the Pacific Qualifications Framework, the Southern African Development Community Qualifications Frameworks and the Transnational Qualifications Framework for the Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth

The EQF was established in 2008 as a regional common reference framework with the purpose of improving the transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications in Europe. As a meta-framework it does not contain qualifications itself. European NQFs, which do encompass qualifications, are referenced to the EQF. However, referencing a qualification to NQFs and thereby to the EQF does not give individuals any rights for automatic recognition of their qualification.

In 1992, New Zealand developed one of the first qualifications frameworks in the world – the National Qualifications Framework. In July 2010, the NZQF replaced both the National Qualifications Framework and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications.[3] Specifically, the NZQF:

- conveys the skills, knowledge and attributes a graduate has gained through completing a qualification

- requires the development of integrated and coherent qualifications that meet the needs of individuals, groups, industry and the community

- enables and supports the provision of high-quality education pathways

- enhances confidence in the quality and international comparability of New Zealand qualifications

- contributes to Māori success in education by recognising and advancing mātauranga Māori

- represents value for money, is sustainable and robust.

This joint activity is concerned with a comparison of the EQF as a meta-framework with the NZQF which is an NQF. This project does not reference the NZQF with European NQFs. Within the EU, Member States are fully responsible for their education and training systems and through the EU treaties, Member States have assigned certain powers to the EU. The current recommendation of the EU Council and the European Parliament in relation to the EQF does not contain the mandate to engage in international formal arrangements.

The relative simplicity of the EQF can mask the extensive diversity of the European qualifications landscape. The EQF is based on independent national qualifications systems and foresees no harmonisation or 'merger' of diverse European qualifications systems. National diversity is seen as a strength and the comparison of the NZQF and the EQF must not overlook this essential aspect. The role of the EQF as a central 'hub' or reference point will facilitate direct dialogue between New Zealand and European NQFs and will also make it easier for education and training institutions, employers and recognition bodies in EQF countries to develop understanding of the frameworks and build links with their New Zealand counterparts. Analysis of the comparability, similarities and differences between the NZQF to the EQF also strengthens the overall credibility of the EQF as a reference framework.

There has been growth in qualifications frameworks and their international linkages on a global scale. This joint activity will assist in those linkages and support the development of bilateral cooperation and trust between New Zealand and the EU. The relative success of the EQF so far is based on the gradual development of trust between the countries involved in the development and implementation of the framework in the region. To generate trust, analysis of the NZQF and the EQF requires an equivalent level of transparency and documentation, particularly in relation to key features such as the use of learning outcomes and quality assurance.

3   For further information about the NZQF timeline see: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/studying-in-new-zealand/understand-nz-quals/nzqf/timeline/

Introduction: context, scope and purpose
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The NZQF and the Asia-Pacific Region

New Zealand maintains a close political and economic relationship with Australia. At a government-to-government level, New Zealand's relationship with Australia is the closest and most comprehensive of all its bilateral relationships. Both governments have stated the importance of the relationship and their intention to strengthen links further, especially through deeper economic integration. New Zealand recently referenced the NZQF with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) as one way of strengthening the links between New Zealand and Australia and supporting the mobility of students and skilled workers between the countries.[4]

New Zealand and Malaysia have also completed qualification recognition projects that aim to facilitate mobility between the two countries. These projects, which contributed to the New Zealand-Malaysia Free Trade Agreement, have demonstrated the comparability of both countries' Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral Degrees.[5]

New Zealand also engages in a range of bilateral and multilateral fora in the Asia-Pacific to support student and labour mobility in the region. New Zealand supports the development of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF). The AQRF is a meta or regional qualifications framework that will enable mobility between ASEAN Member States through the development and strengthening of NQFs and systems in the region.

The EQF and the European Region

Supporting cross-border mobility of learners and workers and facilitating recognition of qualifications and lifelong learning across Europe is a major aim of the EU. This means that qualifications need to be understandable across different countries and systems in Europe. The EQF is one of the core European instruments for supporting mobility and lifelong learning and has been the main catalyst in the development of NQFs for lifelong learning in Europe. The EQF has also been a pioneer for the development of regional reference frameworks in the world. Qualifications frameworks, as powerful descriptions of qualifications systems, are also outward looking and are attractive to people in other countries as a quick reference to qualifications in countries with NQFs. They act as bridges for understanding qualifications between countries.

The EQF has been designed to act as a reference for different qualifications systems and frameworks in Europe. It takes into account the diversity of national systems and facilitates the translation and comparison of qualifications between countries. It does not concern itself with the ways in which countries structure and prioritise their education and training policies, structures and institutions nor does it directly include qualifications. It is a meta-framework that is a reference point for these national systems and national and sectoral qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes in which qualifications are classified to relate to each other. Qualifications are not directly allocated to EQF levels, as they are only linked to EQF levels via the referencing of national qualifications levels to the EQF levels. By acting as a translation device, the EQF aids in the

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4   See: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Enhancing-mobility.pdf
5   See: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/our-role-in-international-education/country-specific-recognition-arrangements/malaysia/

understanding of qualifications allocated to national levels across the different countries and education and qualification systems in Europe.

By June 2016, 29 countries had referenced their national qualifications levels to the EQF. These countries were Austria, Belgium (FL, FR), Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The remaining countries are expected to present their referencing reports in 2016-17.

The development of NQFs in Europe reflects the Bologna process and the agreement to implement qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area (QF-EHEA).[6] All countries involved in EQF implementation are participating in the Bologna process. Twenty five countries had 'self-certified' their higher education (HE) qualifications to the QF-EHEA by February 2016. Countries are increasingly combining referencing to the EQF and self-certification to the QF-EHEA;[7] Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia have all produced joint reports on both processes, reflecting the priority given to the development and adoption of comprehensive NQFs covering all levels and types of qualifications. It is expected that this approach will be chosen by most countries preparing to reference to the EQF in 2016-17. This development reflects the increasingly close cooperation between the two European framework initiatives, also illustrated by regular

meetings between EQF national coordination points (NCPs) and 'Bologna' framework coordinators.

New Zealand-European Union Bilateral Relations

New Zealand and the EU share historic and cultural links as well as a commitment to build a liberal, democratic, rules-based international system. To support such a world, New Zealand and the EU cooperate closely on a broad and expanding set of issues, including: security, international development, climate change, research and innovation among others. In 2014 the partners placed the spectrum of their bilateral relations in a treaty-level framework for the first time with the conclusion of negotiations for the Partnership Agreement on Relations and Cooperation (PARC). In March 2014 Prime Minister Key and then-Presidents of the European Council and European Commission, Herman Van Rompuy and Jose-Manuel Barroso, set in motion a reflection process to determine whether the two sides might deepen their already close trade and investment relations.

New Zealand shares a common educational heritage with many European countries, and there is significant mobility of students and skilled workers between New Zealand and Europe. New Zealand and Europe have a long history of education engagement through bilateral relations with individual nations and with the EU. According to UNESCO, in 2013 approximately 393 New Zealand students were studying in Europe at tertiary level and 1900 European students were studying in New Zealand at tertiary level.[8] A shared understanding of New Zealand's

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6   http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=65
7   Self-certification reports verify the compatibility of the national framework for higher education with the QF-EHEA. Self-certification is done on basis of the 'Dublin Descriptors', which are fully compatible with the descriptors of EQF levels 5-8. – cf. http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Documents/QF-EHEA-May2005.pdf
8   Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx

and Europe's qualifications and systems will support increased mobility of students and skilled workers and the mutual recognition of qualifications.

New Zealand has been an active member of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) since it officially joined the summit in October 2010. The ASEM brings together the European Union, 21 Asian countries, the ASEAN secretariat and Australia and New Zealand. At the ASEM meeting of minsters of education in Riga in 2015 the ministers "Reaffirmed the relevance of achieving more transparency and improving understanding of the different education systems within and between both regions and making education systems more comparable, facilitating mobility and enhancing collaboration.[9] Recently, New Zealand was invited to participate as an ASEAN policy dialogue partner at the inaugural SHARE Policy Dialogue. SHARE is an EU support project to higher education in the ASEAN region to strengthen regional cooperation, enhance quality, competitiveness and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education institutions.

Lisbon Recognition Convention

The Council of Europe – UNESCO *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* of 1997 (Lisbon Recognition Convention) is a legal instrument developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO which binds over 50 countries, including European countries, New Zealand and Australia, to adopt fair practices in the recognition of higher education qualifications. New Zealand became a party to the Convention in 2008.

The Lisbon Convention enhances internationalisation and mobility by introducing and improving qualifications recognition policies and processes,

fostering mutual trust, and building capacity for qualifications recognition. This relies on information and transparency tools, including national and regional qualifications frameworks. A subsidiary text adopted in 2012 included a recommendation that qualifications frameworks should be used to make it easier for competent recognition authorities to assess foreign qualifications and encouraged states to explore how framework levels, learning outcomes, quality and workload can be used to facilitate recognition.[10]

A comparative analysis of the NZQF and EQF could serve as a source of information which informs recognition decisions made by competent recognition authorities in Europe and New Zealand, but will not result in automatic or guaranteed recognition. A foreign qualification's context in a national or regional qualifications framework may be taken into consideration, but this is a matter for the competent recognition authorities in the country to determine.

New Zealand has been a signatory to the *European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas Leading to Admission to Universities of 1953* since 1978. Article 1.1 of the convention recognises the equivalence of university entrance qualifications between signatory countries, where that entrance is subject to state control.

New Zealand is also a member of the European Network of National Information Centres (ENIC) and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres Network (NARIC). This report will broaden the range of agencies and the number of people who understand and recognise New Zealand and European qualifications.

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9   5th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME5) Riga, 27-28 April 2015, ASEM Education Collaboration for Results: Conclusions by the Chair. http://asem-education-secretariat.kemdikbud.go.id/asemme5/

10   Recommendation on the use of qualifications frameworks in the recognition of foreign qualifications http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/DGIIEDUHE(2012)14%20Rev09%20FINAL%20-%20LRC%20Supplementary%20Text%20on%20the%20Use%20of%20QFs%20ENGLISH.asp#TopOfPage

Arrangements between New Zealand and individual EU Member States

Some European Member States have already established bilateral understandings or agreements with New Zealand in the matters of qualifications. The present study does not invalidate or undermine these agreements. It does not take these as a constraint on its own independent consideration of the NZQF. Neither does the study imply any extension to these agreements or require other countries to engage in similar processes. They are documented here in the interests of demonstrating some of the understanding and trust that has already been established between European states and New Zealand.

Ireland

From 2008-2010, New Zealand and Ireland collaborated on a project to improve the basis on which respective qualifications are recognised. The joint New Zealand-Irish report relates to levels 7, 8, 9 and 10 of both the Irish National Framework of Qualifications and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications.[11] The project agreed that New Zealand's level 7 Bachelor's Degrees, level 8 Bachelor Honours Degrees, level 9 Master's Degrees and level 10 Doctoral Degrees are broadly compatible with levels 7-10 of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications.

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom recognises levels of NCEA as equivalent to different levels of the General Certificate of Education (GCE).[12]

UK NARIC (the United Kingdom National Academic Recognition Information Centre) states that:

- NCEA Level 2 is comparable to the United Kingdom GCE (grades A–C)
- NCEA Level 3 is comparable to the United Kingdom GCE Advanced Level (A-Level)
- University Entrance with NCEA Level 3 (with Merits/Excellences in subjects to be studied at higher education institutions) is comparable to those with the overall GCEA Level.

Scope

Individuals seek qualifications recognition for a variety of purposes including admission to further study, occupational registration/licensing, employment and migration. Recognition is carried out by the competent authorities in Europe and New Zealand.

The report can support transparent and consistent recognition decisions informed by a strong understanding and appreciation of the learning outcomes delivered by the frameworks. Its outcomes do not entitle any holder of a European or New Zealand qualification to claim (automatic) recognition, but it will supplement the existing body of knowledge acquired over the many years of student and labour mobility between Europe and New Zealand.

Intended audience

The report is intended to be useful for people in the EU seeking to understand New Zealand qualifications, their place in the New Zealand education and qualification system and the quality assurance system that underpins the NZQF; and vice versa for people in New Zealand to acquire better understanding of the EQF objectives and implementation and of qualifications referenced to the EQF through European NQFs. The primary

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11   http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Qualifications-Compatibility-Project.pdf
12   http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/studying-in-new-zealand/secondary-school-and-ncea/international-recognition-of-ncea/specific-country-requirements/

Introduction: context, scope and purpose
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audience for this report are policy makers within New Zealand, Europe and beyond who wish to gain further understanding of the commonality and differences between the NZQF and the EQF. Equally, it is intended that the report be used as a resource to inform policy decision-making for future education and training cooperation and engagement, particularly in key policy areas of strategic importance to New Zealand and the EU.

Introduction on methodology

Introduction on methodology

Technical Working Group

A joint Technical Working Group (TWG) was established in 2014 between NZQA and the EQF Advisory Group. For the NZQF, the TWG comprised the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). For the EQF the TWG comprised the EQF Advisory Group members from the Czech Republic, Germany and Ireland, and Cedefop and the European Commission.

The working language of the TWG is English. It is worth noting that while much technical work around the EQF is conducted in English, the framework itself is presented in the 22 official languages of the EU Member States.[13] The individual NQFs in Europe that have been referenced to the EQF are in their national languages. All have been translated into English. European tools are available to facilitate translation.[14] Comparisons that rely heavily on detailed lexical analysis, such as this one, are further complicated by the multilingual background of the participants and the linguistic contexts in which the referenced frameworks and qualifications were originally written.

The TWG was formed to carry out exploratory technical work comparing the NZQF and the EQF. It exchanged information on key aspects which relate to qualification frameworks by ensuring:

* a much clearer understanding of the different systems supporting qualifications

* an understanding of the key drivers relating to qualifications frameworks and how these materialise in New Zealand and Europe

* analysis of the comparability of the two frameworks and their levels

* open and in-depth analysis and discussion on opportunities, challenges, benefits and risks

* development of a joint set of criteria as the technical basis for comparability

* reporting back to the EQF Advisory Group and the countries' national bodies at key stages

* recommending the final report for consideration.

The TWG agreed to the approach below to technical work between the NZQA and the EQF Advisory Group at the June 2014 meeting:

* analysis of risks and benefits of cooperation

* technical work on identifying the relationship between the third country qualifications framework and the EQF.

The TWG met in November 2014 by video conference to discuss the benefits and risks papers drafted by New Zealand and Europe and to agree a proposed outline of the joint technical report. It further held a number of video-conferences to progress the report and share information on the frameworks.

A study visit of the EQF TWG members took place to New Zealand (24-27 February 2015). Through an interesting programme the visit provided excellent insights into the functioning of the NZQF in all its composing parts and in practice. The EQF delegation met with persons in charge of the administration of the NZQF, with bodies/persons in charge of quality assurance and funding, as well as with industry stakeholders. The EQF delegation met with the New Zealand Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment, Hon Steven Joyce, showing a high level of political interest in the project.

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13 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32008H0506(01)
14 http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4064
    https://ec.europa.eu/esco/home; http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/sl/publications-and-resources/publications/6119

The EQF was presented to stakeholders in New Zealand, through a combined presentation of the EQF (by the Commission services and Cedefop) and of European NQFs referenced to it (presentation of the Irish Qualifications Framework).

The TWG agreed to the structure and content of the report according to the following principles adapted from the *Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF:*

- **Principle 1:** The roles and responsibilities of NZQA and the corresponding authorities for the EQF are clear and transparent.

- **Principle 2:** Comparability of the NZQF and the EQF and their levels.

- **Principle 3:** The NZQF and the EQF are based on learning outcomes.

- **Principle 4:** There are transparent processes for the inclusion of qualifications on both frameworks.

- **Principle 5:** Both qualifications frameworks are underpinned by quality assurance and are consistent with international quality assurance principles.

- **Principle 6:** National or regional policies for the validation of all learning and credit systems, where these exist, are a key feature of the qualifications frameworks.

Consultation process

New Zealand

New Zealand engaged with the wider sector through the New Zealand Advisory Group members. Members covered the education sector, social and economic partners and government agencies as set out below:

- Universities New Zealand – Te Pōkai Tara

- New Zealand Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics

- The Metro Group

- Te Tauihu o Ngā Wānanga

- Independent Tertiary Education New Zealand

- New Zealand Secondary Principals' Association

- Business New Zealand

- New Zealand Council of Trade Unions

- Industry Training Federation

- New Zealand Union of Students' Association

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- Education New Zealand

- Ministry of Education

- Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

Introduction on methodology
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NZQA met with the New Zealand Advisory Group in May, August and November 2014, and February, May, August, and November 2015. NZQA also formed a focus sub-group specifically to consider the lower levels of the NZQF and the EQF and this group met on 15 August 2014. Attendees included representatives from:

- schools
- the vocational sector
- industry
- higher education.

Representatives from these groups encouraged NZQA to attend peak body forums to discuss the project in more detail and to meet with interested institutions. Initial engagement occurred throughout September and October 2014 with:

- Private Training Establishments (PTE) peak body forum
- Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP) peak body forum
- Industry Training Organisations (ITO) peak body forum
- all eight New Zealand Universities – Auckland, Auckland University of Technology, Waikato, Massey, Victoria, Canterbury, Lincoln and Otago
- WelTec.

Representatives from these institutions included Deputy Vice Chancellors Academic, Academic Managers, Academic Directors, Deans of Graduate Studies, Academic Policy and Regulations staff members, and Heads of Departments.

NZQA also consulted closely with the Universities New Zealand Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) to reach agreement on the best outcomes for NZQF qualifications that are delivered in universities.

Initial engagement concentrated on comparing the levels of the two frameworks. Engagement with the sector was very positive. Stakeholders fully support establishing comparability between the NZQF and the EQF and their levels.

EQF

On the European side the main stakeholder forum is the EQF Advisory Group, composed by government representatives as well as European level education and labour market stakeholders.

Principles for comparison

Principles for comparison

Principle 1: The roles and responsibilities of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the corresponding authorities for the European Qualifications Framework are clear and transparent.

Summary

This principle looks at the key bodies or entities that are responsible for the NZQF and the EQF governance.

Responsibility for the NZQF and the EQF is clearly defined, transparent and accessible. NZQA is the body responsible for the development and maintenance of the NZQF and the related Directory of Assessment Standards. The EQF Advisory Group, chaired by the European Commission, oversees EQF implementation. It comprises representatives of all participating countries, the Council of Europe, EU social partners, Cedefop, ETF and other important EU stakeholders such as public employment services, student union, and lifelong learning stakeholders. With regards to the EQF, NCPs have been established in all participating countries and are charged with the coordination and promotion of their own NQFs which are referenced to the EQF.

NZQF

A key function of NZQA is to set the overarching statutory rules for the quality assurance of qualifications and the tertiary education organisations that provide them (section 253 of the Education Act 1989). To implement these rules, New Zealand has two quality assurance agencies with responsibilities for separate parts of the tertiary education sector (section 159AD of the Education Act 1989):

• NZQA maintains and quality assures New Zealand's qualifications system for the non-university tertiary education sector

• Universities New Zealand fulfils this function for the university sector.

Universities New Zealand has delegated authority for university programme approval, accreditation, listing of university qualifications on the NZQF, training scheme approval, and ancillary powers under section 253A of the Education Act 1989.

NZQA and the New Zealand Qualifications Framework

NZQA is the body responsible for the development and maintenance of the NZQF and the related Directory of Assessment Standards. The NZQF was established in July 2010 as a single unified framework for all New Zealand qualifications. It replaced the National Qualifications Framework and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications.

The Education Amendment Act 2011 established the NZQF and the Directory of Assessment Standards in law, replacing general references to a 'qualifications framework'.

The effectiveness and quality of the NZQF and the related Directory of Assessment Standards are supported by a multi-layered and integrated quality assurance system. There are quality checks at each level and for each component of the system as well as aspects of the health of the system overall. NZQA applies rules and quality criteria to ensure a high and consistent standard.

NZQA's other responsibilities

NZQA is designated as New Zealand's National Education Information Centre under the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

NZQA is also responsible for maintaining effective relationships with overseas certifying and validating bodies. This work allows NZQA to recognise overseas educational and vocational qualifications

in New Zealand and have New Zealand educational and vocational qualifications recognised by other countries (see section 246A(h) of the Education Act 1989).

NZQA has the responsibility for the regulation of international education. It administers the *Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.*

NZQA has responsibility for assessment in senior secondary schools, and the Education Review Office evaluates and reports on the education and care of students in early childhood services, and primary and secondary schools.

NZQA's governance structure

NZQA has an independent Board of Directors. The directors are appointed by the relevant Minister of the Crown. The directors are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds. They all bring diverse and valuable experience to the role.

The NZQA Board ensures that NZQA carries out its legislative functions effectively and efficiently, fulfilling NZQA's mandate to create and run a robust and world-class qualifications system in New Zealand.

NZQA honours the Treaty of Waitangi

As a Crown entity, NZQA actively upholds the principles and spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi.

The Treaty of Waitangi is the founding document of New Zealand which establishes the relationship between the Crown and Māori and recognises Māori as tangata whenua (indigenous peoples) of New Zealand. The Treaty protects Māori knowledge and skills (mātauranga Māori) as a national taonga (treasure) and ensures that Māori

have full and equal participation in society as Māori, including education.

NZQA has an Office of the Deputy Chief Executive Māori, which provides cultural advice and services to NZQA, and has a strategy for raising the achievement of Māori learners as Māori. This strategy is called *Te Rautaki Māori 2012-2017.*

EQF

The EQF Recommendation

The development and implementation of the EQF is based on the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 23 April 2008 on the EQF for lifelong learning.[15] The objective of this Recommendation is to create a common reference framework which should serve as a translation device between different qualifications systems and their levels, whether for general and HE or for vocational education and training (VET). The EQF recommendation calls on Member States particularly to:

- link their national qualification systems/ frameworks to the EQF ('EQF referencing')

- indicate the EQF level on all newly issued certificates, diplomas or Europass documents

- designate NCPs to support and guide the relationship between national qualifications systems and the EQF.

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15 Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF), 2008/C 111/01

Principles for comparison
Principle 1 continued

Governance of the EQF at European level

At the EU level, the EQF Advisory Group, chaired by the European Commission, oversees the EQF implementation. It comprises representatives of all participating countries, Council of Europe (for the coordination with the Bologna process), EU social partners, Cedefop, ETF and other important EU stakeholders (e.g. public employment services, student union, lifelong learning stakeholders, youth and voluntary sector). The work is organised in the form of regular meetings (around five times a year). This is supported by peer learning activities which address particular technical, methodological and policy issues which inform practice; and build Member State capacity and foster mutual trust.[16] Cedefop supports the work by providing analytical and progress reports for discussion.

The EQF Advisory Group has adopted 10 criteria and procedures to ensure that NQFs are referenced to the EQF in a coherent and transparent way.[17] Transparent procedures for including qualifications into an NQF, underpinning quality assurance arrangements and the requirement to demonstrate a clear and demonstrable link between the national qualifications levels and the EQF are among the most important ones. The criteria also help structure the referencing reports that countries present to the EQF Advisory Group.[18] The EQF Advisory Group discusses these reports and provides feedback to the presenting countries. The presentation and discussion of the reports are intended to improve understanding of qualification systems among countries.

The second important network at European level is the NCPs. The 2008 EQF Recommendation invites countries to set up NCPs to be able to 'speak with one voice' on behalf of complex national qualifications systems. This was considered necessary to succeed in consistent referencing to the EQF. NCPs have been established in all participating countries. They support the referencing to the EQF and in some countries they are also in charge of overall NQF coordination and promotion. The institutional basis of the NCPs varies largely between countries and includes NCPs operating under the remit of ministries of education or labour, NCPs situated within the same organisation such as the ENIC/NARIC Centre,[19] independent organisations, and NCPs operating as joint initiatives of several government bodies.

The QF-EHEA is under the governance of the Bologna Process. The decision making body is the triennial Ministerial Meeting.[20] Between these meetings the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) organises policy development and monitors the implementation of the framework among the other action lines of the Bologna Process. It is supported in this work by the Bologna Secretariat and various working groups. The Council of Europe serves as the liaison between the BFUG and the EQF Advisory Group.

EQF implementation at national level in European countries

The EQF has been the main catalyst for the rapid developments and implementation of learning

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16   Topics recently addressed include international qualifications, levelling qualifications, writing learning outcomes, EQF level 5 qualifications and master craftsperson qualifications.

17   See Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF, https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/criteria_en.pdf

18   Already presented referencing reports are available on https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/documentation

19   Networks of academic recognition centres (the European network of information centres (ENIC) and the National academic recognition information centres (NARIC), http://www.enic-naric.net

20   For example the Yerevan meeting in 2015 formally included the short cycle in the QF-EHEA, using the Dublin Descriptor previously referred to in the EQF.

outcomes-based NQFs in Europe.[21] All European countries see national frameworks as necessary for relating national qualifications levels to the EQF in a transparent and trustful manner. The NQFs developed in the European countries may be different in format and function. The EQF referencing reports are produced to provide transparency and evidence on how the 10 referencing criteria are met.[22]

The development of NQFs and the referencing to the EQF is organised at national levels according to the structures and requirements of the respective countries. The national authorities responsible for these processes are usually ministries responsible for education and training and/or qualification authorities in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders (e.g. other ministries, social partners, quality assurance bodies etc).

21   Cedefop. 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014. Overview and analysis of NQF developments in Europe. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/national-qualifications-frameworks
22   Available on https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/documentation

Principles for comparison

Principle 2: Comparability of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework and their levels.

Summary

The underlying principle for the comparability of both the NZQF and the EQF is that the processes and outcomes themselves are transparent, relevant and generate trust, enabling the comparison of the frameworks and the levels within each framework.

There are conceptual and functional differences between the NZQF and the EQF due to their different purposes and functions. Structural and technical analysis and comparison of key concepts, detailed analysis of level descriptors of both frameworks and contextual and social matching have shown that both frameworks can be considered comparable, with the exception of NZQF level 8 which was difficult to match with an EQF level. The summary of the correspondence between NZQF and EQF levels can be found at the end of this section.

Methodological approach

To determine the comparability of the NZQF and the EQF levels, the following elements were used:

- structural comparison of the two frameworks (comparing the architecture and policy of the two frameworks, the concepts of learning outcomes on which they are based and the way the levels are defined)

- technical comparison of the two frameworks included a linguistic/textual analysis and comparison of the level descriptors in both frameworks

- contextual matching – Use of typical examples of qualifications types linked to levels to enrich the context

- social effects matching.

The structural and technical comparison provided an initial view, but for some levels, further research was required to make a more robust and comprehensive comparison. The contextual and social effects matching process was used to deepen comparison.

Additional concepts of best-fit and substantial differences were also considered before final judgements of comparability were made.

Structural Comparison of the NZQF and the EQF

There are conceptual and functional differences between the EQF and the NZQF that need to be considered in the comparability of the levels of the two frameworks.

EQF

The EQF was established in 2008 as a regional reference framework with the purpose of improving transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications in Europe. It takes into account the diversity of national systems and facilitates the translation and comparison of qualifications (VET, Higher Education (HE), general education) between countries. Its eight learning outcomes based qualification levels act as a translation grid and a shared reference point to which NQFs and their levels are positioned. As a meta-framework it does not contain qualifications itself. Qualifications are included in and allocated to levels of European NQFs which are referenced to the EQF levels.

EQF Level
Level 8
Level 7
Level 6
Level 5
Level 4
Level 3
Level 2
Level 1

To fully understand each EQF level, the following principles have to be considered:

- the level descriptors refer to both work and study contexts and reflect specialisations as well as generalisations

- to distinguish between levels and express the increased complexity of learning outcomes, key words are used as indicators of threshold levels e.g. EQF level 1: 'basic general knowledge' and EQF level 7: 'highly specialised knowledge...'; EQF level 1: 'structured context' and EQF level 5: 'context...where there is unpredictable change'

- each level builds on and subsumes the levels beneath

- a full understanding of one particular level therefore requires a 'horizontal' reading – across the three columns (knowledge, skills and competence) – as well as a 'vertical' reading where lower and higher levels are taken into account.

NZQF

In contrast, the NZQF is a unified national framework, listing all quality assured qualifications on the NZQF in relation to each other and the NZQF levels. All approved qualifications, from senior secondary school through to doctoral degrees, are listed on the NZQF.[23]

All qualifications on the NZQF are assigned to one of the 10 levels.[24] Each level is based on the complexity of outcomes, with level one the least complex and level ten the most complex.

All quality assured qualifications listed on the NZQF fit into a qualification type. All together 10 qualification types exist, distributed across 10 levels, some being present at more than one level. Each qualification type is defined by an agreed set of criteria which includes the expected generic outcomes, the level at which the qualifications are listed and the number of credits required at each level.

Level	Qualification Types
10	Doctoral Degree
9	Master's Degree
8	Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates, Bachelor Honours Degree
7	Bachelor's Degree, Graduate Diplomas and Certificates
6 5	Diplomas
4 3 2 1	Certificates

23 http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/approval-accreditation-and-registration/listing-qualifications-on-the-nzqf/
24 See NZQF Qualifications Listing and Operational Rules 2012

Principles for comparison
Principle 2 continued

The levels on both the NZQF and EQF are defined by descriptors in terms of learning outcomes (see Principle 3). These learning outcomes broadly reflect what is acquired when a learner completes a qualification type that is situated on or referenced to the framework.

The eight EQF levels are described using learning outcomes in terms of 'knowledge', 'skills' and 'competence'.[25] The NZQF level descriptors are described in terms of 'knowledge', 'skills' and 'application of knowledge and skills'.[26]

Table 1: Comparison of key definitions and learning outcome level descriptors

NZQF Definitions	EQF Definitions
NZQF qualification is a formal outcome of an assessment process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to a given standard.	**Qualification** means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.
All qualifications on the NZQF contain an **outcome statement** which describes the knowledge, skills and attributes of a graduate. Different learners will achieve the outcomes in different ways, so outcome statements are an indicator of the minimum achievement expected from a qualification. Each outcome statement includes: • Graduate profiles that identify the expected graduate outcomes of a qualification. This comprehensively describes what a person awarded the qualification must be able to collectively do, be and know. • Education pathways that identify other qualifications that a graduate can enrol in after completing this qualification. Where qualifications are stand-alone and do not prepare graduates for further study, the outcome statement should make this clear. • Employment pathways (or contribution to the community) that identify the areas in which a graduate may be qualified to work, or the contribution they may make to their community.	**Learning outcomes** means 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.
Knowledge is what a graduate knows and understands. It is described as a progression from 'basic general knowledge' through to knowledge which is **'factual'**, 'operational', **'theoretical'**, 'technical', 'specialised' and 'frontier' knowledge. Complexity of knowledge is described together with breadth and/or depth in the field of study or work.	**Knowledge** means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the EQF, knowledge is described as **theoretical and/or factual**.

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25   For the EQF level descriptors see https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/content/descriptors-page
26   For the NZQF level descriptors see http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/studying-in-new-zealand/understand-nz-quals/

NZQF Definitions	EQF Definitions
Skills are what a graduate **can do**. The dimension of integration, independence and **creativity** is important to describing skills progression and reflects the degree of familiarity of the task or problem requiring: • predictability or unpredictability • analysis and judgement • standardisation, innovation or adaption. Skills are described in terms of: • the **type, range** and **complexity** of processes • the types, range and complexity of **problems** and solutions.	**Skills** means the ability to **apply** knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve **problems**. In the context of the EQF, skills are described as **cognitive** (involving the use of **logical, intuitive and creative** thinking) and **practical** (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).
Application of knowledge and skills is the **context** in which a graduate applies knowledge and skills. Specifically: • application is expressed in terms of **self-management** and leadership in a profession or **responsibility** for the performance of others • the context may range from highly structured to dynamic. The learner is progressively more **autonomous** and more accountable, more **responsible** for interacting and collaborating with, and managing and leading others, within progressively less transparent, more dynamic contexts.	**Competence** means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in **work or study situations** and in professional and personal development. In the context of the EQF, competence is described in terms of **responsibility and autonomy.**

Red=knowledge Blue=skills Green=application

The definitions used for the NZQF and the EQF key terms including the domains of learning can be considered comparable. The intentions expressed with 'knowledge' and 'skills' in the two frameworks are very similar. The meaning of 'application of knowledge and skills' and of 'competence' can also be considered comparable because both refer to the use of knowledge and skills in specific contexts and to autonomy and responsibility.

Additionally, in the NZQF, strong focus is placed on communication skills and leadership. Communication skills are implemented though the ability to interact and collaborate with others and contribute to group performance. Communication skills are especially mentioned in the qualification type descriptors. Furthermore, the NZQF concentrates on the concept of leadership

throughout the levels in relation to the application of knowledge and skills. It is a continuum of complexity starting with collaboration with others, moving to having some responsibility for the performance of others through to leadership within a profession or discipline.

Detailed information outlining the comparability of the NZQF and the EQF and their levels is provided in Annex I. The tables provide a linguistic/textual comparison of level descriptors and the separate elements of each level of the frameworks. The focus of this comparison was not on the individual descriptors for each domain of learning but on the combination of the level descriptors for each level and their progression from one level to the next.

Principles for comparison
Principle 2 continued

To illustrate the correspondence between NZQF and EQF levels, examples of qualifications were used.[27] They illustrate the requirements related to levels and provide some contextual information. However, since the EQF does not define qualification types, the illustration is based on national qualification types referenced via the NQFs to the EQF. They serve to illustrate diversity of national qualification types referenced to the EQF.

The principle of best-fit was taken when comparing levels of the NZQF and the EQF. When applying the best-fit principle, levels should be understood as corridors and not as exact lines. Qualifications might include learning outcomes related to different levels. Different dimensions or categories of learning outcomes may be emphasised in qualifications placed at the same level. Therefore, qualifications allocated to the same level are not necessarily similar, but can be considered as comparable in terms of the level of learning outcomes achieved. It does not mean that the qualifications are equivalent or interchangeable.[28]

The technical comparison revealed that there are many linguistic similarities between the NZQF and the EQF level descriptors but also some differences. However, in cases where different wording is used, the same meaning or connotation may be implied. For example, NZQF level 1 refers to 'basic general and/or foundation knowledge 'which is understood as having the same meaning as the formulation used in EQF level 2 'basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study'.

Additionally, contextual matching is important for providing extra information to find the best-fit correlation between levels. For instance, the language of the learning outcomes in both the NZQF and the EQF at level 1 is similar, but the purpose and outcomes of the qualifications that sit on the NZQF and EU Member States' Qualifications Frameworks, which have been referenced to the EQF level 1, are different. New Zealand does not certify achievements equivalent to EQF level 1 therefore **EQF level 1 does not have a corresponding level in the NZQF.** Technical comparison and contextual matching provided for the best fit for NZQF level 1 with EQF level 2. The main qualification on the NZQF at level 1 is the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1. This is the first level of senior secondary school qualifications. Students who achieve NCEA Level 1 are generally aged 15 or 16 years old. Most EU Member States have referenced their lower secondary school certificates, or some basic VET certificates to EQF level 2. Applying contextual and social mapping to these levels shows **EQF level 2 and NZQF level 1 have similar outcomes for learners.**

The language of the NZQF level 2 and the EQF level 3 have some differences but viewing the level outcomes as a whole the levels are comparable. This is supported by the contextual and social effects matching which took into account the overall purpose of the qualifications at this level and the pathways of graduates. Overall, **NZQF level 2 compares well with EQF level 3.**

Technical comparison and contextual and social matching show that NZQF levels 3 and 4 best fit with the EQF level 4. NZQF level 3 holds the senior secondary school qualification (NCEA Level 3) and the results are used for the purpose of university entrance, both in New Zealand and abroad. NZQF level 4 holds the New Zealand trade qualifications that recognise the knowledge, skills and attributes required to be a registered

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27 Information on NZQF qualification types is available here: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/studying-in-new-zealand/understand-nz-quals
28 European Commission, Referencing National Qualifications Levels to the EQF Update 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/EQF%20131119-web_0.pdf

tradesperson. Students can access university from NZQF levels 3 and 4. Similarly, qualifications referenced to the EQF level 4 are general education upper secondary school-leaving certificates (giving access to HE) and upper-secondary VET school leaving certificates (school-based VET and dual VET) leading to skilled work and opening pathways to further learning in tertiary education. Overall, **NZQF levels 3 and 4 best fit with EQF level 4.**

NZQF levels 5 and 6 and the EQF level 5 are at the conjunction between upper secondary education and HE and relate to higher VET qualifications as well as HE qualifications. Technical comparison and contextual matching shows a high level of comparability. Employment outcomes at NZQF level 5 require sound knowledge of industry operations and a broad range of managerial skills to coordinate job operations. In New Zealand level 5 is considered the first year of a Bachelor's Degree.

Employment outcomes for graduates with NZQF level 6 qualifications are typically at a senior level in an occupation requiring substantial industry knowledge and wide-ranging, specialised managerial skills. Qualifications at level 6 typically prepare students for higher technical professions and/or provide a pathway program towards a Bachelor's Degree. In New Zealand level 6 is also considered equivalent to the second year of a Bachelor's Degree. In Europe, a broad range of higher professional qualifications (post-secondary VET or 'higher VET' and Short-cycle higher education (SCHE) qualifications are referenced to the EQF level 5. Overall, **NZQF levels 5 and 6 best fit with EQF level 5.**

There was a high level of comparability identified at NZQF levels 7, 9 and 10 with EQF levels 6, 7 and 8 respectively. The Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral qualifications sit at these levels in the NZQF and the EQF.

The correspondence of NZQF level 8 to the EQF is less clear. NZQF level 8 is distinct from EQF level 6 and the descriptors do not completely match with EQF level 7 descriptors.

The Bachelor Honours Degrees and Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates sit at level 8 in the NZQF. The New Zealand Bachelor Honours Degree is a separate qualification from a Bachelor's Degree and involves postgraduate studies. In some professional fields such as Law and Engineering, the New Zealand Honours Degree is awarded to those who have completed four years of specialised study including research components. Knowledge, skills and competences outlined in the learning outcomes for the New Zealand Bachelor Honours Degree have a strong emphasis on research, and programmes of study leading to these qualifications are of a highly specialised nature. Furthermore it provides a progression pathway to Doctoral Degrees.

NZQA has prepared a discussion paper reflecting its view on the matching of the NZQF level 8 to the EQF which is annexed to this report. The EQF Advisory Group has considered the detailed information on NZQF level 8 carefully, and considers that the most transparent outcome at this time is that NZQF level 8 is not fully comparable with any particular level of the EQF. NZQF level 8 shares some characteristics with EQF level 7, but is distinct from EQF level 6. While NZQF level 8 is not fully comparable with any particular level of the EQF, the detailed information about the qualifications that sit at NZQF level 8 will be useful for the purposes of recognition.

The following diagram provides a summary of the correspondence between the NZQF and EQF levels and examples of national qualifications types (linked to the EQF via NQFs referenced to the EQF).

NZQF			EQF
Doctoral Degrees	10	8	Third cycle degrees (Doctorate) Higher professional qualifications EE: occ. qual. 'chartered engineer'
Master's Degrees	9	7	Second cycle degrees (Master's) Higher professional qualifications CZ: 'Chemical engineer product 'manager'
Bachelor Honours Degrees* Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates	8		
Bachelor's Degrees	7	6	First cycle degrees (Bachelor's) IE: Ordinary Bachelor's degree, Honours Bachelor Degree Higher professional qualifications DE: 'Master Craftsman (certified)'
Diploma Qualifications	6	5	SCHE qualifications Higher professional qualifications
Diploma Qualifications	5		
Certificate level 4 Trade qualifications	4	4	Upper secondary general school-leaving certificates
Certificate level 3 NCEA (secondary school – leaving certificate)	3		Upper secondary VET school leaving certificates
Certificate level 2	2	3	VET qualifications Secondary education certificates
Certificate level 1 NCEA	1	2	Lower-secondary education Basic VET qualifications
		1	Primary education Basic VET qualifications

*reflects the Technical Working Group's agreement that NZQF level 8 will remain unlevelled to the EQF.

Principle 3: The New Zealand Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework are based on learning outcomes.

Summary

This principle looks at the way learning outcomes are defined in the NZQF and the EQF. Level descriptors of both frameworks are described in terms of 'knowledge' and 'skills'. Additionally, 'application of knowledge and skills' used in the NZQF and 'competence' used in the EQF are broadly comparable descriptors that recognise how knowledge and skills are applied.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements of knowledge and skills i.e. what a graduate is expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning. Learning outcomes are used to describe both the levels and qualifications which are part of the qualifications framework. They ensure that the details of qualifications are transparent and standard across the education and training sectors and that users of the frameworks and qualifications understand qualification outcomes.

The NZQF as a national qualifications framework and the EQF as a meta-framework, are both based on learning outcomes. Framework levels of both the NZQF and EQF are described in terms of learning outcomes or 'knowledge', 'skills' and 'application of knowledge and skills' (NZQF) or 'competence' (EQF). 'Application of knowledge and skills', used in the NZQF, and 'competence', used in the EQF, are broadly comparable descriptors that recognise how knowledge and skills are applied.

NZQF

The requirements for learning outcomes are set out in the *NZQF Qualification Listing and Operational Rules 2012*. Each qualification listed on the NZQF must have a set of learning outcomes for a particular stated purpose.

All qualifications listed on the NZQF contain outcome statements which describe the knowledge, skills and attributes of a graduate. Each outcome statement must include information on:

- **Graduate profile:** this describes the knowledge, skills, and attributes a graduate will have when they achieve the qualification.
- **Education pathways:** this identifies how the qualification can lead the graduate to other education pathways or qualifications, if relevant.
- **Employment pathways:** this identifies any relevant employment pathways for graduates or any contribution to the community, whānau, hapū, iwi, or hāpori Māori.[29]

As set out in Principle 3 the NZQF is based on learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are defined in terms of what a graduate is expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning.

Knowledge is what a graduate knows and understands. It is described as a progression from 'basic general knowledge' through to knowledge which is 'factual', 'operational', 'theoretical', 'technical', 'specialised' and 'frontier' knowledge.

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29 The requirement to list qualifications with graduate profiles, education and employment pathways was implemented in late 2011. Therefore, the majority of the current qualifications listed on the NZQF do not list information on graduate profiles, education and employment pathways. Transitional arrangements are being put in place to list all qualifications with graduate profiles, education and employment pathways.

Complexity of knowledge is described together with breadth and/or depth in the field of study or work.

Skills are what a graduate can do. The dimension of integration, independence and creativity is important to describing skills progression and reflects the degree of familiarity of the task/problem requiring:

• predictability or unpredictability

• analysis and judgement

• standardisation, innovation or adaptation.

Skills are described in terms of:

• the type, range and complexity of processes

• the types, range and complexity of problems and solutions.

Application of knowledge and skills is the context in which a graduate applies knowledge and skills. Specifically:

• application is expressed in terms of self-management and leadership in a profession or responsibility for the performance of others

• the context may range from highly structured to dynamic.

The learner is progressively more autonomous and more accountable, more responsible for interacting and collaborating with, and managing and leading others, within progressively less transparent, more dynamic contexts.

EQF

EQF learning outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on a completion of a learning process. The eight EQF levels are described using learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

Knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual; **skills** are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments); and **competence** is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy. Nevertheless, these three categories should not be read in isolation from each other.

To grasp the characteristics of one level requires also 'horizontal reading'. The descriptors cover the full range of learning outcomes, irrespective of the learning or institutional context, from basic education, through school and skilled worker levels up to doctoral or senior professional levels. Each level (from 1 to 8) builds on and subsumes the levels beneath and shows increased complexity of leaning outcomes and distinct progress in dimensions of change (e.g. complexity and depth of knowledge, the range of complexity of application/practice etc.). Level descriptors cover both work and study situations, academic as well as vocational settings, and initial as well as continuing education or training, i.e. all forms of learning: formal, non-formal and informal.

The requirements for learning outcomes in NQFs and qualifications referenced to the EQF are set out in EQF referencing criterion 3.

The respective NQFs consist of learning outcomes-based levels. The NQF level descriptors reflect the EQF level descriptors; however, they are parts of national systems and so reflect national contexts, values, traditions and objectives. This is especially evident in the way in which countries have designed, adapted and further developed national level descriptors – now adopted by most countries.

Principle 4: There are transparent processes for the inclusion of qualifications in both qualifications frameworks.

Summary

The NZQF and EQF are both comprehensive qualifications frameworks that span general education, vocational education and training and higher education. Both frameworks include transparent processes for inclusion of qualifications. In the NZQF these concern the rules for listing qualifications on the NZQF. The EQF does not contain qualifications itself. According to the EQF referencing criteria the procedures for inclusion of qualifications in NQFs and for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system must be transparent.

NZQF

NZQA has transparent rules for listing qualifications on the NZQF. These rules are publicly available and accessible from the NZQA website.[30] There are general requirements for all qualifications, and additional, specific requirements for qualifications at NZQF levels 1 to 6.[31]

Qualifications are designed to be:

- based on the workforce and skill needs of employers, industry and communities

- focused on outcomes

- flexible

- built on trust and accountability.

Below is an example of the lifecycle of a qualification. A key component is involving stakeholders in the development of qualifications. This is to ensure there is appropriate stakeholder support for the development of particular qualifications and that the qualification is needed. Stakeholders include groups such as industry, employers and the community.

The lifecycle of a qualification application (Qualification levels 1-6)
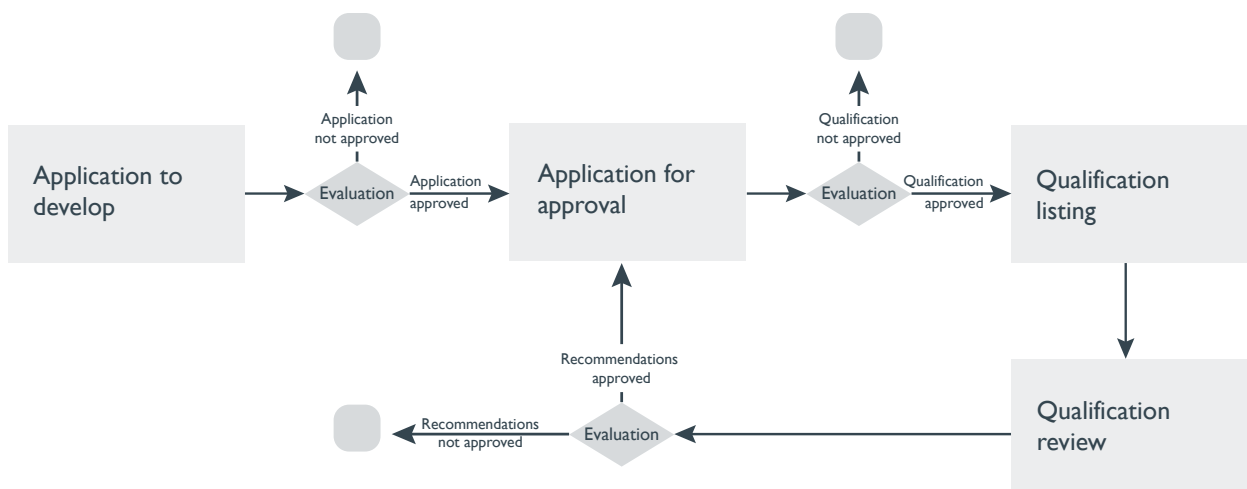
30   NZQF Qualification Listing and Operational Rules 2012
31   See the NZQF Qualification Listing and Operational Rules 2012 at http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qual-listing-rules

Principles for comparison
Principle 4 continued

Requirements for listing qualifications on the NZQF

The listing requirements in sections 248(2) and 253 of the Education Act 1989 mandate NZQA to make associated rules. *The New Zealand Qualifications Framework Listing and Operational Rules* 2012 set out the general listing requirements for qualifications at levels 1 to 10 on the NZQF.[32]

All qualifications listed on the NZQF:

- are quality assured

- have the qualification title and details publicly available

- are defined by a qualification type and level

- are allocated a credit value

- have a subject area classification (New Zealand Standard Classification of Education (NZSCED) code, which classifies a qualification into a subject area)

- have a status to indicate whether the qualification is current, expiring or discontinued.[33]

Qualifications at levels 7-10 are listed on the NZQF after a successful application for the approval and accreditation of the programme leading to the qualification. This applies to programmes and qualifications from across the whole of the tertiary sector (universities, ITPs, wānanga, and PTEs) and is distinct from the process for qualifications at levels 1-6.

Specific additional requirements to list a qualification at levels 1-6 on the NZQF

Within the non-university sector, there are specific additional listing requirements for qualifications at

levels 1-6. There is an additional two-step approval process: approval to develop a qualification; and the separate approval to list a qualification. NZQA administers both of these processes.

The additional information required for listing at levels 1-6 includes:

- a **title,** which begins with the legally protected term 'New Zealand'

- a **statement of strategic purpose** that clearly states the qualification's use and relevance to learners, industry and any relevant communities, and must demonstrate the qualification is substantially different to other qualifications listed on the NZQF

- a **specification** which contains mandatory (including quality assurance arrangements, and arrangements for credit transfer and recognition of prior learning) and optional (such as the context for delivery or assessment) conditions for programmes leading to the award of the qualification

- evidence of clear **stakeholder support for the qualification** and involvement in its development, confirming the **national** need for the particular qualification.

The additional listing requirements for qualifications at levels 1-6 reflect NZQA's intention to increase flexibility in the delivery of these qualifications, and to remove any unnecessary distinctions between qualifications apparent in some subject areas under the previous system (e.g. whether a qualification is delivered in the workplace or in the classroom). Specific qualification outcomes at levels 1-6 may be achieved through a variety of means, so the qualification itself is clearly something separate from the programme of study or training leading to it.

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32   See NZQF Qualification Listing and Operational Rules 2012
33   See NZQF Qualification Listing and Operational Rules 2012

There are a number of approaches qualification developers use when deciding the level of a qualification on the NZQF.

The first is to look at the level descriptors of the qualification and evaluate how the descriptors match the level descriptors on the NZQF. This is achieved through a discussion on the role of the qualification, and the knowledge, skills and application of the qualification. Often the best-fit principle is applied for this approach.

Another approach is to assess the level at which the qualification needs to sit on the NZQF and develop the qualification around the learning outcomes of that level.

Qualification developers

A qualification must be developed by one or more organisations that NZQA accepts as a legal entity. Those organisations automatically recognised by NZQA include: ITOs, ITPs, PTEs, wānanga, universities and current programme owners.

NZQA and the Ministry of Education are directly involved in developing some qualifications. NZQA develops qualifications for Māori, Pasifika,[34] and for generic skills that are not the responsibility of an ITO. The Ministry of Education develops the National Certificates of Educational Achievement for senior secondary school. Other government agencies may participate in or initiate qualifications development to meet particular government policy objectives.

EQF

The EQF is a meta-framework which can, in principle, be used as a reference point for all qualifications and all forms of learning whatever route the learning takes. Qualifications are not directly allocated to EQF levels, as they are only linked to EQF levels via the referencing of national qualifications levels to the EQF levels.

Q = Qualification
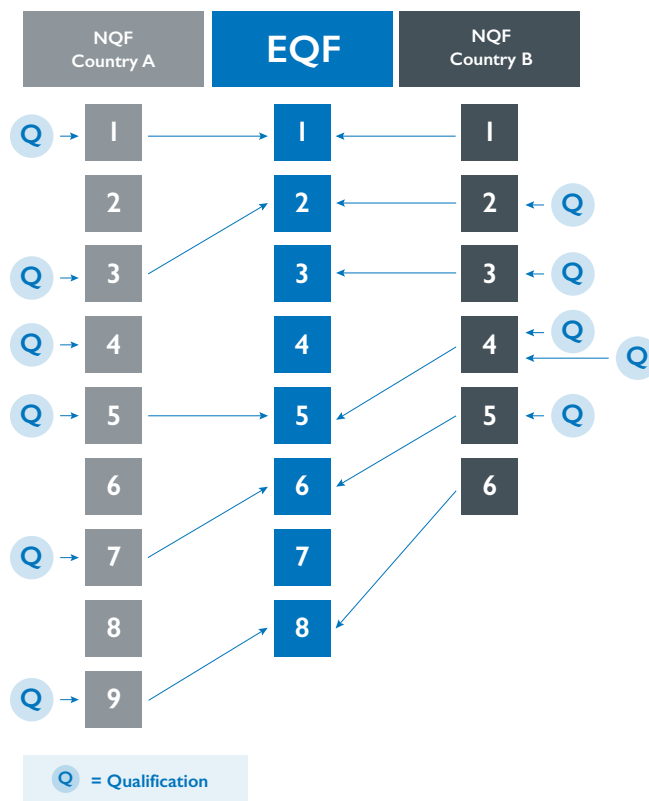
34   Pasifika are New Zealanders who identify with or feel they belong to one or more Pacific Island ethnicities. The seven largest Pasifika ethnicities in New Zealand are Cook Island Māori, Fijian, Niuean, Samoan, Tokelauan, Tongan and Tuvaluan peoples. Refer to http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Publications/Strategic-publications/pasifika-strategy.pdf

Principles for comparison
Principle 4 continued

In most European countries, the inclusion of qualifications is regulated and defined by national acts or regulations. NQFs are a 'gatekeeper' for approved (quality assured) qualifications. In many countries, national registers, catalogues or databases of qualifications are in use. They store information on qualifications, qualifications standards, certificates, degrees, diplomas, titles and/or awards available in a country or a region. In the future, these national qualifications registers will be linked to the European portal.[35] Through this European database, access to detailed information on qualifications in NQFs related to the EQF will be possible.

The *EQF referencing criterion 4* asks for *transparent procedures for the inclusion of qualifications in the NQF or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system*. The allocation of qualifications to NQF levels is based on two fundamental underlying principles:

- the principle and objective of learning outcomes: Qualifications are allocated to a level based on the level of learning outcomes related to this qualification

- the principle of best-fit: Qualifications can focus on different dimensions or categories of learning outcomes and can also include learning outcomes related to different levels. Therefore, usually a 'perfect-fit' is probably not possible and some judgement or approximation is necessary for classifying qualifications in an NQF. This decision is based on the collective professional judgement of stakeholders and on the relationship with other qualifications in the national qualification system.

For establishing the relationship between qualification types and NQF levels, most countries use a combination of technical/linguistic matching and social/political principles (similar to the approach used for matching levels – see EQF referencing criterion 2):

- technical/linguistic matching: qualifications descriptors are compared with level descriptors

- social/political principles: take into consideration how this qualification (or qualification type) is currently regarded nationally, how its social standing is understood (such as the importance of the qualification in the labour market, its traditional status and position in society and among citizens) and how it is related to other qualifications. Such judgement is made based on empirical research, on analyses of available data or by directly consulting stakeholders.

Qualification types linked to NQFs and to EQF levels

The purpose of the EQF is to act as a benchmark for the level of any learning recognised in a qualification in an NQF that has been referenced to the EQF. Since there is a wide variety of qualifications across Europe, the qualifications (or qualification types) linked to the eight EQF levels are quite different. Each individual EQF level also accommodates various qualification types; they differ, for example, in terms of educational sector, institutional context, content, volume, scope and purpose (e.g. progression to further learning or labour market access). However, they are considered as equivalent in terms of their level of learning outcomes achieved. By 'equivalent' it is understood, for example, that the learning outcomes portray a similar level of autonomy among holders of a qualification by which they are able to make use of the knowledge and skills obtained. However, this does not necessarily mean that such qualifications are similar in terms of content, learning objectives and volume or that they are interchangeable.

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35   Portal for 'Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe' http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/search/site?f[0]=im_field_entity_type%3A97#

The following paragraphs provide some information on qualification types from different educational sectors and their referencing to EQF levels.[36]

Higher education

Qualifications from higher education are linked to the EQF levels 5 to 8.

- SCHE qualifications are allocated to EQF level 5.[37]

- Qualifications awarded to students that certify completion of one of the three sequential cycles identified by the Bologna Process[38] are linked to EQF levels 6 to 8[39] : EQF level 6: first cycle (Bachelor), EQF level 7: second cycle (Master) and EQF level 8: third cycle (Doctorate); Honours Bachelor Degrees are linked to EQF level 6 in Ireland and the UK – Scotland.

- 'Pre-Bologna' qualifications (i.e. they are not part of the three cycles of the QF-EHEA) are also sometimes linked to EQF levels 6 to 8 (for example, in Slovenia and Italy).

Vocational education and training

VET qualifications are linked to EQF levels 1 to 8, depending on the country.

- Some countries have linked basic VET qualifications to EQF levels 1 and 2 (for example, UK – England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Malta).

- Some countries have linked qualifications related to positions of 'assistants' to EQF level 3 (for example, Estonia or Slovenia).

- EQF level 4 is often used for upper secondary leaving certificates (school-based VET and dual VET) leading to skilled work.

- Many VET qualifications linked to EQF level 5 have a clear hybrid character: they have a 'hub function' since they are valued as labour market entry qualifications by employers and at the same time have currency for entry to higher education. They are often considered as higher professional qualifications (post-secondary VET or 'higher VET'). This qualification type can also found on EQF levels 6 and 7.

- In a few cases, VET qualifications are linked to EQF level 8 (for example, in Estonia: the occupational qualifications 'chartered engineer' or 'chartered architect').

General education

General education qualifications are mainly linked to EQF levels 1 to 5.

- Some countries have also defined 'entry levels' in their NQFs which are linked to EQF level 1 (for example, in the UK – England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or are not linked to the EQF at all (for example, in the Netherlands) but are seen as a ladder into the qualifications system in their context and thus play a role for social inclusion.

- EQF level 1 is sometimes used for basic education certificates or for classifying primary education (for example, in Belgium-Flanders).

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36 However, it has to be noted that there are many 'zones of overlap' and particularly the borderlines between VET and higher education are partially blurring.
37 SCHE are programmes of study within the Bologna first cycle, but which do not represent the full extent of this cycle. Such awards may prepare the student for employment, while also providing preparation for, and access to, studies to completion of the first cycle.
38 http://www.ehea.info/
39 In some countries, a distinction is made between 'academic' and 'professional' degrees; however, these different types are usually linked to the same level.

Principles for comparison
Principle 4 continued

- So far, most countries have linked their lower secondary education to EQF level 2. A minority of countries have linked it to both levels 2 and 3, making the level dependent on the final grades (for example, Malta and the UK – England, Wales and Northern Ireland). For example, Latvia and Luxembourg have referred it to level 3; Italy and Montenegro have linked lower secondary education to level 1.

- A few countries, notably Austria and Germany, have yet to include general education qualifications in their frameworks.

- General education upper secondary school-leaving certificates (providing access to higher education) would normally be linked to EQF level 4.

- In some cases, general education qualifications are also linked to EQF level 5 (such as the Advanced Higher or the Scottish Baccalaureate in UK – Scotland).

Scope of European NQFs referenced to the EQF

The EQF is designed as a comprehensive qualifications framework for lifelong learning and, thus, to capture all types and levels of qualifications across Europe (such as general education, VET, higher education). EQF level 5 is compatible with the descriptors of the SCHE qualifications SCHE and EQF levels 6, 7 and 8 are compatible with the three cycles of the QF-EHEA.[40] However, these levels are also open to qualifications achieved outside higher education.

Most countries are following a comprehensive approach in the design of their NQFs: The majority of NQFs (in 35[41] out of 39 countries) have been designed as comprehensive frameworks and cover all levels and qualification types from all educational sectors (VET, HE and general education). The remaining countries (the Czech Republic, Italy, France and Switzerland) have developed frameworks with a limited scope or chosen to develop and implement separate frameworks for vocational and higher education. Some countries, such as Germany and Austria, have agreed on comprehensive NQFs but are taking a step-by-step approach where some qualifications (for example school leaving certificates of general education at upper secondary level) have yet to be included.

The EQF is constructed as a reference point for all qualifications in Europe regardless of which body awards them; however, the main requirement is that they are allocated to the national levels referenced to the EQF levels. Up until now, most NQFs have covered qualifications awarded by public institutions of education and training (national authorities or other bodies accredited by these authorities). However, countries increasingly consider or have taken steps (e.g France, the Netherlands, Sweden, UK – Scotland) to include quality assured qualifications which are awarded outside formal education and training systems, for example in the non-formal and private sector, which are often of high relevance in the labour market.

The EQF should also facilitate the relationship between international sectoral qualifications (awarded by international bodies and multinational companies) and national qualifications systems. Some countries have already included them in their NQFs, others are in the process of developing strategies to do so. The EQF Advisory Group supports a coherent approach across Europe.

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40 http://www.ehea.info/cid102843/overarching-framework-of-qualifications-of-the-ehea-2009.html Most countries carry out their EQF referencing and QF-EHEA self-certification in a single process, and present a single report addressing the criteria of both processes.

41 In the UK, the frameworks of Scotland and Wales are comprehensive; the qualifications and credit framework in England/Northern Ireland includes only vocational/professional qualifications.

Principle 5: Both qualifications frameworks are underpinned by quality assurance and are consistent with international quality assurance principles.

Summary

This principle deals with the quality assurance arrangements underpinning each qualifications framework.

New Zealand operates a quality assurance system that is robust and affords public confidence in its qualifications. Within the EQF from the outset, quality assurance has been a fundamental underlying principle.

NZQF

NZQA and Universities New Zealand follow the overarching rules set by NZQA for the quality assurance of qualifications and the tertiary education organisations that provide them. Both agencies use the same rules and criteria to quality assure qualifications, and are also consistent in their approach to the quality assurance of the programmes that lead to qualifications. Only the tertiary qualifications and organisations that are quality assured by one of the two agencies can receive government funding.

The NZQF: a qualifications framework with supporting quality assurance processes

The effectiveness and quality of the NZQF and the related Directory of Assessment Standards are supported by a multi-layered and integrated quality assurance system. There are quality checks at each level and for each component of the system as well as aspects of the health of the system overall. NZQA applies rules and quality criteria to ensure a high and consistent standard.

The evaluative approach (described below) underpins these quality checks, fostering self-assessment, evidence-based judgements and continuous improvement.

The Evaluative Quality Assurance Framework

NZQA operates an integrated quality assurance system where all the components support each other. The basis of the quality assurance system is the Evaluative Quality Assurance Framework (EQAF) introduced in late 2009. It uses an evaluative approach and:

- covers the quality assurance of the non-university tertiary education sector

- uses evaluation theory and practice to reach well-informed, consistent and reliable evidence-based judgements about all aspects of Tertiary Education Organisation (TEO) performance and capability

- has a practical focus on outcomes[42] and key contributing processes

- builds awareness and improvement through organisational self-assessment.

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42 Including: vocational outcomes that meet graduate, employer, regional and national needs; completing courses and qualifications, continuing to further study (Education Performance Indicators – EPIs); contributing to graduates' local and wider communities; graduates developing relevant personal skills, knowledge and cognitive abilities, and improved well-being; creating and disseminating new knowledge and supporting community, iwi and national development (source: Tertiary Evaluation Indicators, 2010, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/teis).

Principles for comparison
Principle 5 continued

This approach is flexible enough to be used by a wide range of organisations, but delivers valid and robust judgements of quality. The approach also seeks to develop and enhance a quality culture in TEOs, and to create an environment which values evidence and accountability and where autonomy is earned.
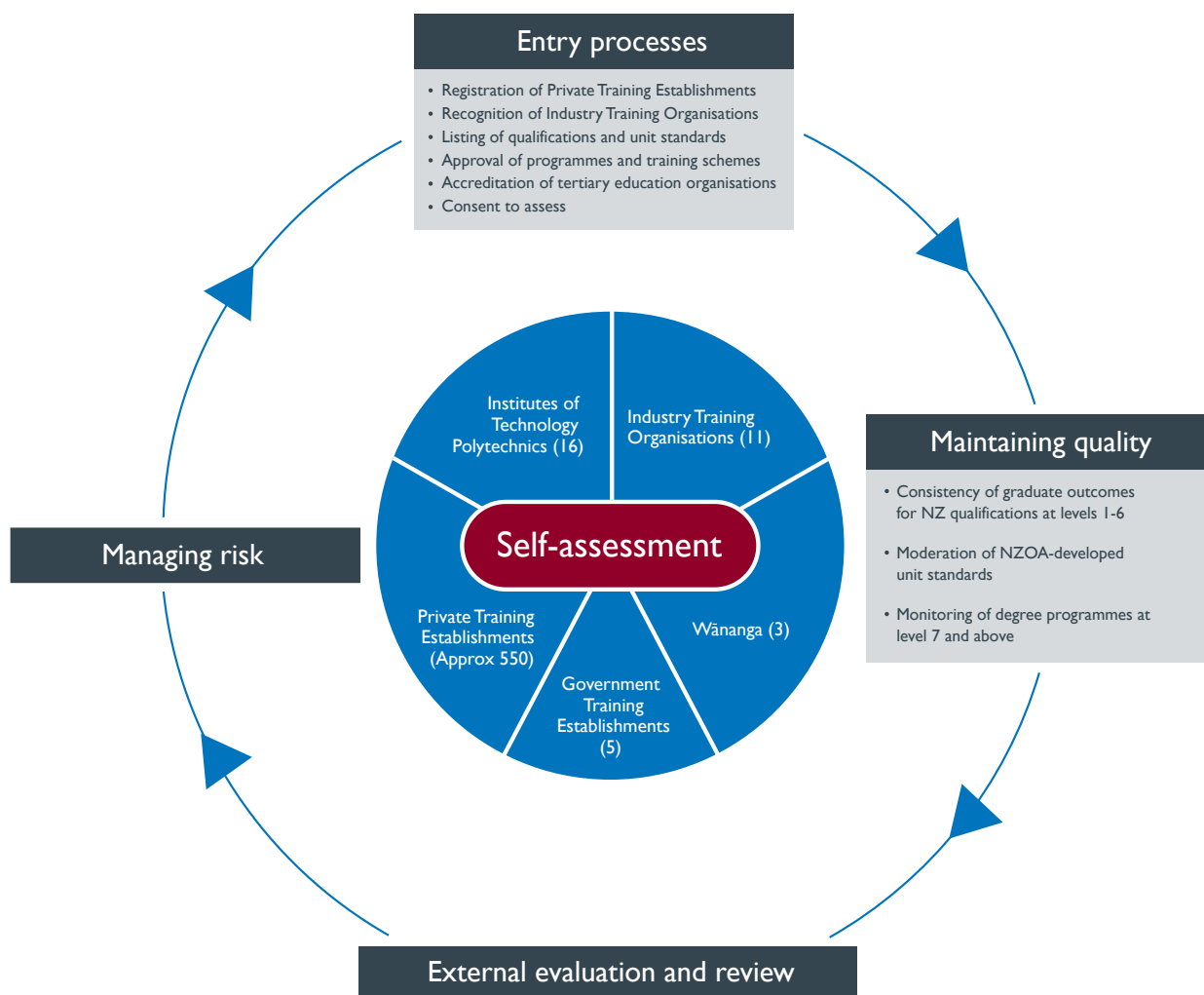
The EQAF has a strong focus on:

- learner achievement and outcomes for learners

- using evidence to improve outcomes

- for learners, business and communities

- a TEO being able to demonstrate that what it is doing is effective and meets learner and stakeholder needs.

The key components of the quality assurance system are represented in the diagram below and a brief description of each component and its role in the system follows.

The Evaluative Quality Assurance Framework

Entry processes
- Registration of Private Training Establishments
- Recognition of Industry Training Organisations
- Listing of qualifications and unit standards
- Approval of programmes and training schemes
- Accreditation of tertiary education organisations
- Consent to assess

Self-assessment
- Institutes of Technology Polytechnics (16)
- Industry Training Organisations (11)
- Wānanga (3)
- Government Training Establishments (5)
- Private Training Establishments (Approx 550)

Maintaining quality
- Consistency of graduate outcomes for NZ qualifications at levels 1-6
- Moderation of NZOA-developed unit standards
- Monitoring of degree programmes at level 7 and above

Managing risk

External evaluation and review

TEOs are responsible for using self-assessment to maintain and improve their own quality and the outcomes they achieve for their learners and wider stakeholders, especially employers. Self-assessment focuses on identifying, responding to and meeting learner and stakeholder needs, evaluating the effectiveness of organisational processes and practices, and using the understanding gained to make real, worthwhile improvements to outcomes and learner achievement. NZQA does not prescribe how tertiary organisations do this, as every organisation is different, but has published evaluation indicators as a common guide for TEOs and NZQA to reach consistent evidence-based judgements. TEO self-assessment information provides the evidence base for all the quality assurance processes.

Entry processes

A PTE must be registered with NZQA if it wants to develop, deliver or use qualifications listed on the NZQF and standards listed on the Directory of Assessment Standards. The registration process ensures that the PTE meets all legislative requirements for an educational organisation, including NZQA rules. The PTE must have governing members who are suitable for delivering education with adequate staff, and equipment and facilities for the education delivered. Furthermore, the PTE must be financially stable with sound quality management systems and practices.

NZQA also provides advice to Ministers and the Tertiary Education Commission on the recognition and re-recognition of ITOs.

To be listed on the NZQF a New Zealand qualification at levels 1-6 on the NZQF must have defined outcomes that provide a profile of what graduates can do, be and know.

Programmes developed by TEOs lead to the award of these New Zealand Certificates or Diplomas.

For a programme[43] at levels 1-6 on the NZQF to be approved, it must lead to a listed NZQF qualification and have a structure and components that allow learners to achieve the associated graduate profile. It must also have an appropriate NZQF level, credit value and amount of learning, and be designed to meet the specific identified needs of learners. It must show a progression of knowledge and skills and how the learning outcomes will be assessed.

Degree programmes[44] (at levels 7-10 on the NZQF) are approved if they have appropriate learning outcomes and content, delivery methods, equipment, facilities, staff, regulations, assessment and moderation. Degree programmes must also be taught mainly by staff engaged in research. Degree programme applications are evaluated by a panel with the necessary skills and knowledge who advise the TEO and NZQA about the quality of the application.

Training schemes are smaller than programmes and are approved if they are genuinely needed by learners and stakeholders. Training schemes must have a coherent structure that allows learners to achieve the learning outcomes. They must also have an appropriate NZQF level and incorporate sufficient learning to demonstrate a progression of knowledge.

In order to be accredited to deliver a programme or training scheme, the applicant must show that the TEO has adequate staff, equipment and facilities to deliver it as approved. Sometimes NZQA visits the TEO as part of this process.

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43   Programmes delivered by ITPs Wānanga and PTEs or organised by ITOs.
44   Delivered by ITPs, Wānanga and PTEs.

Consent to assess against assessment standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards is granted when the applicant has support from the standard-setting body and meets the requirements associated with the standards. Sometimes the standard-setting body visits the TEO as part of this process.

Maintaining quality

Consistency Reviews are a recently introduced requirement to assure consistency with outcomes prescribed by the New Zealand Qualifications, Certificates and Diplomas at levels 1-6 on the NZQF. All tertiary education organisations awarding New Zealand qualifications at levels 1-6 must participate. The reviews, facilitated by an independent reviewer, consider the quality of the evidence presented by each TEO to decide if it is sufficient and if national consistency of the qualification can be confirmed. The Consistency Reviews and any follow up are managed by NZQA.

National external moderation ensures that organisations using NZQA-managed assessment standards are making assessor judgements consistent with the national standard. NZQA selects standards for moderation based on TEO history, risk, high use and issues that have been identified with the standards. Moderators look at samples of learner work sent in by TEOs and assess if the judgements are consistent with the national standard. NZQA recommends changes to assessment materials or moderation practice when assessor judgements are not verified by NZQA. NZQA follows up with TEOs to make sure they address any issues.

After a degree programme at NZQF level 7 and above is approved, NZQA appoints an independent monitor for the degree. The monitor visits the TEO annually to check if the degree is being delivered as approved and reports back to NZQA. NZQA follows up any recommendations from the report with the TEO. After a suitable amount of time, NZQA can give the TEO permission to self-monitor.

External evaluation and review (EER)

EER uses key questions directly addressing achievement, outcomes and key contributing processes to judge the quality of a TEO. It comes to evidence-based conclusions about the quality and performance of the TEO and publishes a public report. When NZQA detects issues, the evaluation finds the source and size of the problem. Immediately prior to an EER, NZQA requires compliance declarations and gathers information on the TEO from other parts of the quality assurance system and from elsewhere. The scope of an EER is designed to cover the strengths and weaknesses of the TEO. NZQA evaluates the TEO's educational performance and capability in self-assessment on-site and reports a level of confidence in each of these aspects. The EER is published on the NZQA website.

The TEO is also placed in one of four categories of capability:

- **Category 1:** Highly Confident in educational performance and Highly Confident or Confident in self-assessment

- **Category 2:** Confident in educational performance and Confident or Highly Confident in self-assessment

- **Category 3:** Not Yet Confident in either educational performance or self-assessment

- **Category 4:** Not Confident in either educational performance or self-assessment.

Mātauranga Māori Evaluative Quality Assurance provides quality assurance for TEOs that deliver qualifications or programmes based on Mātauranga Māori or where the whole organisational approach is based on Mātauranga Māori. Mātauranga Māori Evaluative Quality Assurance is integrated into all parts of the quality assurance framework and uses evaluative approaches developed collectively with the sector.

Managing Risk

NZQA has rigorous processes to investigate and manage risk. NZQA collects information on organisations from NZQA's quality assurance processes, complaints received and concerns raised by government organisations such as Immigration New Zealand. In its investigations NZQA gathers information on whether there is a risk to students or a breach of NZQA's rules or legislative requirements and takes action, including statutory action to address these. This can include:

- issuing compliance notices to and imposing conditions on organisations

- withdrawing quality assurance status granted by NZQA (i.e. registration, consent to assess, approvals, accreditation)

- legal action for breaches of the Education Act 1989.

Quality assurance of NZQF qualifications and programmes delivered offshore

NZQF programmes can be delivered offshore, and NZQF qualifications and programmes can be designed to meet specific offshore requirements, but this context must be included in the application for programme approval or approval to develop a qualification.

These programmes and qualifications must meet all the relevant NZQA rules. Any offshore delivery of programmes also needs to meet the *NZQF Offshore Programme Delivery Rules 2012*.[45]

Regulation of international education

New Zealand institutions are required to be a signatory to the *Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students* (the Code) if they want to enrol international students in their courses.

The Code is a document that provides education providers and their agents with a framework for properly supporting international students while they are studying in New Zealand. The Code was established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989.

The Code sets out the minimum standards of advice and care that are expected of education providers with international students. The Code applies to pastoral care and the provision of information only, and not to academic standards. NZQA currently administers the Code.

If a student has concerns about an education provider not complying with the Code, and these concerns are not resolved by internal grievance procedures, the student can contact the International Education Appeal Authority (IEAA). The IEAA enforces the standards in the Code and, if the Code is breached, can order restitution or action to fix the problem. The IEAA refers serious Code breaches to the Review Panel, which can suspend or remove a provider as a signatory to the Code.

NZQA's *Student Fee Protection Rules 2013* protect the interests of domestic and international students. Registered PTEs in New Zealand must put students' fees in a trust, which can only be drawn on after course content has been delivered to the student.[46] If a PTE closes, the money for the undelivered content can either be refunded to the student, or transferred to a provider willing to enrol the student. This requirement was established under section 253E(1) of the Education Act 1989.

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45   See: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/offshore-delivery-rules/
46   See: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/approval-accreditation-and-registration/student-fee-protection/

Principles for comparison
Principle 5 continued

Quality assurance systems in the university sector

The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (Universities New Zealand) has statutory responsibility, under the Education Act 1989, for the quality assurance of the New Zealand universities.

There are two bodies that oversee quality assurance of New Zealand universities, Universities New Zealand's Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) and the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA).[47]

Quality assurance in the university sector is underpinned by 10 key principles, that quality assurance processes are:

- developed by the universities
- evidence-based
- enhancement-led
- founded on self-review
- assured by peer review
- collective and collegial
- individually binding
- internationally endorsed
- independently operated
- publicly accountable.

Programme approval and accreditation in the university sector

CUAP is the body responsible for exercising powers with regards to compliance, approval and accreditation.[48] CUAP comprises a representative from each of the universities, a Chair (usually a Vice-Chancellor) and Deputy Chair appointed by Universities New Zealand, and a student representative.

Both NZQA and Universities New Zealand use the same overarching rules and criteria to quality assure qualifications.

Universities normally apply for programme approval, and the accreditation to deliver that programme, in one step. Proposals for new qualifications or programmes, or for major changes to existing offerings proceed through internal university development and approval processes before being submitted to CUAP. At various stages in a university's internal process, student, non-academic and professional input is also sought. Proposals approved by a university's council are then submitted to CUAP and subjected to a peer-review process across the entire university system. During the CUAP process, proposals are either approved by the universities, amended as part of the peer-review process and then approved, or discussed at a meeting of CUAP. If CUAP is satisfied that the proposals meet the approval and accreditation rules then it will formally approve them. Proposals that are not approved at a CUAP meeting may also be referred back to the submitting university for further changes, withdrawn by the university or rejected.

Programmes approved by CUAP are listed on the NZQF in the same way as programmes approved by NZQA.

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47 Previously NZUAAU – New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit
48 Refer to the Committee on University Academic Programmes Handbook http://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/aboutus/sc/cuap/cuap-handbook

Programmes approved by CUAP are subject to moderation once the first cohort has graduated. Universities must submit Graduating Year Reviews to CUAP for peer review. Graduating Year Review reports are assessed by CUAP against the approval criteria of the original proposal. Where CUAP has serious concerns about a programme, it has the authority to require changes, request a further review or to withdraw the programme.

After moderation all university programmes are required to be subject to regular programme review. The review cycle is determined by each university's quality assurance policies. How a university manages and responds to these programme reviews is an important focus of academic audit.

Academic audit in the university sector

The AQA, an independent body established by Universities New Zealand, undertakes regular audits of institutions and promotes quality enhancement practices across the university sector. AQA's audits of New Zealand universities occur on a five-year cycle and focus on the university's mechanisms for ensuring academic quality.

The key components of institutional audit are:

- institutional self-review
- institutional academic audit by an external panel (including an international member)
- a published audit report
- follow-up reporting on recommendations.

AQA audit panels review university audit portfolios and focus their attention on areas of particular importance to universities, including mechanisms for:

- quality assurance and enhancement in the design, monitoring and evaluation of courses and programmes of study for degrees and other qualifications
- quality assurance and enhancement of the research basis of university undergraduate teaching and postgraduate education
- quality assurance and enhancement in teaching, learning and assessment, including in postgraduate supervision
- quality assurance and enhancement of the appointment and performance of academic and other staff who contribute directly to the teaching and research functions
- considering the views of students, employers and other stakeholders as part of ongoing quality assurance and enhancement of courses and programmes.

Each audit cycle follows a protocol developed by AQA including a framework which defines the focus of audit.[49] Final audit reports commend good practice and make recommendations intended to assist the university's own programme of continuous improvement. These audit reports are publicly available on the AQA website.[50] Universities report formally on their response to the recommendations one year after each audit and again at the time of the next audit.

Only the tertiary qualifications and organisations that are quality assured by one of the two agencies can receive government funding.

49 Refer to www.aqa.ac.nz/cycle5
50 Refer to http://www.aqa.ac.nz/academic-audit

Principles for comparison
Principle 5 continued

EQF

From the outset, quality assurance has been a fundamental underlying principle of the EQF. It is considered as the very basis of mutual trust between countries and systems, which in turn is a decisive factor for the success of the EQF referencing process. Qualifications frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms must work together in a systematic and transparent way to guarantee confidence in qualifications, for NQFs to be considered as a tool to guarantee and maintain quality.

Quality assurance systems and processes differ considerably across European countries and also across sub-sectors of education and training. Most countries have several quality assurance bodies in place which manage quality assurance processes over a specific sector or sub-system. This diversity of quality assurance systems and processes reflects the diversity of governance systems, of education and training systems, as well as cultural traditions that shape and characterise the European region.

The EQF, in its role as a meta-framework, does not set standards for quality, nor does it prescribe how national quality assurance processes are to be implemented.

Transparency through qualifications registers and databases and the indication of EQF levels on certificates and diplomas

Transparency of information plays a pivotal role in quality assurance and is a major pre-requisite for enhanced trust and confidence in European qualifications. Many countries have thus developed or are developing web-based and freely accessible national registers or databases of qualifications. Work is currently ongoing to link them to the EQF portal[51] (see Criterion 4 for more information). All EQF referencing reports, once presented to the EQF Advisory Group and finalised, are made available through this portal.

Countries are also working towards including a reference to the relevant EQF level in newly awarded qualifications certificates, diplomas and Europass supplements. So far, fifteen countries already indicate EQF levels on newly issued certificates, diplomas or Europass documents.

EQF referencing: The quality assurance requirements for national qualifications frameworks or systems are referred to in EQF referencing criteria 5 and 6

When countries relate their NQFs or systems to the EQF, EQF referencing criteria require them to illustrate that their quality assurance arrangements are consistent with relevant European principles and guidelines.

EQF referencing criterion 5 specifically refers to quality assurance and requires that *'The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications framework or system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines (as indicated in annex III of the EQF Recommendation).'*

Referencing criterion 5 thus requires countries to demonstrate the links between their national quality assurance systems, their NQF and the overarching regulations and agreements in this field. According to referencing criterion 6[52], EQF referencing reports should also include a written statement from the relevant national quality assurance bodies that they agree with the documentation provided in the referencing process.

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51 https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/search/site?f[0]=im_field_entity_type%3A97#
52 Criterion 6: *'The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.'*

Common Principles for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training are defined in Annex III of the 2008 EQF Recommendation[53]

Annex III of the EQF Recommendation provides a set of guiding principles for countries' quality assurance arrangements for higher education and VET to underpin the implementation of the framework. The criteria presented in Annex III are broadly consistent with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET)[54] and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for higher education.[55] These principles state that quality assurance should be an integral part of the internal management of education and training institutions and that they should be regularly evaluated, as should the agencies that carry out quality assurance. The quality assurance procedures should include reference to context, input, process and output dimensions, while giving particular emphasis to outputs and learning outcomes. Quality assurance should be a cooperative process across education and training levels and systems, involving all relevant stakeholders, including learners.

VET: Implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation and its link to NQFs

EQAVET is the European reference framework for quality assurance in VET. It was formally established through the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of EQAVET.[56]

EQAVET is not a quality assurance system, but rather a meta-framework for quality assurance. It invites countries to promote and monitor continuous improvement in their VET systems,

through the use of a quality assurance and improvement cycle based on four phases (Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Review), which are linked to quality criteria and indicative descriptors. It provides a systematic approach to quality assurance and emphasises the importance of monitoring and improving quality by combining internal and external evaluation with qualitative analysis. EQAVET can be applied at the system, provider and qualification awarding levels. EQAVET also promotes European cooperation in developing and improving quality assurance in VET through the EQAVET network, which is a community of practice bringing together countries and social partners, supported by scientific advisers, Cedefop and the European Commission. The EQAVET network plays an important role in promoting a culture of quality assurance across countries, by supporting implementation at the national level and by strengthening synergies and cooperation at the European level. In addition, implementation at national level is supported by Quality Assurance National Reference Points (NRP), which were set up in the individual countries.

As a tool, EQAVET is of a non-binding nature. It adopts a flexible approach, allowing countries and VET providers to select tools and elements from a wide array and to adjust them for their purposes and needs. Since its adoption in 2009, EQAVET has contributed to advancing a quality culture in VET across European countries, and to its practical implementation. The European Commission's recent report on the evaluation of EQAVET acknowledges the achievements made so far; however, it also highlights two important aspects for the further improvement of EQAVET. First, its very flexible tool-based approach has somewhat reduced its potential to create a

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53   https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/journal_en.pdf
54   http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/policy-context/european-quality-assurance-reference-framework.aspx
55   http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/
56   http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:155:0001:0010:EN:PDF

common language and conceptual framework for quality assurance in VET across countries. Second, a closer relationship with NQFs and the EQF (but also with other European tools such as ECVET or Europass) will be needed to allow EQAVET unfold its full potential. EQAVET specifically aims to support the implementation of the EQF; however, it does not sufficiently address the quality assurance of learning outcomes, and in particular the quality assurance of qualification design, assessment and certification. Efforts are currently ongoing, both at European and national level, to more coherently exploit the synergies between the EQF and EQAVET.[57]

Although EQAVET generally addresses all forms of VET, its early implementation has focussed on initial VET. The use of EQAVET in adult education, continuing VET and soft skills development is the subject of recent work.[58]

Higher Education: Implementation of the ESG and their link to NQFs

The 1999 Bologna Declaration,[59] which defines the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), has encouraged European cooperation in higher education quality assurance, with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies. In 2005, national Ministers responsible for higher education adopted the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).[60] These standards and guidelines, which are designed to be applicable to all higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies in Europe, aim to promote mutual trust while respecting the diversity of national and institutional contexts. The ESG provide guidance and reference points for internal and external quality assurance in higher education; they are not to be understood as standards for quality, nor do they prescribe how the quality assurance processes are implemented. The revised ESG were approved by the Ministers at the EHEA Ministerial Conference in 2015.[61] The revised guidelines include a standard that ''The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the NQF for higher education and, consequently, to the framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area'' (Standard 1.2).

The ESG are based on the following four principles for quality assurance in the EHEA:

• higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance

• quality assurance responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students

• quality assurance supports the development of a quality culture

• quality assurance takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society.

The ESG thus recognise the primacy of national systems of higher education, the importance of institutional and agency autonomy within those national systems, and the particular requirements of different academic subjects.

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57   http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/eqavet_en.pdf
58   http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/working-groups/working-groups_2014-2015/Adult-learning-and-CVET.aspx
59   http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/about/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION1.pdf
60   http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ESG_3edition-2.pdf
61   http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

ENQA was set up in 2000, with the aim to disseminate information, experience and good practice in the field of quality assurance in higher education. ENQA membership is open to quality assurance agencies in the EHEA Member States, and requires compliance with the ESG. This compliance is checked every five years through independent review. External reviews of ENQA member agencies are considered to play an important role for assuring quality and trustworthiness of quality assurance agencies for higher education in Europe. By the end of 2014, ENQA had 44 full members in 25 countries of the EHEA.[62]

European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)[63]

Set up in 2008, EQAR maintains a register of those higher education quality assurance agencies that substantially comply with the ESG. Compliance must be demonstrated through an external review by independent experts. The main objective of EQAR is to provide the public with clear and reliable information on quality assurance agencies operating in Europe; the register is thus web-based and freely accessible. As of 2015, 36 agencies in 19 countries were listed on the register.

The Bologna Process has led to a significant transformation of quality assurance of higher education in Europe, making the establishment of quality assurance systems and the general improvement of quality in higher education a priority in many countries. The majority of countries have clear external quality assurance systems in place. Also, most countries have set up national agencies for quality assurance. Many of these developments can be directly attributed to the implementation of the Bologna Process, along with the increased recognition of the importance of stakeholder participation, in particular of students.

Practically all EHEA countries have established some form of external quality assurance system, although there are significant differences in the philosophy and approach behind systems. These can be traced back to the wide diversity of political systems, higher education systems and socio-cultural traditions across countries, that also substantiates the non-prescriptive nature of the ESG. One important distinction that can be drawn across countries is whether the main focus of quality assurance is on institutions or programmes, or both. The vast majority of quality assurance systems now focus both on institutions and programmes. This suggests that while in the early stages of developing external quality assurance systems the focus tends to be on programme evaluation, over time this often evolves to an institutional focus. Countries also increasingly extend their focus in quality assurance to the quality of teaching and learning.[64]

Quality assurance in general education

The common principles for quality assurance laid out in Annex III of the EQF Recommendation do not explicitly cover general education.

General education is typically subject to strong national regulation in practically all countries. Very often, countries apply a combination of external and internal school evaluation as a key method of quality assurance. In many countries,

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62   http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/ENQA-2014-Annual-Report.pdf

63   http://www.eqar.eu/; direct link to the register: http://www.eqar.eu/register/map.html EQAR was set up by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Students' Union (ESU), the European University Association and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE).

64   http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/182EN.pdf

school inspection models apply and often play an important role for quality assurance in general education.[65]

Quality assurance arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning[66]

The 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning asks that transparent quality assurance measures, in line with existing quality assurance frameworks are in place that support reliable, valid and credible assessment methodologies and tools.

Quality assurance is a key aspect in establishing the link between NQFs and validation (see Criterion 4). For the quality assurance of validation arrangements, the majority of countries use (or intend to use) the general quality assurance mechanisms already in place for the educational system and their NQF, signalling that validation of non-formal and informal learning is subject to the same quality requirements as any other assessment and certification process. Only a small group of countries follow the approach of establishing specific quality assurance arrangements for validation.

65   http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/178EN.pdf
66   http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222%2801%29

Principle 6: National or regional policies for the validation of all learning and credit systems, where these exist, are a key feature of the qualifications frameworks.

Summary

The NZQF operates a credit system and has a policy requiring education organisations to have arrangements for the assessment of prior learning. From the outset, the EQF aims to include learning outcomes acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts.

NZQF

Credit recognition and transfer

All qualifications on the NZQF have a credit value. The credit value relates to the amount of learning in the qualification. One credit is equal to 10 notional learning hours. Notional learning hours include:

- direct contact time with teachers and trainers ('directed learning')

- time spent in studying, doing assignments and undertaking practical tasks ('self-directed' or 'on task' learning)

- time spent in assessment.

All qualifications on the NZQF are 40 or more credits. One year's full-time study at a tertiary education organisation is usually 120 credits. If a learner is studying part-time the credits achieved in a year will be fewer. For learning undertaken in the workplace the credit value may also vary.

An approved programme leading to a qualification can allow for the award of credit for formal (assessed through recognised tertiary education and training courses), informal (incidental, through life experience), or non-formal learning (occurring on the job or through structured programmes, but not leading to qualifications).

NZQA has a policy requiring education organisations to have arrangements for the assessment of prior learning.[67] The policy states that "credit will be recorded for recorded success, whether or not it forms part or all of a complete qualification". Credit transfer recognises relevant learning that has taken place in another institution or training arrangement: credit already achieved by a student towards a qualification is recognised as credit for comparable outcomes in another qualification. Credit transfer may happen on a case-by-case basis, or as a structured agreement between education organisations. NZQA is currently reviewing credit recognition and transfer (CRT) and recognition of prior learning (RPL) as part of its Future State programme of work.[68]

In the current global environment there will be a persistent and increasing demand for CRT from highly mobile students bringing parts of qualifications from elsewhere. Students may have qualifications, or parts of qualifications, from education organisations in New Zealand or overseas. These other qualifications may or may not conform to the NZQF's system of credit. Students could be domestic or international. People are increasingly likely to seek formal credit for MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses), corporate certification, and personalised learning.

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67 NZQA, Supporting Learning Pathways – Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy, December 2002. Refer to http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Studying-in-NZ/Tertiary/creditpolicy.pdf

68 As at January 2015.

Educational quality is a central component to developing the well-qualified, skilled and knowledgeable workforce New Zealand needs to succeed in the globalised economy. Quality assurance will continue to be even more important and necessary to avoid reputational risks, and to build the necessary mutual confidence to enable CRT and RPL.

Successful CRT in this environment requires a quality assurance system that allows education to be constructed around students, rather than students conforming to education that is constructed around a system.

The important considerations for NZQA's work programme are:

- How will partial credit be recognised?
- How will the Record of Achievement be extended to include New Zealand qualifications and approved programmes, *and* other types of learning?
- How will concerns about the validity and quality of RPL decisions be addressed?
- How will parity of esteem between parts of the sector be increased so that factors such as institutional uniqueness and trust across different types and modes of delivery or transfer feature less in CRT and RPL decisions?

EQF

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

According to the EQF Recommendation, each level of qualification should, in principle, be attainable through a variety of educational and career paths (including non-formal and informal learning). The 2012 Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning[69] confirms the link between qualifications frameworks and validation arrangements: NQFs provide a common reference point for learning acquired inside as well as outside formal education and training systems. A pre-condition for linking NQFs and validation is the use of the same or equivalent learning outcomes-based standards and to apply the same quality requirements as for any other assessment and certification process.

In order to coordinate the linkage between NQFs and validation, the mandate of the EQF Advisory Group was extended to include the monitoring of the implementation of the Council Recommendation on validation.

A few countries have already integrated validation into their NQF, and in several countries this work is progressing with the further development and implementation of their NQFs. The 2014 update of the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning[70] also confirms that many countries give priority to the linking of frameworks and validation arrangements. Since countries have different traditions and regulations for validation, there are also different levels of developments regarding the link between NQFs and validation. However, in more than half of the countries, learning outcomes acquired in non-formal or informal learning contexts can be used to acquire a qualification classified in the NQF and/or can be used to access formal education included in the NQF. In a few countries, these links are established in a comprehensive and systematic way and qualifications at all levels can, by and large, be obtained through validation (for example, in France). In other countries such links may only apply in relation to some qualifications or validation only leads to exemptions from part(s) of specific programmes classified in the NQF.

69   http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF
70   http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory

ECVET, ECTS

The EQF referencing criteria state that NQFs (or qualifications systems) referenced to the EQF and the qualifications allocated to national levels are linked to credit systems (where they exist).

The European systems for credit transfer and accumulation, namely the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)[71] used in higher education and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET),[72] both follow the learning outcomes approach. They are considered as tools for describing programmes or qualifications in a transparent way, support the transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes, and allow for flexible pathways to obtain qualifications.

- ECTS: ECTS credits are allocated to study programmes leading to a qualification as well as to their educational components (such as modules, course components, work placements etc.). They are allocated based on the estimated workload students need in order to achieve expected learning outcomes (i.e. time needed for lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and examinations). Sixty ECTS credits are allocated to the workload and associated learning outcomes of a full-time academic year. Credits are awarded to individual students after completion of the respective learning activities. They may be accumulated with a view to obtaining qualifications and may be transferred into another programme. The ECTS key documents are: *Course Catalogue, Student Application Form, Learning Agreement and Transcript of Records.* The updated ECTS User's Guide,[73] which offers guidelines for implementing ECTS and links to useful supporting documents.

- ECVET: The description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes that can be assessed and validated separately is one of the main elements of ECVET. ECVET points are a numerical representation of the overall weight of learning outcomes in a qualification or unit. ECVET points are allocated on the basis of 60 points per year of formal full time VET. The total number of points is assigned to that qualification. Assessed learning outcomes can be accumulated towards a qualification or transferred to other learning programmes or qualifications. The ECVET key documents are: *Memorandum of Understanding, Learning Agreement and Personal Transcript.*

Although these credit systems are not directly designed as part of the EQF,[74] they complement the EQF in its aim to increase transparency and to support mobility and lifelong learning.

While ECTS is already used in around 75 per cent of higher education courses, ECVET is at an earlier stage of implementation. This was confirmed by the recent evaluation of ECVET[75] which also highlighted that ECVET points are perceived critically and that in general there would be no particular relevance or demand for credit points due to their unclear technical specifications. However, several countries are planning to implement ECVET alongside NQF developments. Credit systems (ECVET or national ones) are already an integral part of NQFs in a few countries, for instance in Croatia, Malta, Slovenia and the UK frameworks.

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71   http://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system_en
72   http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/ecvet_en.htm
73   http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/2015/ects-users-guide_en.pdf
74   However, ECTS credits are used in formulating national qualifications frameworks for higher education.
75   http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/docs/education/ecvet14_en.pdf

Lessons learned

Lessons learned

New Zealand

The EQF-NZQF comparative analysis project has provided New Zealand with an opportunity to strengthen its global connectedness through the comparison of its national qualifications framework (NZQF) with the EQF as a leading regional qualifications framework.

As a result of this project, New Zealand learned important lessons on current European thinking and the approach to referencing European NQFs to the EQF, including the deepening of comparative analysis, engagement with stakeholders, and the invaluable benefit of mutual visits in the exchange of knowledge. These learnings will assist New Zealand in its future referencing work.

- Extending the comparative analysis process from technical matching into contextual and social effects matching has been a continuing learning experience for New Zealand. This is the first international project in which New Zealand has used an independent comparative process: the discussion on the matching of NZQF level 8 to the EQF used the Bologna cycle descriptors as a triangulation point.

- The project also contributed to New Zealand's engagement with its domestic stakeholders by including focus groups of sector-wide representatives. These groups addressed the matching of the lower levels of the frameworks and the NZQF level 8. The use of these focus groups and wider engagement complemented the ongoing advice from the New Zealand Advisory Group.

- New Zealand's visit to the EQF Advisory Group in June 2014 and the visit of EQF experts to New Zealand in February 2015 were both highly useful in terms of collaboration, forming working relationships, sharing of ideas and deepening both parties' understanding of the implementation of NQFs in other parts of

the world. New Zealand looks forward to continuing to build on these relationships in coming years.

- Having open access to information and advice on European referencing practice assisted New Zealand with progressing its side of the project. Having access to peer learning activities was also helpful.

- As a third party country approaching the EQF Advisory Group referencing process for the first time, New Zealand has found the Advisory Group's decision-making process challenging to engage with. A longer introduction to these processes prior to commencing the project would have been useful to develop understanding earlier of how final decisions are reached. This would have enabled a smoother transition for submitting the final draft comparative analysis report for consideration.

- International feedback received during this project has enabled New Zealand to reflect on its own qualifications framework and its associated process, including the clarity of descriptors at level 8 of the NZQF.

EQF perspective

- This study has taken place in the context of three pilots comparing the EQF with three mature national qualifications frameworks; besides the NZQF these concern comparisons between the EQF and the Australian Qualifications Framework and between the EQF and the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework.

- The project has allowed a better understanding of the principles, the governance structures and the day-to-day operation of the NZQF, its qualifications as well as the quality assurance mechanisms underpinning them. It also revealed that a qualifications framework is not just a technical tool, but is deeply embedded within

the broader political, social and economic context. This required the technical experts to become familiar with these complex contexts and how they condition the expectations of the respective parties and their stakeholders as well as engaging with the technical work of comparison. The comparative analysis thus contributes to the building and extension of zone of trust in the complex world of qualifications between New Zealand and countries involved in the EQF implementation.

• The NZQF is longer established, more extensive and more deeply implemented than many European national frameworks that have been referenced to the EQF. The NZQF has realised within the New Zealand education and training system and labour market some of the benefits of NQFs that many European countries also aspire to. Nevertheless it is clear that also a mature framework like the NZQF requires ongoing maintenance and implementation support by stakeholders to ensure its continuing policy relevance.

• Despite the challenges of comparing an operational NQF with a regional meta-framework (the EQF), which is different in nature and purpose, it has been possible to establish comparability between the two frameworks and their levels, with the exception of NZQF level 8 (see below). In this context an important lesson from an EQF perspective is that the nature, purpose and the governance of the EQF, and the relationships between the EQF and the European NQFs need careful explanation when engaging into a technical comparison project. They are moreover embedded in the EU constitutional, legal and governance structures which also need careful explanation.

• This asymmetry between an NQF and a regional QF is also reflected in the different consultative processes followed by the two parties to this project. While in New Zealand the existing structures of consultation (including the New Zealand Advisory Group, Universities New Zealand) have been closely involved in the project, on the European side discussions were generally limited to the EQF Advisory Group. The more limited consultation on the EU level is the consequence of the absence of provisions on external policy in the current EQF Recommendation. The EQF Recommendation was adopted in 2008 as a framework to enhance the mobility of workers and learners and lifelong learning through transparency and comparability of qualifications within Europe.

• Policy learning: the study, the discussions in the working group and the mutual visits have allowed rich exchanges of knowledge and experiences which have been of invaluable benefit to the EQF side in the context of a reflection on the EQF as well as on European NQFs and the policies and processes associated with these.

• The most challenging part was to address NZQF level 8 (including Bachelor Honours Degrees and Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates) for which no clear correspondence to either EQF level 6 or EQF level 7 was found. In this situation both parties chose to give full information, through both an explanation in the body of the text and by annexing a paper prepared by Universities New Zealand on the NZQF level 8 qualification. Such an approach provides full transparency and allows dealing with qualification types that do not exist in most European countries. This approach provides useful information e.g. where credential evaluators within Europe are asked to assess an NZQF level 8 qualifications.

Glossary

Glossary

NZQF

Credit value system	A credit value system uses a generally agreed-upon value to measure a student workload in terms of learning time required to complete a programme of study, resulting in learning outcomes.
Formal Learning	Learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning and typically leads to the award of a qualification. It includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education.
Government Training Establishments	New Zealand government-owned organisations providing education or training (for example, New Zealand Police Training Services, New Zealand Army).
Industry Training Organisations	New Zealand industry-specific organisations. An ITO sets NZQA-accredited skill standards for their specific industry, and runs industry training that helps learners achieve those standards through education organisations.
Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics	New Zealand government-owned tertiary education organisations. They provide technical, vocational and professional education and training ranging from foundation studies through to full degree and post-graduate programmes, including applied doctorates.
Informal Learning	Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective. Examples of learning outcomes acquired through informal learning are skills acquired through life and work experiences, project management skills or ICT skills acquired at work, languages learned and intercultural skills acquired during a stay in another country, ICT skills acquired outside work, skills acquired through volunteering, cultural activities, sports, youth work and activities at home (e.g. taking care of a child).

Non-formal Learning	Learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships). It may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers. Very common cases of non-formal learning include in-company training, structured on-line learning and courses organised by civil society organisations.
Private Training Establishments	PTEs are operated in New Zealand by a wide range of companies, trusts and other entities, and are not publicly owned. PTEs are diverse in terms of their scale, location, and areas of educational expertise. Some PTEs focus on re-engaging learners into education and training while others specialise in vocational education aimed at specific occupations. A few PTEs deliver research-led degree programmes and postgraduate opportunities.
Qualification	Formal outcome of an assessment process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to a given standard.
Tertiary education	Tertiary education in New Zealand covers all training outside of the school sector. The tertiary sector covers private training establishments (PTEs), institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs), Government Training Establishments (GTEs), wānanga, universities and workplace training.
Trades	Jobs requiring manual skills and special training. Typically include plumbers, electricians, builders.
Universities	There are eight universities in New Zealand and all are publicly-owned institutions. They undertake a diverse range of teaching and research, especially at a higher level, that maintains, advances disseminates and assists the application of knowledge and develops intellectual independence. New Zealand universities are internationally recognised. All have strong connections with universities in other countries.
Wānanga	These are publicly-owned tertiary institutions in New Zealand that provide education in a Māori cultural and traditional context. The three wānanga deliver a range of qualifications in a way that recognises Māori world-view and ideas about education. Wānanga offer a range of programmes from adult and community education and youth training to post-graduate degrees.

Glossary
Continued

EQF

Bologna Process

The Bologna Process was initiated by the 1999 Bologna Declaration, by 30 countries, as an agreement to engage in a voluntary process to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The process today includes no fewer than 47 participating countries. At its inception, the Bologna Process was meant to strengthen the competitiveness and attractiveness of the European higher education and to foster student mobility and employability through the introduction of a system based on undergraduate and postgraduate studies with easily readable programmes and degrees. Quality assurance has played an important role from the outset, too. However, the various ministerial meetings since 1999 have broadened this agenda and have given greater precision to the tools that have been developed. The undergraduate/postgraduate degree structure has been modified into a three-cycle system (Bachelor/Master/Doctorate), which now includes the concept of qualifications frameworks, with an emphasis on learning outcomes.

Between 1999–2010, all the efforts of the Bologna Process members were targeted to creating the European Higher Education Area, that became reality with the Budapest-Vienna Declaration of March, 2010. (Cf. EHEA).

www.ehea.info

Council Recommendation on VNFIL

The 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) calls on Member States to put arrangements in place by 2018 to allow individuals a) to have knowledge, skills and competences which have been acquired through non-formal and informal learning validated, and b) to obtain a full qualification, or, where applicable, part qualification, on the basis of validated non-formal and informal learning experiences. The 2012 Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning confirms the link between qualifications frameworks and validation arrangements. The EQF Advisory Group has been put in charge of following up on this process. (Cf. Validation).

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF

ECTS	The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer, based on the transparency of learning, teaching and assessment processes. Its objective is to facilitate planning, delivery and evaluation of study programmes and learner mobility through the recognition of qualifications and periods of learning. It is a system that helps to design, describe and deliver study programmes and award higher education qualifications.
EHEA	The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was launched along with the Bologna Process' decade anniversary, in March 2010, during the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference. As the main objective of the Bologna Process since its inception in 1999, the EHEA was meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. (Cf. QF-EHEA; Cf. Self-certification; Cf. Bologna Process). http://www.ehea.info/
EQAVET	The European Quality Assurance for Vocational Education and Training is a reference tool for policy-makers based on a four-stage quality cycle that includes goal setting and planning, implementation, evaluation and review. It respects the autonomy of national governments and is a voluntary system to be used by public authorities and other bodies involved in quality assurance. http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/home.aspx
EQF Advisory Group	Is the European level governance body for the EQF, set up based on the 2008 EQF Recommendation. The EQF AG is the body responsible for providing overall coherence and promoting transparency of the process of relating qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework. It comprises representatives of all participating countries, Council of Europe, EU social partners, Cedefop, ETF and other important EU stakeholders. The work is organised in form of regular meetings (4-5 a year), peer learning activities and working groups. http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=2107]

Glossary
Continued

EQF Recommendation

Refers to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. It is the official document which constitutes the EQF.

Recommendations are official EU documents without legal force but are negotiated and voted on according to appropriate legislative EU procedures. Although not legally binding to the Member States, all of them have chosen to implement the Recommendation. The total number of countries currently implementing the EQF is 38.

Further examples of Recommendations include the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, and the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training.

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:EN:PDF

EQF Referencing Criteria

The 'Criteria and procedures for the referencing of national qualifications levels to the EQF' is a list of ten criteria, which guide the referencing process of participating countries and bring some conformity to it in the interests of mutual trust. They help to ensure that national qualifications frameworks (or systems) are linked to the EQF in a coherent and transparent way. The criteria have provided a structure for the process of referencing and for the report of the process. (Cf. Referencing).

https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/criteria_en.pdf

EQF Referencing Report

EQF Referencing Reports are an important element of the EQF Referencing Process (cf. Referencing). A Referencing Report is a statement of the relationship between a countries national qualifications system or framework and the EQF, at a specific point of time. The ten EQF Referencing Criteria (see above) provide a basis for the preparation of these reports. Countries then present their report to the EQF Advisory Group. The EQF Advisory Group discusses them and provides feedback on the reports. The presentation and discussion of the reports improve understanding of qualification systems among EQF countries.

Erasmus+

EU programme for Education, Training, Youth, and Sport for 2014–2020.

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm

Europass	A portfolio of five different documents and an electronic folder aiming to contain descriptions of the entire holder's learning achievements, official qualifications, work experience, skills and competences, acquired over time. These documents are: the Europass CV, the Diploma Supplement, the Certificate Supplement, the Europass Mobility and the Language Passport. https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/home
Formal learning	Learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually in the form of a certificate or a diploma; it includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222(01)&from=EN
Horizon 2020	EU Research and Innovation programme for the period 2014 to 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/
Informal learning	Informal learning means learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective; examples of learning outcomes acquired through informal learning are skills acquired through life and work experiences, project management skills or ICT skills acquired at work, languages learned and intercultural skills acquired during a stay in another country, ICT skills acquired outside work, skills acquired through volunteering, cultural activities, sports, youth work and through activities at home (e.g. taking care of a child). http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222(01)&from=EN
International Sectoral Qualification (ISQ)	An "International Sectoral Qualification" is a certificate, diploma, degree or title awarded by an international body (or a national body accredited by an international body) and used in more than one country which includes learning outcomes (based on standards developed by an international sectoral organisation or an international company) relevant to a sector of economic activity.

Glossary
Continued

Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes are 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: • *'knowledge'* is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual; • *'skills'* means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments); • *'competence'* means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy. https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/journal_en.pdf
National Coordination Point	National Coordination Points, also known as EQF-NCPs, are contact points, which are set up in all participating countries, to support and coordinate the EQF Referencing Process at national level.
National Qualifications Framework	An instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims to integrate and coordinate national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society. https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/journal_en.pdf
National Qualifications System	All aspects of a Member State's activity related to the recognition of learning and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. This includes the development and implementation of institutional arrangements and processes relating to quality assurance, assessment and the award of qualifications. A national qualifications system may be composed of several subsystems and may include a national qualifications framework. https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/journal_en.pdf

| **Non-formal learning** | Learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers; very common cases of non-formal learning include in-company training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers such as ICT skills, structured online learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target group or the general public.

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222(01)&from=EN |
| --- | --- |
| **Principle of best-fit** | Best-fit is a way of finding harmony between two sets of differing data. Best-fit requires a common judgement from a range of stakeholders so that there can be confidence in the outcome of the approximation. It is a decision that is based on collective professional judgements of stakeholders. This principle is applied when referencing NQF levels to the EQF levels or when allocating qualifications (or qualification types) to NQF levels. This principle was also used by a Technical Working Group established comparability between the NZQA and the EQF levels and provided the collective professional judgement for the decisions. |
| **QF-EHEA** | Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area – An overarching framework that makes transparent the relationship between European national higher education frameworks of qualifications and the qualifications they contain. (Cf. EHEA; Cf. Self-certification) |
| **Qualification** | In the context of the EQF, qualification means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/journal_en.pdf |

Glossary

Continued

Referencing of qualifications levels (EQF Referencing Process)	Referencing in the EQF is a process that results in the establishment of a relationship between the levels of national qualifications, usually defined in terms of a national qualifications framework, and the levels of the EQF. Through this process, national authorities responsible for qualifications systems, in cooperation with stakeholders responsible for developing and using qualifications, define the correspondence between the national qualifications system and the eight levels of the EQF.
SCHE	SCHE (short-cycle higher education) are higher education degree programmes of less than 180 ECTS (typically 120 ECTS) in volume, leading to a degree that is recognised at a lower level than a qualification at the end of the first cycle. Such programmes may prepare learners for employment, while also providing preparation for, and access to studies for the completion of the first cycle. The descriptors of the short cycle correspond to the learning outcomes of EQF level 5.
Self-certification	The self-certification is a process by which the competent authorities of a given country verify that the national qualifications framework is compatible with the overarching QF-EHEA Framework. Once the self-certification process has been completed, self-certification reports should be published so that partners in the European Higher Education Area may access them. Many countries prepare these reports as a joint report with their EQF referencing report (Cf. EHEA; Cf. QF-EHEA). http://www.ehea.info/
Substantial difference	Substantial difference comes from the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Convention). The use of substantial difference requires a test to find if the link from level to level is beyond what can be justified or proved, otherwise the link is accepted.
Validation (of learning outcomes)	Validation refers to the confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification. (Cf. Council Recommendation on VNFIL)

Annexes

Annexes

Annex I: Technical comparison of the NZQF and the EQF

EQF Level 1 and NZQF Level 1

Table 2: Technical comparison of EQF Level 1 and NZQF Level 1

EQF Level 1	NZQF Level 1
EQF level 1 descriptors	NZQF level 1 descriptors
Knowledge • Basic general knowledge	**Knowledge** • Basic general and/or foundation knowledge
Skills • Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	**Skills** • Apply basic solutions to simple problems • Apply basic skills required to carry out simple tasks
Competence • Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context	**Application** • Highly structured contexts • Requiring some responsibility for own learning • Interacting with others

The language of the learning outcomes in both the NZQF and EQF at level 1 is similar, but the purpose and outcomes of the qualifications that sit on the NZQF and European Member States Qualifications Frameworks, which have been referenced to the EQF level 1, are different.

Qualifications (types) referenced to EQF level 1 relate to basic/primary certificates for general education/VET, awards in adult learning for achieving basic skills for specific target groups. Taking into account contextual factors NZQF level 1 does not match to the EQF level 1.

EQF Level 2 and NZQF Level 1

Table 3: Technical comparison of EQF Level 2 and NZQF Level 1

EQF Level 2	NZQF Level 1
EQF level 2 descriptors	**NZQF level 1 descriptors**
Knowledge • Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	**Knowledge** • Basic general and/or foundation knowledge
Skills • Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	**Skills** • Apply basic solutions to simple problems • Apply basic skills required to carry out simple tasks
Competence • Work or study under supervision with some autonomy	**Application** • Highly structured contexts • Requiring some responsibility for own learning • Interacting with others

Both frameworks refer to learners having **basic knowledge** at this level.

The skills and competence for NZQF level 1 learning outcomes are comparable with EQF level 2. EQF level 2 **solve routine problems using simple rules and tools** are similar to **apply basic solutions to simple problems** in NZQF level 1. EQF **basic skills required to carry out tasks** is similar to **apply basic skills required to carry out simple tasks** in the NZQF. NZQF level 1 refers to students **requiring some responsibility for their own learning,** which compares with **some autonomy** in EQF level 2.

The purpose of a qualification at level 1 on the NZQF is to equip individuals with **basic knowledge** and **skills** for **work, further learning and community involvement**. The main qualification

on the NZQF at level 1 is the National Certificate of Educational Achievement Level 1. This is the first level of senior secondary school qualifications. Students are generally aged 15 or 16 years old.

So far, most EU Member States have referenced their lower secondary school certificates, or some basic VET certificates to EQF level 2.

Applying contextual and social mapping to these levels shows EQF level 2 and NZQF level 1 have similar outcomes for learners.

Overall, the best fit for NZQF level 1 is with EQF level 2.

EQF Level 3 and NZQF Level 2

Table 4: Technical comparison of EQF Level 3 and NZQF Level 2

EQF Level 3	NZQF Level 2
EQF level 3 descriptors	NZQF level 2 descriptors
Knowledge • Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	**Knowledge** • Basic factual and/or operational knowledge of a field of work or study
Skills • A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	**Skills** • Apply known solutions to familiar problems • Apply standard processes relevant to the field of work or study
Competence • Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study • Adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems	**Application** • General supervision • Requiring some responsibility for own learning and performance • Collaborating with others

Both frameworks refer to learners having **factual knowledge** at these levels. The NZQF concept of **operational knowledge** is referred to in the EQF **knowledge of principles, processes and general concepts**. Both frameworks put knowledge in the context of **a field of work or study**.

There is similarity between the skills learning outcomes in both frameworks. NZQF skills for **applying standard processes** is similar to the EQF skills for **applying basic methods, tools** and the NZQF **applying known solutions to familiar problems** corresponds with the EQF **solve problems**.

In the application/competence outcomes the EQF demonstration of **adapting own behaviour to circumstances** is similar to the NZQF outcome of **some responsibility relating to learning and performance and collaborating with others**. Collaboration implies one has to adapt one's behaviour and be accepting of other people's point of view.

Additionally, the substantial difference test was applied to this level, which involved a comparison of NZQF level 2 with EQF level 2. **Collaborating with others** requires both self-awareness, and awareness and acceptance of others' views. This is something more advanced in terms of student behaviour than level 2 of the EQF.

This demonstrates that there is a substantial difference between the learning outcomes at NZQF level 2 and EQF level 2. The learning outcomes at NZQF level 2 fit better with EQF level 3.

The purpose of qualifications at level 2 in the NZQF is preparation for work and further learning. Employment outcomes for graduates are occupations that are mainly routine using limited practical skills and basic industry/operational knowledge in a defined context, working under general supervision. Educational outcomes are pathways into level 3 and level 4 qualifications.

European Member States have referenced the levels in their NQFs that hold VET certificates to EQF level 3. These qualifications allow access to the labour market and open a route to further learning.

The language of the NZQF level 2 and the EQF level 3 have some differences but viewing the level outcomes as a whole the levels correspond. This is supported by the contextual and social effects matching which took into account the overall purpose of the qualifications at this level and the pathways of graduates.

Overall, NZQF level 2 compares well with EQF level 3.

EQF Level 4 and NZQF Levels 3 and 4

Table 5: Technical comparison of EQF Level 4 and NZQF Levels 3 and 4

EQF Level 4	NZQF Level 3	NZQF Level 4
EQF level 4 descriptors	NZQF level 3 descriptors	NZQF level 4 descriptors
Knowledge • Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	**Knowledge** • Some operational and theoretical knowledge in a field of work or study	**Knowledge** • Broad operational and theoretical knowledge in a field of work or study
Skills • A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	**Skills** • Select and apply from a range of known solutions to familiar problems • Apply a range of standard processes relevant to the field of work or study	**Skills** • Select and apply solutions to familiar and sometimes unfamiliar problems • Select and apply a range of standard and non-standard processes relevant to the field of work or study
Competence • Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change • Supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities	**Application** • Limited supervision • Requiring major responsibility for own learning and performance • Adapting own behaviour when interacting with others • Contributing to group performance	**Application** • Self-management of learning and performance under broad guidance • Some responsibility for performance of others

Contextual background

Levels 3 and 4 are pivotal points on the NZQF and both contain flagship qualifications.

Level 3 holds the senior secondary school qualification (NCEA Level 3) and the results are used for the purpose of university entrance, both in New Zealand and abroad. The intent of qualifications at level 3 on the NZQF is to provide pathways to further study and to qualify graduates to undertake skilled, specific work.

Level 4 holds the New Zealand trade qualifications that recognise the knowledge, skills and attributes required to be a registered tradesperson.[76]

Students can access university from NZQF levels 3 and 4.

General

Both frameworks refer to learners having broad theoretical knowledge and both put knowledge in the context of a field of work or study.

In the skills outcomes the NZQF range of standard and non-standard processes is similar to the EQF range of cognitive and practical skills. Specific problems in the EQF relates to familiar and unfamiliar problems in the NZQF.

Both frameworks introduce the concept of self-management at these levels. The NZQF refers to the self-management of learning and performance and some responsibility for the performance of others. This relates to the responsibility a registered tradesperson would have at this level.

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76   Examples of a registered tradesperson is a plumber, electrician, builder.

Annexes

Annex 1 continued

It corresponds with the EQF **exercising self-management** and having **some responsibility** when **supervising the work of others**.

In Europe, general education upper secondary school-leaving certificates (providing access to higher education) would normally be referenced to the EQF level 4. This level is also often used to for upper secondary VET school leaving certificates (school-based VET and dual VET) leading to skilled work.

The senior secondary school qualification (NCEA Level 3) in New Zealand is comparable to, European school leaving certificates and is accepted for admission into European universities.

Therefore, NZQF level 3 corresponds to EQF level 4 in terms of secondary school qualification contextual mapping.

Taking into account the concept of best-fit and substantial difference, linking NZQF level 3 to EQF level 3 was beyond what could be proved or justified in terms of language and other qualifications sitting at those levels. The collective professional judgements of stakeholders were that NZQF level 3 was best compared with EQF level 4.

Overall, NZQF levels 3 and 4 best fit with EQF level 4.

EQF Level 5 and NZQF Levels 5 and 6

Table 6: Technical comparison of EQF Level 5 and NZQF Levels 5 and 6

EQF Level 5	NZQF Level 5	NZQF Level 6
EQF level 5 descriptors	NZQF level 5 descriptors	NZQF level 6 descriptors
Knowledge • Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	**Knowledge** • Broad operational or technical and theoretical knowledge within a specific field of work or study	**Knowledge** • Specialised technical or theoretical knowledge with depth in a field of work or study
Skills • A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	**Skills** • Select and apply a range of solutions to familiar and sometimes unfamiliar problems • Select and apply a range of standard and non-standard processes relevant to the field of work or study	**Skills** • Analyse and generate solutions to familiar and unfamiliar problems • Select and apply a range of standard and non-standard processes relevant to the field of work or study
Competence • Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change • Review and develop performance of self and others	**Application** • Complete self-management of learning and performance within defined contexts • Some responsibility for the management of learning and performance of others	**Application** • Complete self-management of learning and performance within dynamic contexts • Responsibility for leadership within dynamic contexts

Contextual background

EQF level 5 descriptors are wide in range and scale and, therefore, encompass both NZQF levels 5 and 6.

The NZQF learning outcomes show a distinct progression in the level knowledge, skill and application requirements from level 5 through to level 6; for example, the complexity of knowledge increases.

NZQF levels 5 and 6 are the juncture between the upper end of technical and para-professional qualifications and the lower end of professional qualifications. Given this, the knowledge dimension descriptors are complex as they relate to a variety of contexts.

There are four aspects to the knowledge dimension across these two levels:

• type (operational, technical or theoretical)

• complexity (broad or specialised)

• depth

• breadth (specific field, a field, or one or more fields).

These four aspects allow for the range of qualification types and qualifications with varying purposes to sit at these levels.

Employment outcomes at NZQF level 5 require sound knowledge of industry operations and a broad range of managerial skills to coordinate job operations. Employees may operate independently, have responsibility for others and make a range of operational business decisions. In New Zealand level 5 is considered the first year of a Bachelor's Degree.

Employment outcomes for graduates with NZQF level 6 qualifications are typically at a senior level in an occupation requiring substantial industry knowledge and wide-ranging, specialised managerial skills. Employees may operate independently, take responsibility for others and make a range of strategic business decisions.

Qualifications typically prepare students for a para-professional occupation and/or a pathway program towards a Bachelor's Degree. In New Zealand level 6 is also considered equivalent to the second year of a Bachelor's Degree.

General

Both frameworks refer to **specialised theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study**.

In the skills outcomes the NZQF **range of standard and non-standard processes** is similar to the EQF **range of cognitive and practical skills** and **develop solutions** in the EQF covers **generate solutions** in the NZQF. The EQF also refers to **abstract problems** which the NZQF covers in **familiar and unfamiliar problems**.

The application/competence outcomes of the NZQF and EQF at these levels are differently worded but are comparable as the concepts demonstrate the same degree of complexity. For example, the NZQF refers to **responsibility for the management and performance of others and leadership within dynamic contexts** which reflects the leadership needed to **review and develop the performance of self and others** in the EQF. **Self-management of learning and performance within dynamic contexts** in the NZQF corresponds with **management where there is unpredictable change** in the EQF.

NZQF levels 5 and 6 are considered to be the first two years of a Bachelor's Degree so work well together when comparing them to the EQF. The levels are also similar to the short cycle in the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area.

The knowledge requirements of NZQF level 6 are slightly greater than EQF level 5 but less than EQF level 6.

Discussions between stakeholders and NZQA again took into account the concept of best-fit and substantial difference. Linking NZQF level 6 to EQF level 6 was beyond what could be proved or justified in terms of language and other qualifications sitting at those levels. The collective professional judgements of stakeholders was that NZQF level 6 was best corresponding to EQF level 5.

Overall, NZQF levels 5 and 6 best fit with EQF level 5.

EQF Level 6 and NZQF Level 7 and 8

Table 7: Technical comparison of EQF Level 6 and NZQF Levels 7 and 8

EQF Level 6	NZQF Level 7	NZQF Level 8
EQF level 6 descriptors	NZQF level 7 descriptors	NZQF level 8 descriptors
Knowledge • Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	**Knowledge** • Specialised technical or theoretical knowledge with depth in one or more fields of work or study	**Knowledge** • Advanced technical and/or theoretical knowledge in a discipline or practice, involving a critical understanding of the underpinning key principles
Skills • Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	**Skills** • Analyse, generate solutions to unfamiliar and sometimes complex problems • Select, adapt and apply a range of processes relevant to the field of work or study	**Skills** • Analyse, generate solutions to complex and sometimes unpredictable problems • Evaluate and apply a range of processes relevant to the field of work or study
Competence • Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts • Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups	**Application** • Advanced generic skills and/or specialist knowledge and skills in a professional context or field of study	**Application** • Developing identification with a profession and/or discipline through application of advanced generic skills and/or specialist knowledge and skills • Some responsibility for integrity of profession or discipline

EQF level 6 corresponds to the First cycle of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and is the level that Member States have referenced the levels on their frameworks which contain Bachelor's Degrees. NZQF level 7 holds New Zealand's Bachelor's Degrees.

While the expression of knowledge learning outcomes is different, there is match between NZQF and EQF at these levels. The EQF requires advanced knowledge which is matched with the depth of knowledge in one or more fields of work or study in the NZQF. Both level descriptors for skills refer to a graduate being able to analyse and solve complex, unfamiliar/unpredictable problems. The context of application of knowledge and skills is comparable. The EQF requirements relate to management of others. The EQF include the context unpredictable work while NZQF refers to advanced generic skills and/or specialist knowledge and skills in a professional context or field of study.

Overall, NZQF level 7 compares well with EQF level 6.

See also Annex II for New Zealand's position on the matching of the NZQF level 8 to the EQF.

EQF Level 7 and NZQF Levels 8 and 9

Table 8: Technical comparison of EQF Level 7 and NZQF Levels 8 and 9

EQF Level 7	NZQF Level 8	NZQF Level 9
EQF level 7 descriptors	NZQF level 8 descriptors	NZQF level 9 descriptors
Knowledge • Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research • Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields	**Knowledge** • Advanced technical and/or theoretical knowledge in a discipline or practice, involving a critical understanding of the underpinning key principles	**Knowledge** • Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge, and a critical awareness of issues in a field of study or practice
Skills • Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields	**Skills** • Analyse, generate solutions to complex and sometimes unpredictable problems • Evaluate and apply a range of processes relevant to the field of work or study	**Skills** • Develop and apply new skills and techniques to existing or emerging problems • Mastery of the field of study or practice to an advanced level
Competence • Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches • Take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams	**Application** • Developing identification with a profession and/or discipline through application of advanced generic skills and/or specialist knowledge and skills • Some responsibility for integrity of profession or discipline	**Application** • Independent application of highly specialised knowledge and skills within a discipline or professional practice • Some responsibility for leadership within the profession or discipline

EQF level 7 corresponds to the Second cycle of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and is the level that Member States have referenced the levels on their frameworks which contain Master's Degrees. NZQF level 9 holds New Zealand's Master's Degrees.

The language of the knowledge learning outcomes of both frameworks are very similar at these levels. Both refer to highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge, and a critical awareness of issues in a field of study or practice.

The level of the skills outcomes are the same at EQF level 7 and NZQF level 9 but focus on different aspects. For example, NZQF level 9 requires learners to develop and apply new skills and techniques to existing or emerging problems. Emerging problems require learners to be innovative as in the EQF descriptor. Developing and applying new skills and techniques to existing or emerging problems in the NZQF corresponds to transforming work or study contexts that are complex and unpredictable in the EQF. To transform work you need to be able to develop and apply new skills and techniques.

The application outcomes on the NZQF are slightly different but the EQF descriptors are not precluded from the meaning. The EQF is more specific in the context, whereas the NZQF assumes the context. For example, the EQF refers to the learner being able to manage and transform work that requires new strategic approaches. Strategy is one aspect of leadership which the NZQF refers to. Both frameworks refer to a learner taking some responsibility for leadership within the profession (NZQF) and contributing to professional knowledge and practice (EQF).

Overall, NZQF level 9 compares well with EQF level 7.

EQF Level 8 and NZQF Level 10

Table 9: Technical comparison of EQF Level 8 and NZQF level 10

EQF Level 8	NZQF Level 10
EQF level 8 descriptors	NZQF level 10 descriptors
Knowledge • Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields	**Knowledge** • Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of study or professional practice
Skills • The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice	**Skills** • Critical reflection on existing knowledge or practice and the creation of new knowledge
Competence • Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research	**Application** • Sustained commitment to the professional integrity and to the development of new ideas or practices at the forefront of discipline or professional practice

EQF level 8 corresponds to the Third cycle of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and is the level that Member States have referenced the levels on their frameworks which contain Doctoral Degrees. NZQF level 10 holds New Zealand's Doctoral Degrees.

Qualifications at level 8 on the EQF and level 10 on the NZQF represent the highest level of educational achievement in Europe and New Zealand. Graduates at this level can apply a substantial body of knowledge to research, investigate and develop new knowledge in one or more fields of investigation, scholarship or professional practice. Qualifications at these levels are normally the culmination of study which begins at the Bachelor's level.

Both frameworks require **knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study**.

Both frameworks refer to learners being able to demonstrate **commitment to professional integrity** and to the **development of new ideas or practices at the forefront of work**.

Level 10 qualifications on the NZQF are moderated in an international setting. They culminate in a thesis, dissertation or equivalent for independent examination by at least two expert examiners of international standing. These experts are external to the enrolling institution, independent of the conduct of research and without conflict of interest, in line with good practice guides. This provides consistency across qualifications and across countries.

Overall, NZQF level 10 and EQF level 8 are comparable.

Annexes

Annex II: Paper by NZQA to inform discussion on the matching of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework level 8 to the European Qualifications Framework

Executive Summary

This paper provides additional information to support the matching of the NZQF level 8 to the EQF.

NZQF level 8 contains Postgraduate Diplomas, Postgraduate Certificates and Bachelor Honours Degrees. These qualifications are all considered postgraduate qualifications in New Zealand.

Information from the technical matching indicates NZQF level 8 is situated between the upper range of the EQF level 6 band and EQF level 7.

New Zealand considers the best fit for NZQF level 8 is EQF level 7. The NZQF level 8 descriptors do not entirely match with EQF level 7 descriptors, but other contextual and social effects matching indicates that the 'corridor' of EQF level 7 is the best fit.

The NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree is discussed in this paper because it is the flagship qualification on NZQF level 8. While the NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree shares a similar title as qualifications in the United Kingdom (UK) and Republic of Ireland, it is a distinctive qualification. These differences are not clearly expressed by commonality in the titles of the qualifications, which can lead to misunderstandings.

The NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree is a distinct, independent programme of study at a postgraduate level with a substantial research focus. The qualification typically has an advanced entry point, and completion allows graduates one avenue of progression to Doctoral Degree programmes.

Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas at NZQF level 8 are comparable to postgraduate qualifications in the EU countries that have been referenced to level 7 of the EQF.

The Dublin Descriptors of cycles within the European Higher Education Area Framework (Bologna Framework) provide a triangulation point and an additional perspective to support the matching of NZQF level 8 to EQF level 7. The learning outcomes of NZQF level 8 match the second cycle descriptors on the Bologna Framework. EU countries reference the levels on which their Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas sit to EQF level 7, as well as to the intermediate second cycle qualifications in the Bologna process.

NZQA has engaged with interested stakeholders, including New Zealand universities, and it is their collective professional judgement that NZQF level 8 best fits with EQF level 7.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to propose the matching of NZQF level 8 to EQF level 7. This proposal follows on from discussions at the Technical Working Group regarding the comparability of the higher levels on the frameworks.

For higher education, there are four levels on the NZQF and three levels on the EQF. The Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral Degrees on NZQF levels 7, 9 and 10 match clearly with EQF levels 6, 7 and 8 respectively. The best fit for NZQF level 8 with the EQF is yet to be agreed within this context.

This paper focusses on contextual matching using the qualifications that sit at NZQF level 8 and similar qualifications on the NQFs of EU Member States. It also considers social effects matching using the 2013 New Zealand census data.

It sets out a comparison of NZQF Bachelor Honours Degrees and those found across the UK and the Republic of Ireland,[77] as well as the Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates in New Zealand and the EU, using the Bologna Framework as a triangulation point to provide further insight.

This paper will assist the EQF Advisory Group to consider where NZQF level 8 should be matched to on the EQF.

Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates

NZQF level 8 of the NZQF contains Postgraduate Diplomas, Postgraduate Certificates and Bachelor Honours Degrees. Each of these is a postgraduate qualification that deepens and extends knowledge of the subject area.

Postgraduate Diplomas and certificates are well known throughout Europe, and feature on the qualifications frameworks of many countries. England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland have all included Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates on their NQFs, which are at the same level as Master's Degrees, as intermediate qualifications. This level has been referenced to the EQF at level 7.[78]

Bachelor Honours Degrees

The qualification title 'Honours Degree' is used throughout education systems influenced by the Anglo-Irish model (including South Africa, Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka).[79] However, there are significant variations in the structure and purpose of these qualifications, which can cause confusion.

Some Honours Degrees (e.g. UK and India) are meritorious, and awarded for achieving excellent academic standards. They do not include postgraduate study. Others, notably Ireland, were meritorious until 2005, but now generally represent an undergraduate degree.

Honours Degrees in New Zealand, South Africa and Australia are considered postgraduate study because of the advanced entry point. An Honours Degree cannot normally be entered directly using a school-leaving qualification.

Even though the NZQF Bachelor Honours Degrees share a similar title as qualifications in the UK and Republic of Ireland, they are postgraduate qualifications. Their status is made clear on the NZQF: level 8 signifies a step up from the level 7 learning outcomes and is an intermediate level between Bachelor's Degree level and Master's level. Level 8 also includes Postgraduate Certificates and Postgraduate Diplomas. The 10 level NZQF allows for this distinction, which is further discussed below.

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Framework

Reference is made throughout the paper to the Dublin Descriptors and the cycles within the Bologna Framework. The Descriptors and the Framework provide a triangulation point that add a useful perspective to this discussion. The NZQF qualifications and the qualifications on the EHEA that are discussed in this paper are all higher education qualifications. The Bologna Framework

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77   There are no comparable qualifications in other parts of the European Union.

78   More information is available at https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/compare

79   These qualifications have different titles; for brevity those outside of New Zealand are described generically as Honours degrees.

therefore provides further basis for the discussion of NZQF level 8 qualifications.

The relationship between the various NQFs and the qualification types offered in the UK and the Republic of Ireland is illustrated in the tables in *Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries.*[80] Table 10 below shows the compatibility of the higher education frameworks for Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland with FQ-EHEA ('Bologna framework').

Table 10: The outcome of verifying the compatibility of higher education frameworks for Scotland (FQHEIS/SCQF), for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and for the NQF for the Republic of Ireland (NFQ IE) with the FQ-EHEA

Typical higher education qualifications within each level	FHEQ level	FQHEIS/SCQF level	NFQ IE level	Corresponding FQ-EHEA cycle
Doctoral degrees	8	12	10	Third cycle (end of cycle) qualifications
Master's degrees (including integrated Master's)	7	11	9	Second cycle (end of cycle) qualifications
Postgradute diplomas				
Postgraduate certificates				Intermediate qualifications within the second cycle
Bachelor's degrees with honours/Honours Bachelor Degrees	6	10	8	First cycle (end of cycle) qualifications
Irish Higher Diploma				
Bachelor's degrees/ Ordinary Bachelor Degree			7	
Graduate diplomas		9		Intermediate qualifications within the first cycle
Graduate certificates				
Foundation Degrees (eg FdA, FdSc)	5	8	6	Short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle) qualifications
Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE)				
Higher National Diplomas (HND)				
Irish Higher Certificate				
Higher National Certificates (HNC)	4	7		Intermediate qualifcations within the short cycle
Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)				

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80 Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/publications/documents/qualifications-can-cross-boundaries.pdf

The EQF and the Bologna Framework are fully compatible; the Bologna Framework being seen as part of the overarching EQF.[81] EU countries which have completed the referencing process within the EHEA have the choice not to repeat the process with the relevant EQF levels, and vice versa.

The levels of the EU Member States NQFs that match the first cycle qualifications of the Bologna Framework sit at level 6 on the EQF, the second cycle qualifications sit at level 7 and the third cycle qualifications sit at level 8. This is illustrated in Table 11 below, which is taken from *The Bologna Framework* and *National Qualifications Frameworks – An Introduction*.

Table 11: The relationship between the Bologna Framework and the EQF

EQF	Bologna Framework
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	*
6	First Cycle
7	Second Cycle
8	Third Cycle

The NZQA – EQF Technical Working Group has agreed that levels 6, 7 and 8 of the EQF correspond to the NZQF level 7 Bachelor's Degree, the NZQF level 9 Master's Degree, and the NZQF level 10 Doctoral Degree, respectively.

In considering where NZQF level 8 fits, a discussion of the intermediate qualifications within the Bologna Framework cycles is useful.

Intermediate qualifications

The first and second cycles of the Bologna Framework allow for intermediate qualifications that sit between cycles. This is referred to in *The Bologna Framework* and *National Qualifications Frameworks – an Introduction.[82]*

'In adopting the Bologna Framework, Ministers agreed that the Framework would include, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications.

… National qualifications frameworks may contain sub-levels (or intermediate qualifications) within the Bologna cycles (e.g. a short cycle within the first cycle). These sub-levels allow institutions to structure a particular qualification and regulate progression through the qualification.'

The provision for 'intermediate' qualifications within the second cycle recognises the variation in national qualifications systems, and is in keeping with the fundamental principle of the EQF of acknowledging, and promoting lifelong learning.

The qualifications at NZQF level 8 are comparable to qualifications in the second cycle of the Bologna Framework in terms of learning outcomes, relationship to other qualifications and credits.[83] For example, the Postgraduate Diplomas offered in the UK and the Republic of Ireland are intermediate second cycle qualifications which build on the learning undertaken in the first cycle qualification. Similarly, the NZQF Postgraduate Certificates, Diplomas and Bachelor Honours Degrees demonstrate a progression between Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree levels.

81   Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF
82   See 'The Bologna Framework and National Qualifications Frameworks – An Introduction' http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/QF/Bologna_Framework_and_Certification_revised_29_02_08.pdf
83   See analysis in Appendix A: Comparison of NZQF levels 7 – 10 with the Bologna cycles.

The difference between these intermediate qualifications and Master's Degrees is addressed in the UK Framework Report:

'Master's Degrees are often distinguished from other qualifications at this level (for example, advanced short courses, which often form parts of continuing professional development programmes and lead to postgraduate certificates and/or postgraduate diplomas) by an increased intensity, complexity and density of study. Master's Degrees — in comparison to postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas — typically include planned intellectual progression that often includes a synoptic/research or scholarly activity.'[84]

This distinction can also be applied to explain the relationship between NZQF level 8 qualifications and NZQF level 9 Master's Degrees.

Summary

As the compatibility between the Bologna Framework and the EQF is well established, it would follow that NZQF level 8 qualifications could be matched to EQF level 7 as they sit within the broader corridor of the Bologna Framework second cycle qualifications. They can be viewed in the same way as the Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates in the UK and the Republic of Ireland which are matched at EQF level 7, as intermediate qualifications.

Comparison of NZQF Bachelor Honours Degrees with the UK and the Republic of Ireland Honours Bachelor Degrees

An overview of NZQF Bachelor Honours Degrees with the UK and the Republic of Ireland Honours Bachelor Degrees is attached as Appendix B.

The section now focusses on the NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree as the use of similar titles internationally can lead to misunderstandings. It is also the flagship qualification at level 8 on the NZQF.

The NZQF Bachelor Honours Degrees are a distinct, independent programme of study at a postgraduate level.[85] The UK Bachelor's Degrees with Honours, and the Republic of Ireland Honours Bachelor Degrees are meritorious, awarded as a result of marks for an undergraduate degree.

In the case of many UK Bachelor's Degrees with Honours and the Republic of Ireland Honours Bachelor Degrees, a distinction is made between 'ordinary' Bachelor's Degrees and those where the student has attained grades sufficient to signify first, second or third class 'Honours' with Third Class Honours Degrees being awarded with marks as low as 40 per cent. The Honours Degrees that can be found across the UK and Ireland are comparable and referenced to the EQF at level 6.

The NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree has a distinct research focus.[86] The knowledge, skills and application of knowledge and skills outlined in the learning outcomes for the NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree, emphasise research, along with a highly specialised programme of study. This suggests

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84   See page 22, http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Framework-Higher-Education-Qualifications-08.pdf

85   There are some exceptions to the standard pathway to an NZQF Bachelor Honours degree for programmes of study in highly specialised professional fields such as Law and Engineering. In these cases the NZQF Bachelor with Honours degree is awarded to those who have completed four years of specialised study including research components.

86   Refer to page 22 of 'CUAP Handbook 2015' http://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/cuap-handbook The Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) is the quality assurance body that undertakes programme approval and accreditation for the university sector.

they fit more appropriately within the Bologna Framework second cycle of post-bachelor degree qualifications.

The learning outcomes relating to the scope, complexity and autonomy of the research projects, included in some UK Honours Degrees, are not comparable to the research component required for an NZQF level 8 Bachelor Honours Degree. Some programmes include a 'dissertation module'[87] in the third year, but this does not equate to the substantial research focus of the NZQF Bachelor Honours Degrees which include a minimum research component of 30 credits.

An NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree is typically entered from a more advanced point than Honours Degrees across UK and the Republic of Ireland. It usually follows the completion of a NZQF Bachelor's Degree. In some cases, admission into an NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree is possible prior to completion of an NZQF Bachelor's Degree, if students can demonstrate above average performance in undergraduate credits relevant to the proposed Honours study. In both cases, the duration of study is four years, compared with three years for a NZQF Bachelor's Degree. See Appendix B for the definition of an NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree.

Honours Degrees offered across the UK and the Republic of Ireland are entered directly from a school-leaving qualification. These constitute undergraduate degrees.

Completion of an NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree at specified levels of attainment allows progression to Doctoral Degree programmes

(dependent on approval criteria). This is a similar pathway to the Bologna Framework second cycle qualifications which give entry to the third cycle PhD.

Summary

The discussion on the best-fit principles in the EQF Update *Referencing National Qualifications Levels to the EQF* p.53 notes that levels should be viewed as corridors,[88] and that qualifications might include learning outcomes related to different levels. It also notes that qualifications placed at the same level do not necessarily have to be similar but can be considered comparable in terms of levels of learning outcomes achieved.

Due to the advanced entry point, knowledge, skills and competences outlined in the learning outcomes for the NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree, particularly the strong emphasis on research, along with the highly specialised nature of the programmes of study leading to these qualifications and the progression pathway to Doctoral degrees, it is possible to conclude that they fit more appropriately within the Bologna Framework second cycle of post-bachelor degree qualifications.

While the NZQF level 8 descriptors do not completely match with EQF level 7 descriptors, other contextual matching indicates that the corridor of EQF level 7 is the best fit.

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87 The English BA (Hons) at University College Cork is an example of an Honours degree with a dissertation module http://www.ucc.ie/en/ck109/

88 Refer to page 53 of 'Referencing National Qualifications Levels to the EQF – Update 2013' http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/ EQF%20131119-web_0.pdf

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Other considerations

Referencing with Australia

New Zealand and Australia have referenced their NQFs and the joint report was published in 2015. The report compares the 10 levels of the frameworks and concludes a referencing of the frameworks level-to-level. This appears deceptively straightforward but there were complex issues to be resolved at several levels. Contextual and social effects matching were used to deepen the comparisons before final judgements of comparability were made. These included analysis of best-fit and substantial difference.

For example, before the judgement to reference NZQF level 9 with AQF level 9, a contextual and social effects matching complemented the technical analysis. A test of substantial difference was applied to this level, which involved a comparison of NZQF level 9 with AQF level 10 and AQF level 9 with NZQF level 8.

The final referencing of the levels using a best-fit principle, was based on the understanding of the levels in a framework being corridors and not exact lines.

Both Australia and New Zealand noted in discussions on the process that conclusions in the level-to-level referencing may not be replicated when either country referenced to another framework. Each referencing project would sit within another context.

Social effects matching

NZQF Bachelor Honours Degrees have high social value in New Zealand, as demonstrated by recent employment statistics. Their value is more aligned with Master's degrees and show a marked step up from Bachelor's Degrees.

The 2013 New Zealand census[89] shows that graduates with Bachelor Honours Degrees earn on average nine per cent more than Bachelor's Degree holders and only four per cent less than Master's graduates.

In some disciplines, such as ICT, Engineering, Architecture and Building, Forestry, Agriculture, Medical Science, Veterinary Science, and Economics, Bachelor Honours Degree graduates earn on average 8.6 per cent more than Master's Degree graduates.

These statistics demonstrate the value that employers in New Zealand assign to Bachelor Honours Degrees is close to that of Master's Degrees.

The collective professional judgements of stakeholders

NZQA consulted regularly with the New Zealand Advisory Group (NZAG). This group comprised representatives from across the New Zealand education sector: schools, tertiary education organisations, government agencies and social partners. The membership of this group is outlined in the draft Joint Technical Report on the *Comparison of the European Qualifications Framework and the New Zealand Qualifications Framework* in the Methodology section under the Consultation process. The NZAG recommended that NZQA engage more widely on two areas, one of which was the matching of NZQF level 8.

NZQA met with all eight universities and one institute of technology, the national education sector bodies (called peak bodies in New Zealand) of the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics, Industry Training Organisations and private providers (called Private Training Establishments in New Zealand).

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89   http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-income.aspx

Representatives from the institutions included Deputy Vice Chancellors Academic, Academic Managers, Academic Directors, Deans of Graduate studies, Academic Policy and Regulations staff members and Heads of Departments.

The feedback from these groups noted that there was a substantial difference between NZQF level 8 and EQF level 6. The NZQF level descriptors do not make this explicit as they cover a wide corridor of qualifications. Stakeholders' unanimous recommendation was that the best-fit for NZQF level 8 was with EQF level 7.

Endorsement by the Committee on University Academic Programmes

NZQA has consulted with Universities New Zealand's Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP). CUAP supports the best-fit of NZQF level 8 to EQF level 7.

Conclusion

NZQF level 8 qualifications should be viewed as intermediate qualifications, with the same status as other intermediate qualifications, such as Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates from the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

The NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree is a distinct, independent programme of study at a postgraduate level with a substantial research focus. It is typically entered from a more advanced point and completion allows graduates to progress to Doctoral Degree programmes (dependent on approval criteria).

The learning outcomes of NZQF level 8 match the Bologna Framework intermediate second cycle descriptors. The intersection of the Bologna Framework and the EQF is clear. It would follow that under the best-fit principle, and contextual matching, that NZQF level 8 qualifications should be matched to EQF level 7 as they sit within the broader corridor of the Bologna Framework second cycle qualifications.

New Zealand considers NZQF level 8 best fits with EQF level 7.

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Appendix A: Comparison of NZQF levels 7 – 10 with the Bologna cycles

Table 12: Comparison of NZQF Level 7 with the Bologna First Cycle

NZQF Level 7	Bologna First Cycle	Note:
NZQF level 7 descriptors (Diploma, Bachelor's Degree, Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma)	Qualifications that signify completion of the first cycle (e.g. Bachelor's degrees) are awarded to students who:	
Knowledge • Specialised technical or theoretical knowledge with depth in one or more fields of work or study **Skills** • Analyse, generate solutions to unfamiliar and sometimes complex problems • Select, adapt and apply a range of processes relevant to the field of work or study **Application** • Advanced generic skills and/or specialist knowledge and skills in a professional context or field of study	• have demonstrated **knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education**, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be **informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study**; • **can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation**, and have competences typically demonstrated through **devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study**; • **have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues**; • can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences; • **have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.**	• The first cycle (e.g. Bachelor's Degrees) of the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area corresponds to level 6 of the European Union's EQF. • The learning outcomes of the NZQF's level descriptors do not have a specific learning outcome for communication skills. Communication skills are implied through the ability to interact and collaborate with others and contribute to group performance which are part of the Application of knowledge and skills learning outcome at the lower levels of the NZQF. Communication skills are specified in the qualification type descriptors. • Level descriptors assume that learning outcomes are cumulative by level: knowledge, skills and application at one level include those at lower levels. Learning outcomes for Application at lower levels of the NZQF cover the requirement for 'complete self-management of learning and performance within defined contexts' at level 5 and 'within dynamic contexts' and level 6.

Table 13: Comparison of NZQF Level 8 with the Bologna Second Cycle

NZQF Level 8	Bologna Second Cycle	Note:
NZQF level 8 descriptors (Bachelor Honours Degree, Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma)	Qualifications that signify completion of the second cycle (e.g. Master's Degrees) are awarded to students who:	
Knowledge • Advanced technical and/or theoretical knowledge in a discipline or practice, involving a critical understanding of the underpinning key principles **Skills** • Analyse, generate solutions to complex and sometimes unpredictable problems • Evaluate and apply a range of processes relevant to the field of work or study **Application** • Developing identification with a profession and/or discipline through application of advanced generic skills and/or specialist knowledge and skills • Some responsibility for integrity of profession or discipline	• have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context; • can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study; • have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements; • can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously; • have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.	The second cycle (e.g. Master's Degrees) of the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area refers to level 7 of the European Union's EQF. Notes for the first cycle also apply here. The qualification descriptor for the NZQF Bachelor Honours Degree is attached in Appendix B. It requires planning and conducting original research. **Outcomes** A graduate of a Bachelor Honours Degree is able to: • engage in self-directed learning and advanced study • demonstrate intellectual independence, analytic rigour, and the ability to understand and evaluate new knowledge and ideas • demonstrate the ability to identify topics for original research, plan and conduct research, analyse results, and communicate the findings to the satisfaction of subject experts.

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Table 14: Comparison of NZQF Level 9 with the Bologna Second Cycle

NZQF Level 9	Bologna Second Cycle	Note:
NZQF level 9 descriptors (Master's Degree)	Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:	
Knowledge • Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge, and a critical awareness of issues in a field of study or practice **Skills** • Develop and apply new skills and techniques to existing or emerging problems • Mastery of the field of study or practice to an advanced level **Application** • Independent application of highly specialised knowledge and skills within a discipline or professional practice • Some responsibility for leadership within the profession or discipline	• have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context; • can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study • have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements; • can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously; • have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous	The second cycle (e.g. Master's Degrees) of the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area refers to level 7 of the European Union's EQF. Notes for the First Cycle also apply here. The qualification descriptor for the NZQF Master's Degree requires planning and conducting original research.

Table 15: Comparison of NZQF Level 10 with the Bologna Third Cycle

NZQF Level 10	Bologna Third Cycle	Note:
NZQF level 10 descriptors (Doctoral Degree)	Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:	
Knowledge • Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of study or professional practice **Skills** • Critical reflection on existing knowledge or practice and the creation of new knowledge **Application** • Sustained commitment to the professional integrity and to the development of new ideas or practices at the forefront of discipline or professional practice	• have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field; • have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity; • have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication; • are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas; • can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise; • can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.	The third cycle (e.g. PhD or Doctoral Degrees) of the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area refers to level 8 of the European Union's EQF. Notes for the First Cycle also apply here.

Appendix B: Overview of Bachelor Honours Degrees in New Zealand, the UK and the Republic of Ireland

New Zealand

Purpose

A Bachelor Honours Degree recognises distinguished study at level 8. It may either be a degree in itself, or a discrete postgraduate degree following a Bachelor's Degree.

Entry

Entry to a Bachelor Honours Degree programme is normally based on achievement of above average performance in the credits within the Bachelor's Degree that are relevant to the proposed honours study.

Outcomes

A graduate of a Bachelor Honours Degree is able to:

- engage in self-directed learning and advanced study

- demonstrate intellectual independence, analytic rigour, and the ability to understand and evaluate new knowledge and ideas

- demonstrate the ability to identify topics for original research, plan and conduct research, analyse results, and communicate the findings to the satisfaction of subject experts.

Credit requirements

A Bachelor Honours Degree may be either a 480-credit degree (e.g. engineering and law), or a discrete 120-credit degree following a Bachelor's

Degree. The degree has a minimum of 120 credits at level 8, with a specified research component that represents at least 30 credits at that level.

Progression

When achieved to an appropriate standard, a Bachelor Honours Degree prepares graduates, as a stepping stone, for admission to further postgraduate study, either an additional year to complete a Master's Degree or entry into the Doctoral programme.

Within Europe, New Zealand has an agreement with Germany that recognises that NZQF Bachelor Honours Degrees achieved to an appropriate standard may be recognised for progression into a Doctoral Degree in Germany.[90]

United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)[91]

- **Special Honours:** Single-subject courses in the last year of a three year undergraduate degree (although relevant subsidiary subjects are often studied as well, at least in the first two years). The honours is meritorious depending on results, and does not represent higher study as it is evidence of the completion of the normal undergraduate degree route. Third Class Honours may be awarded for a result as low as 40 per cent in some universities.

- **Joint/Combined/Double Honours:** Two or more main subjects studied to the same level (as above, awarded based on results as part of the normal undergraduate degree route).

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90   See the New Zealand-German Academic Links Agreement: http://www.hrk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/hrk/02-Dokumente/02-07-Internationales/02-07-05-Mobilitaet-und-Anerkennung/HRKAbk_NZ_260606Fin_01.pdf

91   See UK NARIC (log in required): https://www.naric.org.uk/Product/International%20Comparisons/Equivalent%20Comparison.aspx?QualificationID=38906&CountryID=78

- **General Honours:** Two or three main subjects studied, at a lower level of specialisation (this is also meritorious honours based on results).

- **Ordinary/Pass Degree:** Generally awarded to students who have only completed 300 credits (Honours Degrees are normally 360 credits) or whose marks were too low to gain a Third Class Honours, or a mixture of these. The UK also award foundation degrees after two years of study.

The UK Bachelor's Degree with Honours is a Bologna Framework first cycle qualification which is comparable to the NZQF level 7 Bachelor's Degree in structure, purpose, relationship to other qualifications, and learning outcomes. This qualification is based on the Anglo-Irish Model: early specialisation and rapid progression through the academic standards to graduation or exit level. The Ordinary/Pass Degree is an exit qualification for those with low grades in the first stages of study.[92] It is also an exit qualification for students who do not achieve sufficiently after completing their third year of study.

While some students complete a substantial research project in the final stage of study towards the UK Bachelor's Degree with Honours, these research projects are not found consistently across the range of degree programmes on offer.

Scotland

The Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework describes Scottish Bachelor's Degrees as follows:

'Undergraduate degree programmes in Scotland are designed to be studied over three or four academic years of full-time study or the equivalent in part-time study. The starting point at Year 1 is Level 7 on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and each full year of study comprises 120 credit points. Students may be able to graduate after three years of study, at SCQF Level 9, with 360 credit points and a general degree,[93] but most students continue to SCQF Level 10 (Year 4) to achieve 480 credit points and an Honours Degree. An Honours Degree is the normal entry point for a Master's Degree which generally requires at least a further calendar year of study, and awards the learner 180 credit points at SCQF Level 11.'[94]

The Scottish Bachelor's Degree with Honours is a Bologna first cycle qualification. In the first two years of these Honours Degrees students study a broad range of subjects, then proceed to more specialised work in the final two years.

A research component is often included in the requirements for these degrees, with a project or thesis in the final year.

However, despite the four year duration, learners completing a Scottish Bachelor's Degree with Honours progress from SCQF Levels 7-10 in order to complete an undergraduate qualification which has parity with the three year UK Bachelor's Degree with Honours.

92   See also the QAA 'Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 6: Bachelor's degree with honours' http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Framework-Higher-Education-Qualifications-08.pdf

93   In the first two years of the Ordinary Degree is similar to that of the Honours Degree program, but the third year consists of general studies. Log in Required. https://internationaleducation.gov.au/cep/Europe/United-Kingdom/Education-System/Pages/HigherEd-CoursesandQuals-Default.aspx

94   See 'Communicating the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework:' http://scqf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Communicating-the-SCQF-Guide-for-Universities-FINAL-Updated-Dec-2014.pdf

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Republic of Ireland

The Honours Bachelor Degree is described on the National Framework of Qualifications website as follows:

'The Honours Bachelor Degree is normally awarded following completion of a programme of three to four years duration (180-240 ECTS credits), although there are examples of longer programmes in areas such as architecture, dentistry and medicine. Entry is generally for school leavers and those with equivalent qualifications. In addition, there are transfer arrangements across higher education, and a number of programmes of one year duration leading to Honours Bachelor Degrees for holders of the Ordinary Bachelor Degree. The Honours Bachelor Degree is a Bologna First Cycle qualification.'[95]

The Honours Bachelor Degree in Ireland is a Bologna Framework first cycle qualification that does not extend and/or enhance knowledge and understanding. These qualifications can be either three or four years in duration depending on entry level.

95   See Irish National Framework of Qualifications: http://www.nfq-qqi.com/index.html

94   Comparative Analysis of the European Qualifications Framework and the New Zealand Qualifications Framework: *Joint Technical Report*

Tables

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